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GIRLS' VOICES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GENRE FOR YOUNG FEMALE READERS, 1740-1800

by

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Ph.D. DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Department of English and Film Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Doctor of Philosophy in English and Film Studies

Wilfrid Laurier University

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Abstract

Just as they do today, adolescent girls functioned as a cultural force in the eighteenth century, and it was commercially viable for authors and publishers to attract and sustain the attention of these teenaged readers. *Girls' Voices of the Eighteenth Century: The Development of a Genre for Young Female Readers, 1740-1800,* examines how four female authors leveraged elements of fairy tales, romances and gothic fiction, and developed dialogue and humour in their texts, to reflect the interests and literary awareness of their target audience of adolescent girls. My study begins with an investigation of the legacy of early French fairy tales in these texts, particularly in the work of Sarah Fielding, who was inspired by the potential of the fairy tale form and its cast of female protagonists. I then study the work of Mary Ann and Dorothy Kilner, who demonstrated the adolescent's increasing awareness of power imbalances in the larger, adult world, and gave voice to the underdog in class and gender hierarchies. Finally, I consider the voice of female characters in the texts of Ellenor Fenn, who was subversive in her use of fairy tale and gothic features, recognizing that both genres were popular in the period with adolescent readers. Fenn was especially unique for her conscious appropriation of teenage colloquial speech in an attempt to entertain and engage her youthful audiences. Fielding, Fenn, and the Kilners recognized the potential of a new genre of text – the real precursor, it could be argued, to the contemporary YA novel – in which narrative form was expressly tailored to appeal to and to address the adolescent girls themselves. As experienced pedagogues, their intimacy with the young people in their care provided insight into the experience of eighteenth-century youth. This understanding especially shines in their work for adolescent girls, in which dialogue is rich, and characters seem to speak for the first time in their own voices.

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Introduction

In the last fifty years of the eighteenth century, the rise of the middle class and heightened concerns about women's behaviour were reflected in literature produced for young people. Fiction for children became a site from which middle-class and domestic ideologies could be instilled, particularly in girl readers, and the children's literature of the period has therefore developed a reputation for being conservatively didactic in nature. However, "didactic" has since been equated with "boring" in the world of children's literature, especially since the Romantics idolized childhood as a time of natural openness, imagination and freedom from the rules of adult life. Charles Lamb famously summed up the Romantics' poor opinion of late eighteenth-century children's authors when he categorized them all as "that cursed Barbauld crew." He was referring to Anna Laetitia Barbauld and her peers – women whose legacy has been their staunch didacticism. When it came to ideas about childhood, Mitzi Myers noted in the 1980s, the Romantics aligned themselves with Rousseau, venerating the innocent (and, she argued, ignorant) child, whereas most of the women authors Lamb so disliked had rejected many of Rousseau's ideologies, specifically with respect to the education of girls. She states, "Georgian children were the locus of a revolutionary generation's hopes and fears. No wonder improving books were constantly thrust into their hands, and no wonder women writers directed so much energy to formulating exemplary mothers and governesses" (Myers *Impeccable* 36). Myers asserts that enlightenment children's texts written by women were greatly undervalued and understudied because their representations of childhood do not line up with that of the Romantics.

Myers' main concern was to resurrect children's literature written by Georgian women – her argument being that their depictions of strong mother-figures and female teachers model the

"heroic potential in ordinary female life, in everyday female roles" for a generation of children, and reflect the increasing authority of mothers as a characteristic of the late enlightenment (*Impeccable* 50). She also notes that the use of children's texts to teach this message indicates that Georgian female writers were confident the genre could serve as a site to address social issues and to effect change:

> With their homely plots where small actions have large moral implications and where women, children, and the lowly are taken seriously as moral agents, the little books tidily demonstrate women writers' resourceful exploitation of the available literary and cultural conventions to suit their own ends. (Myers *Impeccable* 55)

Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* stresses that sound female education is of the utmost importance in producing better mothers and wives, and this is where she draws away from Rousseau's ideology. While both Rousseau and Wollstonecraft argued that educators of boys and girls should focus on knowledge that would be useful in adulthood, there is a difference in what each of them meant by "useful".

Rousseau's argument in his 1762 *Émile, or On Education*, was that girls' skills in adornment and attractiveness were most important to secure a male partner for protection, and therefore should be the focus for cultivation in the education of young women. His educational philosophy therefore was that girls should be taught above all to please men: "Man says what he knows; woman says what pleases. He needs knowledge to speak; she needs taste. Useful things ought to be his principal object and pleasing things ought to be hers" (Rousseau 376). This was a point of contention for Wollstonecraft, who argued that women's importance as the family's moral and domestic caregiver required a focus on educating girls' minds and spirits:

> To prepare a woman to fulfil the important duties of a wife and mother, are certainly the objects that should be in view during the early period of life; yet accomplishments are most thought of, that and the all-powerful beauty, generally gain the heart; and as the keeping of it is not considered of until it is lost, they are deemed of the most consequence. (Wollstonecraft *Education* 59)

"Sophie" is the ideal woman Rousseau describes as his example in *Emile*. Due to her secluded upbringing and lack of formal education, she does not exhibit the ability to think, reason or choose. Her mind is "formed not by reading but only by the conversations of her father and mother, by her own reflections, and by the observations she has made in the little bit of the world she has seen" (Rousseau 395-6). She is a perpetual child, dependent on her parents and then her husband in all things. However, Rousseau maintains that this is the ideal education:

> The good constitution of children initially depends on that of their mothers. The first education of men depends on the care of women. Men's morals, their passions, their tastes, their pleasures, their very happiness also depend on women. Thus the whole education of women ought to relate to men. To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet-these are the duties of women at all times, and they ought to be taught from childhood. (Rousseau 365)

Perhaps most offensive to Wollstonecraft was that Rousseau believed women needed to maintain ignorance in order to be pleasing to men. As Corinne Field points out: "The fundamental problem for Wollstonecraft was not simply that Rousseau would educate girls to please men, but that what he found pleasing was immaturity, youthful beauty, and childish dependence" (Field 208). In fact, even the act of marrying early was a point of disagreement.

While Rousseau suggests that an early marriage is ideal, since a good part of a girl's education should come from her husband, Wollstonecraft argues the opposite, commenting of these young women: "Many are just returned from a boarding-school, when they are placed at the head of a family, and how fit they are to manage it, I leave the judicious to judge. Can they improve a child's understanding, when they are scarcely out of the state of childhood themselves?" (Wollstonecraft *Education* 96). Field further explains that Wollstonecraft was particularly frustrated with the ways in which "men used ideas of innocence to turn girls and young women into sexual objects that could be exploited and abandoned", and that Wollstonecraft "argued that civilization perverted female development in a very specific way – by preventing women from reaching "maturity". Women could age (or in her words "fade"), but they never matured in the sense of developing their full, inborn potential" (Field 209-10).

Rousseau, for his part, vehemently argues in favour of maintaining female ignorance in order to keep a happy home, and rails against the educated and opinionated women with whom Wollstonecraft would have aligned herself, noting:

> But I would still like a simple and coarsely raised girl a hundred times better than a learned and brilliant one who would come to establish in my house a tribunal of literature over which she would preside. A brilliant wife is a plague to her husband, her children, her friends, her valets, everyone. From the sublime elevation of her fair genius she disdains all her woman's duties and always begins by making herself into a man after the fashion of Mademoiselle de I'Enclos. Outside her home she is always ridiculous and very justly criticized; this is the inevitable result as soon as one leaves one's station and is not fit for the station one wants to adopt. All these women of great talent never impress anyone but fools. It is always known who the artist or the friend is who holds the pen or the brush

> when they work. It is known who the discreet man of letters is who secretly dictates their oracles to them. All this charlatanry is unworthy of a decent woman. Even if she had some true talents, her pretensions would debase them. (Rousseau 409)

Contrary to Rousseau's philosophy, Wollstonecraft does not believe men's minds are the only ones worth cultivating. She comments, rather drily: "In a comfortable situation, a cultivated mind is necessary to render a woman contented; and in a miserable one, it is her only consolation" (Wollstonecraft *Education* 101). Wollstonecraft considers that a young woman's education greatly improves her own development, and sense of accomplishment, and ultimately leads to the family's greater well-being and happiness.

Wollstonecraft's ideal woman is enlightened, educated and capable of reason, while maintaining the moral centre of the domestic sphere. Contrary to Rousseau's complaints, she does not see morality and education as mutually exclusive, but rather argues that the education of women in matters beyond the domestic is important for the proper education of future generations. This enlightened maternal affection, which is central to Wollstonecraft's agenda in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, is reflected in the heroine, Mrs. Mason, of her children's book *Original Stories*, as well as in the many strong female teachers and mother figures in children's texts by other women writers of the late eighteenth century, including Ellenor Fenn, whose work will be the focus of Chapter 4: Talking Mothers, Talking Girls.

While some female pedagogues of the late eighteenth century stepped away from the ideology expressed by Rousseau, and appeared to prefer the rationalism of John Locke and Mary Astell, not all of them rejected Rousseau entirely. Sarah Fielding's girl's school in *The Governess*, for example, replicates Astell's system of women's education and contains moralizing passages about behaviour conformance and obedience. However, Fielding's text,

which is set in a garden enclosure suggests some alignment with ideology similar to that of Rousseau about children's imagination and preserving naïveté in young girls. Fielding's experimentation with fairy tale and oral storytelling forms indicate this first foray into book-length fiction for young girls was a deliberate attempt to appeal to the unique tastes of the identified demographic. Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner and Ellenor Fenn, all writing later in the century, had the influence and experience of their predecessors to guide them in producing works of fiction that would be both valuable and interesting to young women. While all three incorporate much of Locke's insight, they aimed to experiment with what they had learned about popular culture and educational theory of the period. As such, not all female writers of the period were staunch Rationalists, as perceived by the generations that followed. Even into the twentieth century many scholars continued to paint female children's authors with the same brush. Percy Muir, for example, sweepingly dubbed them all "a monstrous regiment of women" (Muir 82). This is a label I work to overturn in my research, for a group of female writers who were most popular with young readers of the period. Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner and Ellenor Fenn were widely read by adolescent girls in the late eighteenth century. However, as their work was geared specifically to young female readers (and not boys, or adults), they continue to be overlooked – even in light of recent interest in children's literature of the eighteenth century.

Though Mitzi Myers aimed to undo the Romantic opinions of eighteenth-century children's literature, she limited her research to the work of women writers such as Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth, who were already known for their texts for adults, their Lockean approach to pedagogical works, and for their opposition to Rousseau's ideal young woman.

Maria Edgeworth had written pedagogical works with her father, Richard, including *The Parent's Assistant* in 1796 and *Practical Education* in 1798. The Edgeworths' pedagogical

approach was child-centric, and their belief was that education should be about the cultivation of the mind, rather than the memorization of facts. Edgeworth corresponded often with mothers and readers of her parenting books, and regularly asked for feedback. In her study of Edgeworth, Mitzi Myers refers to one example of this type of correspondence, with a Lady Anne Romilly. Lady Romilly wrote to Edgeworth: "one amongst the innumerable excellent things I have learnt from Practical Education is to consider what is passing in the child's mind at the moment, and I am sure this is a thing which is seldom if ever attended to" (Quoted in Myers *Reading Rosamund* 72). This approach to education, through the perspective and language of the child, was revolutionary pedagogy for the period, and influenced authors such as the Kilners and Fenn to develop the approach in their work. Furthermore, Edgeworth's child characters model the act of learning in her texts, and her work aimed to produce enlightened, independent thinkers who were responsible for their own actions and the cultivation of their own minds. This was specifically true for female children, who are represented equally in her children's texts, and for mothers, who are represented in strong educational roles.

As Kathleen Grathwol explains, for the Edgeworths,

> …higher education for women and the pursuit of literary endeavors by women were both part of a broader Enlightenment belief in the advancement of society through education. Lockean in their approach, the Edgeworths clearly distinguished between female innocence and ignorance, and their educational treatises proselytized on the importance of educating women to be thoughtful, active citizens and, eventually, sensible and effective mothers. Rejecting the Rousseauistic ideal of womanhood as passive and unintellectual, the Edgeworths were outspoken advocates of female education, who nonetheless argued for a system of education tempered by reason and disciplined by self-control (74).

Maria Edgeworth became more known, however, for her fiction for adults. She described her 1801 novel *Belinda* as a "Moral Tale", and in many ways, it severely criticized Rousseau's suggested educational – or rather non-educational – system for girls, his "purely relational" view of women, and the "weight Rousseau gave to public opinion" (Johnston 66). *Belinda* was controversial for its representation of gender and social issues, and marriage – including an interracial marriage later censored in the third edition. However, Edgeworth's use of humour and her ability to develop character through dialogue are important literary tactics that should not be overlooked, as they inspired a generation of writers for both children and adults. Jane Austen was especially inspired by Edgeworth's witty dialogue and character introspection in her adult texts, referring to *Belinda* by name in this oft-quoted passage from *Northanger Abbey*, her parody of gothic romances:

> "And what are you reading, Miss –?" "Oh! it is only a novel!" replies the young lady, while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame. "It is only *Cecilia,* or *Camilla,* or *Belinda*"; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language. (Austen *Northanger Abbey* 36)

The literary devices that Austen so admired at the level of the novel – humour, representations of human nature, differences in language and of opinion – were being developed equally in fiction for children in the period, particularly by female authors.

Myers' critical analysis in the 1980s and 1990s resurrected children's texts written by the likes of Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth, and appraised them for their value in domestic education and early feminist thinking. Yet these authors were already known for their successful works for

adult readers. Furthermore, children's texts by Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth, I argue, were written as pedagogical works, perhaps to be read with the guidance of a mother or governess. To date, even feminist critics have been reluctant to claim the importance of authors who wrote primarily for adolescent girls, unless they had published work for adults as well. Sarah Fielding, Ellenor Fenn, Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner concentrated their efforts on addressing this specific demographic, and a study of their work forms the basis for this dissertation project.

Scholarly work by Andrea Immel, Lissa Paul, Matthew Grenby, and Andrew O'Malley on eighteenth-century children's culture, reading and the book industry demonstrates growing contemporary interest in children's literature of the period. Contemporary critics of children's literature of the period have mainly taken socio-cultural-historical approaches, and rarely venture into the territory of narrative technique used by the authors. For example, Paul's recent work *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the Eighteenth-Century* is an enlightening look at the children's book industry nearing the end of the eighteenth century, using Eliza Fenwick's *Visits to the Juvenile Library*, to ground her study. In doing so, Paul opens up a gateway into the commercial, intellectual and political networks of those writing for children in this progressive and revolutionary age. She then extends her study to argue that these writers worked to cultivate a "knowing and feeling child" over the Romantic ideal of childhood innocence and ignorance. As Paul has pointed out, eighteenth-century children saw themselves as citizens of the world and were encouraged to think, connect with and participate in the world (Paul 3). Child-readers actively engaged with their texts and were not simply passive receptors of adult ideology. As experienced educators, writers of fiction for girls encouraged discussion and introspective, rational thinking. These authors looked to the legacy not of Rousseau, (whose infantilized Sophie exemplifies Romantic "Endumbment", as Jack Zipes would put it), but of John Locke,

who popularized the Enlightenment values of learning through experimentation and experience, and of Mary Astell, who advocated higher education and focused study for young women. It is time, Paul suggests, to take another look at texts which have been pushed aside since the Romantic redefinition of the child as innocent and ignorant. However, Paul takes a socio-cultural-historical approach in her work, and does not discuss form, or how ideology is reflected in the poetics of these late eighteenth-century works.

In his 2003 monograph *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century*, Andrew O'Malley details the development of children's literature in the period and its relationship with growing middle-class ideologies. O'Malley is primarily interested in how late eighteenth-century children's literature focuses on shaping (or "making") child readers into the middle-class that we now recognize. He provides insight especially into eighteenth-century children's literature's major goal of producing rational-thinking and self-regulating adults. O'Malley's detailed investigation of growing middle-class values, pedagogical approaches, and ideologies both blatant and inherent, helps to ground my research. I extend the study to consider narrative techniques used by four specific authors to develop their genre.

Andrea Immel, the current Curator of the Cotsen Children's Library at Princeton University, has written about Ellenor Fenn's works for very young children – particularly about her methods of elementary instruction, as well as her sets of toys and teaching games. I draw on Immel's research to examine Fenn's innovative initiatives in pedagogy, but extend my study beyond the nursery and schoolroom, to investigate Fenn's texts for adolescent girls.

Matthew Grenby, through his Hockcliffe Project, has worked to digitize and provide contextual essays for an extensive collection of early British children's books, and make them

publicly available on the web. His 2011 scholarly text, *The Child Reader 1700-1840*, provides illuminating insight into the consumers of children's literature in the eighteenth century, using subscriber and publisher information, and reader marginalia as a primary focus. It was after reading Grenby's study that I opened my own early edition of Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories* to discover that it was owned by the nieces and nephews of Ellenor Fenn herself, and that the dates and initials in the margins of the text were likely her own notes written to guide her charges' reading efforts while she was their governess.

In spite of this growing interest in enlightenment children's culture and literature, to date, there have been very few studies of eighteenth-century children's literature that concentrate on adolescent girls as a distinct focus for any type of formal literary analysis. It is evident through differences in register, complexity of language, and content, that authors such as Sarah Fielding, Ellenor Fenn, Mary Ann Kilner and Dorothy Kilner had identified adolescent girls as a distinct audience. Fenn, for example, even wrote under two separate pen-names to distinguish her work for older readers from that of the younger set. Her reading primers and games for young children were produced under the pseudonym "Mrs. Lovechild", while her texts addressing adolescent girls on themes of courtship and marriage were often presented as written by "Mrs. Teachwell", or featured teacher-heroines such as "Mrs. Foresight". The latter name particularly indicates an approach that embodies the desire to guide in the coming-of-age and maturity of girl characters and readers. Eager to appeal specifically to these adolescent female readers, these authors seem to deliberately move away from the narrative structure of the novel, and experimented with ways to tailor the form of their texts to this newly established demographic. I believe their work has been under-studied not only because we are still labouring under Romantic notions of childhood,

but also because these texts do not conform to the, now more familiar, narrative structure of the novel, and because literature addressing adolescent girls still carries a stigma.

Literature produced for the younger, Romantic, idealized, innocent child is still a preferred site of study, rather than fiction for adolescents, whose sexual maturity, but social dependency, puts them in a liminal space that critics are still reluctant to validate. When adolescent girls appropriate a text, publishers may jump for joy at the cash register receipts, but critics still roll their eyes. Maybe it is the commercial popularity of young adult novels that makes the literary snobs suspicious, but continued disrespect for books aimed at this demographic might also be gender-related. It is impossible to ignore the likelihood that these texts have been devalued, at least in part, because of their content. Stories about the concerns of schoolgirls, while of great interest to a female reader of fifteen, have not traditionally drawn the attention of adult male critics. Though gender ideology was clearly implicit in early children's literature – girls play with pincushions, boys play with balls, for example, in Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744)– it was not until later in the century that children's texts were explicitly written and sold for either girls or boys. Even then, books for the youngest readers, such as reading primers, were aimed at both genders together. But as the century wore on, writers of fiction for older children had begun to identify and capitalize on perceived gender preferences. By the 1780s, the authors working for John Marshall's publishing house had clearly defined adolescent girl readers as a distinct and viable market, and attempted to engage their younger female audience not only through content, but through experimental forms.

In the 1980s feminist critics claimed that the traditional structure of the novel, particularly the Bildungsroman, which the Romantics especially cherished, is inherently male. The form mirrors that of a male coming-of-age, signaled by leaving the home and separating from the

mother, whereas, a more feminine coming-of-age, it has been argued, would involve the development of relationships with community and family (Abel, Hirsch et al). This type of feminist analysis was later mirrored in the 1990s by children's literature critics, led by Roberta Seelinger Trites in her *Waking Sleeping Beauty* (1997), who extends the argument to discuss twentieth-century children's and young adult literature. As the male-structured coming-of-age novel became the benchmark and primary basis for literary analysis in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, earlier texts for young people which did not follow this structure have been difficult to categorize. Yet, I maintain that these works were an attempt to develop different, reader-focused narrative structures that would appeal specifically to adolescent girls, and which could be regarded as an early precursor to contemporary YA fiction.

In his 2011 study of marginalia in surviving copies of eighteenth-century children's books, Matthew Grenby shows that adolescent girls were the genre's largest consumers by the end of the eighteenth century (56-7). Authors and publishers who were aware of this potentially lucrative market were, I argue, working to appeal to the literary tastes of this demographic. Children's literature historians have often lumped together children's authors of the late eighteenth century into groups labeled "Moralist", sometimes declaring that these authors wrote in contrast to the styles popular in adult fictions of the period, and usually insisting that the books could not have reflected the interests of their intended young readers. In their early children's literature anthology *From Instruction to Delight*, Demers and Moyle describe the child-characters and readers of late-eighteenth-century fiction:

> The interests and activities of the children, who soberly enter into rational discussions with their seniors, are coloured by adult emotions and viewpoints. Nevertheless these books *were* written for children. However, they were purchased by well-intentioned parents

> (those who did not object to the slighting of religious topics), who pressed them on their offspring. They, poor lambs, were conditioned to accept and profit by such gifts. Like the hell-fire tales of the Puritans, these books of the Rational Moralists tell us more about their authors and other like-minded adults than about the true interests of the children for whom they were written. (Demers 122)

However, I suggest that Sarah Fielding, Mary Ann and Dorothy Kilner and Ellenor Fenn were good examples of authors who leveraged elements of fairy tales, romances and gothic fiction, and developed dialogue and humour in their texts, to reflect the interests and literary awareness of their target audience of adolescent girls.

Mary Wollstonecraft, while showing her concern that too much in the way of romance could be detrimental to a young woman's happiness, does express the following:

> I do not mean to recommend books of an abstracted or grave cast. There are in our language many, in which instruction and amusement are blended… Reason strikes most forcibly when illustrated by the brilliancy of fancy. The sentiments which are scattered may be observed, and when they are relished; and the mind set to work, it may be allowed to chuse books for itself, for every thing will then instruct. (Wollstonecraft *Education* 52)

Just as they do today, adolescent girls functioned as a cultural force in the eighteenth century, and it was commercially viable for authors and publishers to attract and sustain the attention of these teenaged readers.

One approach to shaping a new genre that would appeal to young women was to use forms and devices that had been traditionally considered feminine. My dissertation begins with an exploration of the legacy of fairy tales in eighteenth-century adolescent fiction. Sarah Fielding's

The Governess was the first children's text to portray girls expressing subjectivity and desire, modeling the use of oral storytelling and personal confession, both often seen as female forms, as a way to define consciousness and to develop a voice. I therefore begin my study with Chapter 1: Talking Fairies, which examines the legacy of early French fairy tales in eighteenth-century English literature for adolescent girls. English women writers, like Sarah Fielding, were inspired by the potential of the fairy tale form and its cast of female protagonists. In the introduction to her text Fielding asserts to her young readers "the true use of books is to make you wiser and better" (xiii).

As Grathwol notes, "while much criticism of children's literature presupposes a neat divide between those books which teach lessons and thus appeal to the head, and those which engage the imagination and appeal to the heart, Fielding's text exposes the weakness of this supposition – it is too simplistic… Fielding's pioneering text initiates a model of imaginative instruction for young girls that is inextricably linked, like the world of romance and many eighteenth-century novels, to female storytelling" (79).

Though French fairy tales in the baroque style of Madame D'Aulnoy were highly influential in the development of fiction produced for teenaged girls late in the century, moral conservatives such as Sarah Trimmer, voiced their concern about its subversive nature. Fielding's use of fairy tales in her text indicates a desire to capitalize on the popularity of the form with her target audience, and it also led the way for others, such as Ellenor Fenn, to use fairy-tale elements in fiction for adolescent girls later in the century.

Chapter 4: Talking Girls will consider the voice of women and child-characters in the texts of Ellenor Fenn. Fenn was subversive in her use of fairy tale and gothic features in her texts, recognizing that both genres were popular in the period with adolescent readers. Furthermore,

she was unique for her conscious appropriation of teenage colloquial speech in an attempt to entertain and engage her youthful audiences. Fenn produced several school stories for adolescent girls that focused on mother-daughter relationships, and on the development of community. Fenn makes use of the good girl/bad girl binary opposition – a common fairy tale trope – in her many boarding-school stories featuring strong female teachers, such as Mrs. Foresight. While Fenn's young boarding-school characters embody various vices and highlight certain "good" behaviours, her teachers represent wise stand-ins for missing or ineffective mothers. In fact, though the theme of the absent mother was by this time already popular in women's fiction, in the case of Fenn's works, the mother is replaced not by a father figure, or suitor, but an educated, and witty, female teacher. Mrs. Foresight expertly fills the gap left by the missing mothers while modelling not staunch rational moralism, as was perceived by the Romantic critics, but a keen sense of propriety mixed with an appropriate use of wit. Through the use of extensive conversations, Fenn's modeling of girls actively participating in dialogue and knowledge production is indicative of changing ideas about girls' reading. The girls in Fenn's texts reflected the voices of her readers – they were curious and capable of reason.

In other cases, these authors appropriated the latest trend. "It-narratives" were a fad in the mid-eighteenth century, in some cases telling tales meant for adults from the point of view of such objects as a sofa, a watch, or a coin. But since Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner popularized them, it-narratives and, in particular, animal narrators, have become perhaps the single most important device in children's literature. Chapter 2: Talking Pincushions, and Chapter 3: Talking Mice, will investigate these narrative devices used to engage and amuse young readers in the Kilners' novels. The Kilners worked to find key elements to satisfy the child reader, and they found the picaresque style of the it-narrative particularly useful for developing a connection

between their girl readers and their protagonists. Mary Ann Kilner's *Adventures of a Pincushion* (1780) and Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1783) demonstrate the adolescent's increasing awareness of power imbalances in the larger, adult world, giving a voice to the underdog in class and gender hierarchies for generations to come. Interestingly, these characters model the expression of subjectivity for their readers through the act of writing their own stories.

My research considers that young readers were not simply passive recipients of the themes presented in children's texts of the period. Grenby's study has shown that young readers were actively engaged with their texts – reading aloud, annotating, correcting and performing them under adult supervision. Children's authors of the period encouraged this engagement through form. A great majority of children's texts in the last few decades of the eighteenth century, therefore, were based on 'familiar conversations', 'dialogues', plays and letters. This active participation is indicative of changing ideas about children's reading long before Lewis Carroll mocked rote learning and memorization in *Alice in Wonderland*. Sarah Fielding, Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner, and Ellenor Fenn portrayed girls in their texts who reflected their readers – they were curious and capable of reason. Question and answer formats, conversations, and debate were encouraged. Their authors believed that girls' voices should be included in the discussion.

While adolescent girls had been featured protagonists in novels since the mid-eighteenth century (such as Burney's *Evelina*, Lennox's *The Female Quixote* or Hayworth's *Betsy Thoughtless*), it was not until the latter half of the century that authors began to develop narrative forms that considered the distinct voice and interest of a young female audience. That is to say, while Burney, Lennox and Haywood may have been using the developing novel form to address

the concerns of their adult readers with respect to eighteenth-century female adolescence, Fielding, Fenn, and the Kilners were experienced pedagogues who recognized the potential of a new genre of text – the real precursor, it could be argued, to the contemporary YA novel – in which narrative form was expressly tailored to appeal to and to address the adolescent girls themselves. But while the earlier adult novels about female adolescence have, in recent years, become the subject of new interest and critical analysis, these texts aimed at the younger audience continue to be largely dismissed. I argue that this is due to their authors' literary approach, intended to appeal to eighteenth-century adolescent girls, differing from the now-comfortable (and some might still argue 'male') format of the novel, the characters not reflecting our contemporary ideal of the romanticized child, and the authors themselves having focused primarily on publishing texts for young people.

However, as Matthew Grenby's analysis of inscriptions, marginalia and subscriber lists has shown, girls were by far the largest consumers of children's fiction in the period, and texts written for this demographic saw great publishing success. These women authors, particularly in the latter half of the century, worked to engage this demographic by incorporating representations of young girls in their texts. Girl characters therefore perform eighteenth century girlhood as experienced, witnessed, remembered, and imagined by these adult women pedagogues. In their work as governesses and schoolteachers, women such as the Kilners and Fenn developed pedagogical methodologies that were meant to improve education and literacy in young children. But, also, their intimacy with the children in their care provided, I argue, deeper insight into the experience of childhood. This understanding especially shines in their work for adolescent girls, in which dialogue is rich, and characters seem to speak for the first time in their own voices.

While adult texts of the period continue to be considered in terms of the novel's development toward realism, literature for young people, Perry Nodelman has argued, must be considered as a genre apart – with its own specific generic markers and a history which may have diverged from that of its adult counterpart (*Hidden Adult*). These early texts warrant attention because they offer insight into the way in which eighteenth-century adults considered adolescent thought, and how authors negotiated the relationship between young people, specifically teenage girls, and the novel. I argue that these texts continue to struggle for status in children's literature scholarship because, as they were written by authors who specialized in children's texts, and were designed primarily for a young female audience, they have resisted traditional forms of analysis, which is based on paternalistic and Romantic approaches that have been dominant since the nineteenth century. These early texts warrant attention because they offer insight into the way in which adults thought about children's pleasure in the late eighteenth century, how authors managed the relationship between children, specifically girls, and a text, and how girls negotiated their representation in print.

This research is grounded in an in-depth study of early texts on education, debates about gender roles, and discussions of social class dynamics, since these concerns colour the work of children's literature authors in the second half of the century. No study of eighteenth-century literature would be complete without an understanding of "the rise of the Novel" in Ian Watt's terms, or the development of domestic fiction, as Nancy Armstrong has defined it. Interiority and reflection, women and rational thinking, sympathy and sentiment, and domestic education are themes that surface frequently in fiction for adolescent girls, perhaps even more vividly than they do in fiction for adults of the period. Furthermore, a broad study of eighteenth-century fiction reveals that critics are still reluctant to admit a very important truth: novels such as

Evelina and *The History of Betsy Thoughtless*, *The Female Quixote* and *Belinda* could also be defined as Young Adult fiction. The work of scholars such as Margaret Doody, Kathryn Kirkpatrick, Mary Anne Schofield and Christine Blouch over the past thirty years has opened up a space in the canon for these books. But, I argue that they have been accepted as such because they are not too far a cry from the now familiar, and preferred, structure of the novel. And since this familiarity is what satisfies contemporary literary preferences, fiction which stands outside of that neat trajectory of the novel's rise, has been denied any status. Contemporary Young Adult fiction, with its own literary structures aimed specifically at teen girls, often suffers a similar fate at the hands of adult critics.

Jacqueline Rose calls children's literature "impossible" because, she argues, the genre creates a dynamic in which the empowered "adult comes first (author, maker, giver)" and the disempowered or even colonized "child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but… neither of them enter the space in between" (Rose 1-2). However, I argue that re-evaluating young adult fiction of the eighteenth century sheds light on the agency of female adolescent readers of the period. Through their consumption of popular texts at the time, these young female readers entered the "space in between" and influenced the shaping of a genre.

Robin Bernstein argues that if race and gender, are cultural constructs, then children, as a part of that culture are complicit in the development of those constructs. She notes, "agency and intention emerge through everyday engagement with the stuff of our lives" (165), and studies how children's agency can be considered through material artifacts and children's play. In her comparisons of text and material culture, Bernstein asks "What historically located behaviours did this artifact invite, and what actions did it discourage?" (165) – and approach which informed my study of Mary Ann Kilner's stories featuring toy-protagonists in Chapter 2: Talking

Pincushions. Matthew Grenby's research indicates that juvenile marginalia can be another indicator of how eighteenth-century readers performed and helped to produce constructions of gender, class and race. His study of marginalia shows that girls were performing parts of dramas and dialogues, which is a reflection of the conversations and question and answer formats which were popular forms in girls' literature of the period. This suggests that young girls were thinking and knowing readers, and not just passive recipients of ideology. Agency can also be gleaned through inter-textual references, which can tell us what these readers were interested in reading, or least what their adult authors thought they might like. Marjory Fleming's journals, written when she was a girl and under the direction of her teenaged governess and cousin, Isabella, have provided insight into the literary tastes of this demographic – tastes which include satire, humour, gothic and romance alongside the nursery texts written with child readers in mind. Marjory's notes refer to many of the texts that I discuss in the following pages, and form a basis for understanding their reception by both young readers, as well as by their teachers – who in some cases were only just adolescents themselves. Jane Austen's *Juvenilia,* written when she was a teenager, has shed light on how her early critical reading of these types of texts may have shaped her writing. Austen's *Jack and Alice*, *Love and Freindship*, and *The Beautifull Cassandra*, for example, are wonderful illustrations of the avid young reader's experimentation with satire and her early development of narrative voice. These texts, not published until the twentieth century, are fresh and unrestrained novelettes revealing Austen's early preference for humour and the novel form. Interestingly, as Peter Sabor notes in his edition of the Juvenilia, Austen's care to maintain and frequently refer to these texts right up to the moment of her death, indicates that the author valued them in their own right (xxiv). Though they were written when she was only eleven to seventeen years old, they are not children's texts, and were written

primarily, as Juliet McMaster has pointed out, for adult audiences. McMaster quips, "Anyone who scanned the plot content alone of Austen's juvenilia, in comparison with that of her mature novels, might well conclude that the six tamed and restrained "mature" novels are the ones more suitable for children!" (284). As she was unrestrained by the censure of publication when producing these works, the teenaged Austen was free to experiment with topics still deemed taboo for young readers, but of great interest to an adolescent reader such as herself: murder, suicide, violence, theft, verbal abuse, gluttony, drunkenness and sex. In my work I explore how Ellenor Fenn picked up on adolescent girls' interest in these themes, which were often associated with gothic and romantic novels, and utilized the familiar forms to develop her fiction for young women. Austen's and Fleming's youthful writing reflects what inspired young female readers in the late eighteenth-century, and indicates that these girls were not passive recipients of prevailing ideologies. They were active participants in the constructions we tend to attribute only to adult society, and they were a powerful driving force in eighteenth-century fiction.

In her 2009 book *Other People's Daughters: The Life and Times of the Governess*, Ruth Brandon explores the cultural and social inequality of footing between eighteenth-century governesses and their charges. Typically, eighteenth-century governesses came from upper class families, but as a result of changes in financial or family circumstances, they were required to work to support themselves. Often these ladies had no real training or pedagogical skills. Because of their own aristocratic upbringing, in many cases their knowledge of subjects beyond such 'accomplishments' as music or dancing was minimal. The resulting poor quality of girls' education gained critical attention, particularly in the latter years of the eighteenth-century, when authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft warned that it left them unprepared for life as middle-class women. These changes in thinking about the value of girls' education led to a

professionalization of pedagogy and an increased focus on the importance, training and preparation of female educators themselves. However, this was often in itself a heartbreaking venture. Anna Jameson, the governess who was the inspiration for *The King and I* once wrote:

> I have heard it said and supported by argument, that to fit a woman for a private governess, you must not only cram her with grammar, languages, dates, and all the technicalities of teaching, but you must… avoid the cruelty – yes, *that* was the word, -- the *cruelty* of giving her any ideas, feelings, aspirations, which might render the slavery of her future life more dreadful than it might otherwise be. (quoted in Brandon 39)

For, in the end, a highly-educated, professional governess continued to be paid poorly, had limited professional options aside from teaching, and was still generally dependent on friends and family for support in her later years. As Wollstonecraft lamented in her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, "A teacher at a school is only a kind of upper servant, who has more work than the menial ones" (Wollstonecraft *Education* 71). Those who succeeded in providing comfortable lives for themselves sometimes did so by leveraging their experience as educators to write and publish books for young audiences. Dorothy Kilner, Mary Ann Kilner and Ellenor Fenn were experienced teachers who wrote with a pedagogical eye, but also from experience and closeness with their charges, which is reflected in the pages of their work. Their usage of key elements of popular literature of the period was a bright strategy to gain a share of the growing market for texts for young female readers in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Chapter 1

Talking Fairies, Talking Mothers: Early French Fairy Tales and their Influence on Eighteenth-Century Texts for Young Girls

As adolescent girls were becoming a key market for book sales in the period, authors began to attempt to appeal specifically to this demographic. In 1749, Sarah Fielding published *The Governess; Or, The Little Female Academy,* marketed specifically for young girls. Fielding's focus was on supplying her readership with appealing themes, characters and literary structures, which would also satisfy the parents and educators who would be purchasing the book. To do so, she found great inspiration in the French fairy tales of the 1690s, which had become popular, and somewhat controversial, reading in England in the early decades of the eighteenth century. A study of Fielding's text reveals her use of some of the key elements of fairy tales, and further shows her ground-breaking attempt to represent the voices of young girls through the use of dialogue, modeling oral storytelling techniques and writing. Fielding's text is now widely regarded as the first book-length work of fiction for young audiences, and influenced a generation of female authors who wrote for adolescent girls in the remaining years of the eighteenth century.

Les Précieuses: Literary Fairy Godmothers

It was in the sixteenth century that tales from the oral tradition were first recorded and published in a form that was available for widespread readership. The most widely circulated in the western world were Giovan Francesco Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti*, published in 1550, and Giambattista Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti* (also known as *Il Pentamerone*), published in 1634. In both of these collections, the stories are purportedly revised from the oral tradition, both use

local, specifically lower-class dialect and female narrators, and both use satire to express concerns about power inequality, political tension, and corrupt aristocracy. They were both also translated into French and, by the late seventeenth century, were circulated in the elite circles of the French courts.

At this time France was in the midst of the Enlightenment. This was the reign of Louis XIV and the expansion of the palace at Versailles -- a time of baroque opulence and excess. But, philosophers and writers were critical of the corruptness of court life, and there was a general desire for change. While the men were writing about politics and philosophy, women in the period were beginning to develop their own literary voice. At first restricted to travelogues, memoirs, and romances, these women writers were looking for platforms to critique or, in some cases, subvert the corrupt and patriarchal system. Fairy tales seemed to be an ideal platform.

As it was, there were great changes in French literary culture during this time, particularly with regards to women, both as authors and as subjects. While the Renaissance gave rise to the multitude of male-authored moralist literature for women, this new Grand Siècle saw an increase in female authors, publishing mainly fiction, in France. Where early modern French women were counselled to say little and draw minimal attention to themselves, the seventeenth century *salonnières* of Paris gathered to discuss, debate, create and retell stories.

The cultural phenomenon of the *salon* was developed and presided over by women in an attempt to create a forum in which to experience their own Enlightenment. It consisted of a gathering at a regularly scheduled time at the home of a prominent and respected, usually wealthy, woman. She would invite popular artists, poets, philosophers and musicians to attend, to entertain and to generally mingle with people of influence, and affluence – all of whom would be there for the benefit of surrounding themselves with the best and the brightest. Artists would

rise and fall in popularity, and *salonnières* would compete to have the best and most interesting of these at their *salons*. Traditionally the hostess would hold court in her bed, while the guests would mingle about her apartments. A guest's popularity was determined by his or her proximity to the hostess' bedroom, with the most prominent and interesting guests lingering in *la ruelle* – the space between the bed and the wall – where there was the most action.

The salonnières developed a culture, even a manner of speaking, of their own. They were referred to as *les précieuses*, and their lively, witty style of conversation and storytelling was called *précosité.*

> In an atmosphere critical of feminine assertiveness, the précieuses tried… to foster civility and restore the image of women by re-affirming their right to consideration, independence, and learning. As a result, salons became sites for two forms of innovation: the contestation of social conventions and the discussion of progressive ideas. Not only did seventeenth-century salonnières encourage novel social encounters, they challenged traditional notions of marriage and maternity, advocated unions based on love, and emphasized the importance of individual autonomy. (Kale 18)

Faith E. Beasley argues that the salonnières were especially responsible for redefining and shaping French literary culture, by fostering an environment of creativity and critique which gave rise to the novel, as well as other new, non-traditional literary forms, such as the fairy tale (111). By the mid-seventeenth century, a fashionable parlour game in *salon* culture was to retell or recreate fairy stories in this *précosité* style. Many of the fairy tales with which we are familiar today were told in the salons of seventeenth century France by women such as Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy and Marie-Jeanne L'Heritier, as well as men such as Charles Perrault, who was also a frequent participant in these gatherings. Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy became popular in *salon*

culture for her particular skill as a storyteller, and in 1697 she published a collection of her stories, written in the *précosité* style and entitled *Contes des Fées*, or in English: Tales of the Fairies. This was the first time stories of this type were referred to as "fairy tales" in Western culture. In fact, the French "des" is as ambiguous as the English "of". Are these tales *about* fairies, or tales *told by* fairies?

According to Elizabeth Harries, the female fairy tale author was "interested in recapturing the elegant simplicity of the language current in the salons, always characterized as 'naïve', even at its most artificial and constructed" (108). This *précosité* – an unusual mix of childish, yet flowery, language the women used in their fairy tales – served to disguise their critiques of the court and of patriarchal society in general, which were implicit in their stories. However, in spite of the naïve language, literary fairy tales in this style most often involved quite complex narrative forms – the most popular being a nested "frame" narrative. This structure is similar to a Russian doll – a story within a story within a story, and so forth – with the larger frame often set in reality or in a social context that was in ironic juxtaposition to the tale itself (106). Narrators of the frame tale were most often women, and reflected storytellers of the oral tradition: governesses, nurses, gossips, old wives.

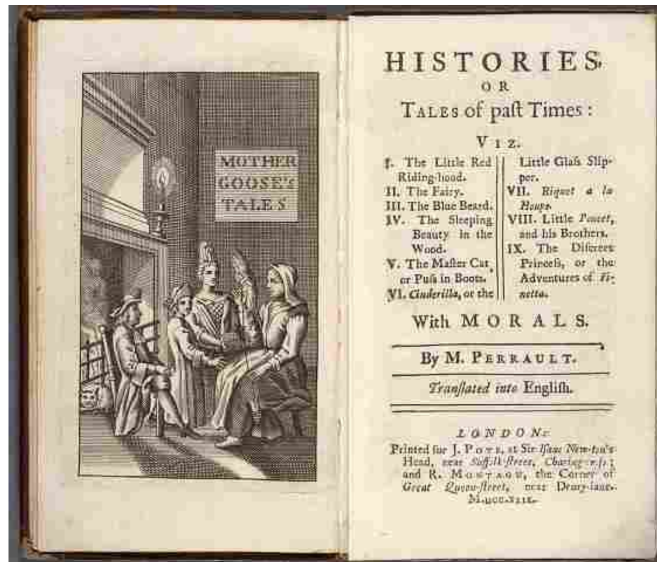
Marina Warner points out that, while storytelling is not limited to females, the oral transmission of folktales did often happen while women carried out routine and repetitive work in the home and at the hearth: "Spinning a tale, weaving a plot: the metaphors illuminate the relation; while the structure of fairy stories, with their repetitions, reprises, elaboration and minutiae, replicates the thread and fabric of one of women's principal labours – the making of textiles from the wool or the flax to the finished bolt of cloth" (23). The women who wrote these fairy tales sometimes inserted themselves, or reflections of themselves, as the narrators or even

fairies in their texts. While they were keen on criticizing the prejudices and practices of courtly life, which "confined and defamed women in their view, and coarsened the minds and manners of all members of society" (49), D'Aulnoy and her contemporaries were somewhat protected from chastisement by the fact that, due to their feminine origins, fairy tales were not considered serious literature by intellectuals of the period.

More than two-thirds of the fairy tales that came out of the *salons* in this time were written by women, and almost all of them dealt not with children's themes, but with the difficulties of marriage, familial conflicts, and the limitations of a patriarchal society (Seiffert 8). D'Aulnoy's tales tell us how she saw herself as a woman in the late seventeenth century. Her stories offer criticism, morals and advice, often directed toward young, unmarried or newly married women of her time. Her stories were a mix of original tales as well as reworked variations of the earlier Italian stories by Basile and Straparola, which had most likely been circulating in the *salons* of her day. She is credited with inventing the fairy tale mostly because she was the first to publish using that terminology, but also because, according to Jack Zipes, she was the first to use the genre "to publish and publicize subversive views that questioned the power of hegemonic groups" (19) – the patriarchy, the aristocracy and the clergy. In two volumes and two years D'Aulnoy published 24 fairy tales, many of which employ female protagonists who subvert cultural expectations for young women in her day. A good example of this would be D'Aulnoy's version of Cinderella, "Finette Cendron", loosely translated as "Cunning Cinders", which features a heroine who, as the title suggests, is an active participant in her quest for the altar. Mme D'Aulnoy's stories are, at times, racy and dark – so much so, in fact, that a few were deemed inappropriate for translation into English in the 18th century, and some, to this day, remain untranslated. While English versions in later years deadened her

language and referred to her as "Mother Bunch", Warner likens her more to a Scheherazade. The female characters and narrators of D'Aulnoy's original texts voiced protest on the behalf of the précieuses – not illiterate old gossips but, in most cases young, educated, affluent and influential women.

Scholars such as Anne E. Duggan have sought to excavate the works of the salonnières, and have worked to elevate that literary status of D'Aulnoy, as well as her contemporary, Madeleine de Scudéry, for their contributions to the French literary canon. She writes that these "women played highly influential roles as *salonnières*, novelists, and poets in the constitution of the seventeenth-century French literary field, and especially in the development of the novel. Despite the fact that most of these women writers' works have been excluded from the classical canon, they nevertheless constituted an important part of the period's literary field" (Duggan 18). However, despite her important contributions to French literature and to the fairy-tale genre, Madame D'Aulnoy is largely overshadowed by her friend and colleague, who probably shared her copy of Straparola's tales, who attended the same *salons*, and who generally mingled in the same circles: Charles Perrault. In the same year as Mme D'Aulnoy's *Contes des Fées*, Perrault published what has become one of the most famous collections of fairy tales in the Western world: *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, with a subtitle: *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye.* In English, we know the collection as *Tales of Mother Goose*. D'Aulnoy's coining of the term "fairy tale" is telling of her aim to define a new feminine genre and elevate it to literary status. Perrault, for his part, chose to capitalize on an emerging children's market, highlighting instead that while stories of this nature were certainly feminine in origin, they were the domain of local gossips and nurses, and not literary scholars.


MOTHER GOOSE'S TALES

HISTORIES
OR
TALES of past Times:
VIZ.

I. The Little Red Riding-hood.
II. The Fairy.
III. The Blue Beard.
IV. The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood.
V. The Master Cat, or Puss in Boots.
VI. *Cinderilla*, or the Little Glass Slipper.
VII. *Riquet a la Houpe.*
VIII. Little *Poucet*, and his Brothers.
IX. The Discreet Princess, or the Adventures of *Finetta.*

With MORALS.

By M. PERRAULT.

Translated into English.

LONDON:
Printed for J. POTE, at *Sir Isaac Newton's* Head, near *Suffolk-street*, *Charing-cross*; and R. MONTAGU, the Corner of *Great Queen-street*, near Drury-lane.
M.DCC.XXIX.

Figure 1 Frontispiece from an early English translation of Perrault's tales, with reference to Mother Goose. Perrault, Charles. Histories or Tales of Past Times, With Morals. London: J. Pote, 1729.

Lewis Seifert suggests that the "ambivalent marginality" of the fairy tale form was particularly suited for salonnières, or conteuses (female storytellers) to subtly demonstrate their own vision of women's role in literary culture and society because "it was at once an unthreatening genre that was far from approaching the elite status of tragedy or epic poetry" and women were able to appropriate it "without threatening male literary figures" – enabling them "to defend and perpetuate their own *locus* of cultural authority" (9). While Seifert describes a feminocentric form of literature that is predominantly produced by female writers such as d'Aulnoy, he does allow that a few male authors, such as Perrault, contributed to their development and lasting popularity.

While he may not have invented fairy tales, Perrault was a champion of the new form. He was the first man in France, and the first recognized academic, to publish in the genre. But his defense of fairy tales was not about promoting women's literature. It was part and parcel of

the campaign to promote ‘modern’, homegrown literature against the *Anciens* – academics who proclaimed the superiority of all things Greek and Latin. As Warner puts it: “To the Moderns, the fairy tale was a living shoot of national culture; to the Ancients, the genre was a bastard child of the vulgar crowd” (169). This battle between the Ancients and Moderns continued into the eighteenth century and played out in literature for young people. Through the fairy tale, Modern was feminized and became influential in the development of literature written specifically for very young children and girls, while Greek and Latin continued to dominate in boys’ classrooms and texts (Bottigheimer 173).

While he may not have anticipated that development, by the 1690s Perrault did recognize that there was a market for fairy tales among parents and educators for their child readers. He was therefore the first to write his stories with this younger audience in mind. In his Preface, he clearly sets forth this agenda: “However fanciful or extraordinary the events in all these fables may be, there can be no doubt that they instil in children both the desire to resemble the characters who are seen to become happy, and fear of the disasters which befall those characters who are wicked” (Trans. Betts 5). When Perrault’s tales were translated into English a few years later their popularity soared, as publishers and parents began to realize the fairy tales’ potential to “instruct and delight” the child reader. By the mid-eighteenth century, when English publishers like John Newbery began producing the first picture books for children, fairy tales were by far the most significant influence.

To this end, Jack Zipes has said that the key to the popularity of fairy tales lies in their role in what he calls the “civilizing process”. He has noted: “To be civil in any society, to be counted as a civilian, one must understand and follow social codes that are not of one’s making and that determine to a large degree one’s sexual identity and social status” (Zipes 21). Zipes’

project centers on how and why authors try to influence children through fairy tales. He argues that fairy tales "are not ageless, universal, and beautiful in and of themselves, and they are not the best therapy in the world for children. They are historical prescriptions, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives by mystifying them" (11). Zipes reminds us that very early on in the history of literary fairy tales, adults were using them to instill specific morals and social behaviours in their child readers. In the case of Charles Perrault's tales, these behaviours were class and gender-specific: girls were expected to emulate such characters as Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella, who exemplified patience, industriousness, submissiveness, passivity and limited intelligence. Social deviates – jealous stepsisters and power-hungry stepmothers, for example, are punished.

While not all writers of the early literary fairy tales agreed on the role and ideal behaviour of women and girls, Zipes notes, "Here the crucial factor to consider is the social standard to which all French writers subscribed: the literary fairy tale was to be used as a vehicle to discuss proper breeding and behaviour exemplified by models drawn from the practice in court society and bourgeois circles and the theoretical writings on manners… The center of concern was civility, and the fairy-tale discourse reflected variations on this theme and became increasingly moralistic as children were regarded as the major audience" (Zipes 47). In fact, some of the female writers of literary fairy tales were becoming known also for their published texts for young noblewomen on conduct and manners. As social and literary circles entwined, the lines between fairy tales and educational texts blurred.

When Sarah Fielding wrote the first attempt at a novel for child readership, she looked to this "new" literary fairy tale form for inspiration. The plot of her book, *The Governess: or, the Little Female Academy* (1749), consists of a group of young middle-class girls with varying

parental influences, telling each other stories about their own lives. But there were two very exciting things about *The Governess*. The first is that Fielding's target readers were specifically girls, generally between the ages of 8 and 14 – the "tweens" of the eighteenth-century. The second is that Fielding incorporated her own, original, fairy tales in her text and attempted to use them to impart morals to these readers. Fielding saw value in the fairy tale form for the emerging field of literature for children, and particularly literature for young girls. As Zipes suggests, she was attempting to use fairy tales to influence her young readers to behave within the limits of social expectations. In her case this meant relating story after story about girls practising obedience, modesty and restraint. However, her use of a frame-narrative similar to the structure employed by the early women fairytale authors implies a deliberate reference to this feminized genre. The girls make up a feminine community, and use oral storytelling techniques to relate their own histories and develop their own voices. Within this framework, the girls, led by the eldest girl Jenny Peace, also relate Fielding's original fairy tales, as stories within stories.

Fairy Tale Form and 'Feminine' Storytelling Techniques

Andrew O'Malley likens the community that is represented in Fielding's *The Governess* to a middle-class, pseudo-democracy (94-6). He argues that, as Mrs. Teachum mostly leaves the girls alone in the garden, they manage to keep each other in line by watching their peers' behaviour. Jenny Peace, the eldest, has been elected the arbitrator in all arguments, but the girls are encouraged to keep themselves in check by learning from the confessions of each – how they have behaved poorly in the past, and how they have improved themselves since – and by knowing that they are constantly being watched by their community. This surveillance is a type of Foucauldian, middle-class panopticon – the possibility of shame, not punishment, is what keeps the girls behaving throughout the novel.

After *The Governess*, the concept of community became a central theme in children's literature for girls, specifically nearing the end of the 18th century. In their introduction to *Fictions of Female Development*, Abel, Hirsch, and Langland outlined how the traditional narrative structure in the coming of age novel is inherently male, and suggest that female fictions of development would more likely focus on the development of community, rather than on separation from one's parents (11). In *Waking Sleeping Beauty*, Roberta Trites argues that this goes a long way to explain the predominance of the theme of community in children's fiction for girls, or fiction with female protagonists (100). Fielding's community development in *The Governess* inspired authors writing for girls over the course of the next fifty years to set their stories in boarding schools and homes, with a variety of central and supporting female characters.

However, Fielding's experiments with form are not limited to the use of the fairy tale genre or to the community setting. She in fact makes use of a variety of other forms traditionally regarded as "feminine", including letters, first person confessions, and depictions of oral storytelling. Her use of dialogue in the text thereby gives her girl-characters voices. Heavily influenced by John Locke's philosophies, Fielding emphasizes the value of achieving peace of mind through the privileging of rational thinking and the denial of passions such as melancholy, envy, pride and revenge. The girl's education – that is, the instilling of Locke's Principle of Virtue – occurs mainly through the telling of stories. Fielding relies on the traditionally 'female' art of storytelling in her plot – the child characters read fairy tales, but they also tell their own life stories in the form of 'confessions' – imparting the moral lessons of their own experiences, and showing how they strive for personal improvement.

Along with the girls' life stories, Fielding uses fairy tales to impart morals to her child readers. While Locke suggested that a child's first reading material should be entertaining, he did warn parents against disfiguring the impressionable mind with stories of ghosts and other fantastic creatures (Locke 100). As the traditional fairy tales involved magical beings and sometimes ambiguous morals, supporters of Locke's philosophies were not convinced that they were appropriate for children. Indeed, both Pickering and Summerfield assert that the debate over the suitability of fairy tales was heated throughout the eighteenth century, with supporters on the one side arguing that the entertaining stories encouraged children to read, and detractors on the other side contending that they filled children's heads with wild ideas. Eighteenth-century moralists, critics and parents were especially concerned that girls should only be reading texts that depicted their reality, and which would teach them useful skills for their future adult lives. Fielding is not unaware of prevailing attitudes that fairy tales were appropriate only as trifling entertainments for very young children. She uses the words of the youngest member of the group, Miss Polly Suckling, to poke fun at this way of thinking. In response to Jenny Peace's suggestion that they read a fairy tale, Polly replies: "That altho' she was very unwilling to contradict any-thing Miss Jenny liked, yet she could not help saying, she thought it would be better if they were to read some true History, from which they might learn something; for she thought Fairy-Tales were fit only for little Children. Miss Jenny could not help smiling at such an Objection coming from the little Dumpling, who was not much above Seven Years of Age" (Fielding 111).

Conservatives at the end of the eighteenth century feared that fairy tales were too fanciful and romantic, and that exposure to this genre would leave middle-class young women feeling dissatisfied with the mediocrity of their real lives. They argued that the religious and moral

values of the middle-class were what should be instilled in young people – that success and happiness were not to be had from luck and magic, but from hard work and devotion to God. They believed that young girls especially should not be exposed to anything unrealistic that might give them silly or immoral ideas. In fact, some adults of the period were so concerned about the potential negative impact of girls reading what they considered to be frivolous fairy tales that Mary Martha Sherwood – a prolific writer of religious tracts for children – edited and published a version of *The Governess* in the early nineteenth century, in which she removed all but one of Fielding's fairy tales and inserted religious parables in their place. In Sherwood's introduction, she writes:

> Several Fairy-tales were incidentally introduced into the original work: and as it is not unlikely that such compositions formed, at that period, one for the chief amusements of the infant mind, a single tale of this description is admitted into the present edition. But since fanciful productions of this sort can never be rendered generally useful, it has been though proper to suppress the rest, substituting in their place such appropriate relations as seemed more likely to conduce to juvenile edification. (Sherwood 235)

Mrs. Sherwood's edition was considered a resounding success by her Victorian contemporaries and went into six editions by 1840.

Some of the concerns about young people reading fairy tales seemed to align with similar views about romances and novel-reading as it developed in the century. What young woman would be satisfied with middle-class motherhood after having her appetite for romance whetted by stories of princesses, magic and jewels? While the intensity of storylines was a concern, and were thought to heighten young women's expectations to dangerous levels, critics were also worried that the uneducated reader would be too easily inclined to repeat the inappropriate

behaviours of evil characters. Traditional fairy tale conflict is almost always the result of characters exhibiting obvious immoral or wicked behaviour, such as jealousy, greed or pride, whereas the characteristics meant to be emulated, such as modesty and kindness, were often more subtle. Character traits were also sometimes revealed through elaborate symbolism, such as hair colour or appearance. For example, in D'Aulnoy's texts, physical beauty almost always goes hand in hand with the beauty of one's character. In her story "Princesse Belle Etoile", D'Aulnoy makes a point of noting that the health and state of mind of the children affects the quality and number of the gemstones that their hair can produce. In her tale "The Two Sisters", the good-natured sister is not only beautiful, but also has pearls fall from her lips as she speaks, whereas the ill-natured sister is not only ugly, but when she opens her mouth a deluge of toads and snakes is let loose. This type of symbolism may seem obvious to contemporary readers, but in the early years of children's literature it may have left too much room for interpretation for the comfort of many conservative critics, who were concerned that young readers were not sophisticated enough to understand.

D'Aulnoy and her contemporaries almost always involved characters at both ends of the moral spectrum in order to establish a clear distinction between good and evil. Every benevolent princess had a jealous, vain sister. Every brave, noble prince was offset by an evil counterpart. While D'Aulnoy's tales, evolving from the French salons of adult women, were not expressly written to impart morals, Charles Perrault particularly believed there to be value in the style to teach behaviours to children. According to Bettelheim,

> Presenting the polarities of character permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two, which he could not do as readily were the figures drawn more true to life, with all the complexities that characterize real people... Furthermore, a child's choices are

based, not so much on right versus wrong, as on who arouses his sympathy and who is antipathy. … The child identifies with the good hero not because of his goodness, but because the hero's condition makes a deep positive appeal to him. The question for the child is not 'Do I want to be good?' but 'Who do I want to be like?' The child decides this on the basis of projecting himself wholeheartedly into one character. If this fairy-tale figure is a very good person, then the child decides that he wants to be good too. (Bettelheim 9-10)

Sarah Fielding's alignment of fairy tale binary opposition to characterization in *The Governess* led the way for authors to continue to develop this literary device for their own purposes, as discussed in more detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. But the main concern of conservatives of the period was that readers would not be able to tell the difference between reality and fantasy, and between good and bad behaviour. As Samuel Johnson sustained in Rambler 4, since the uneducated or weak-minded may be inclined to emulate the characters they read about, there is no room for ambiguity in fiction. Good and evil must be clearly distinct.

While Fielding incorporated some of her own original fairy tales in her novel, she was careful to remind her child readers, through the warning of Mrs. Teachum, that they should only be reading literature with a moral that has already been approved by their guardians. Miss Jenny Peace acquires the proper approval from Mrs. Teachum, and over the course of three days tells the story of "The Princess Hebe" to the group of eight younger girls in the school garden. The fairy tale is complex in structure, with storylines embedded Russian-doll style: a tale about the heroine Princess Hebe is told within the life story of the narrator (the fairy Sybella), which is told within the structure of Jenny Peace reading to her young friends in the garden. The story itself is one of sisterly jealousy and deception, and imparts advice to the young listeners to resist vanity, to value reason and kindness over passion and power, and to submit without question to the

expectations of parents and guardians. When the story is complete, Mrs. Teachum advises her young charges:

> My good Children, I am very much pleased when you are innocently amused; and yet I would have you consider seriously enough of what you read, to draw such Morals from your Books, as may influence your future Practice: And as to Fairy Tales in general, remember, that the Fairies, as I told Miss Jenny before of Giants and Magic, are introduced, by the Writers of those Tales, only by way of Amusement to the Reader. For if the Story is well written, the common Course of Things would produce the same Incidents, without the Help of Fairies. (Fielding 141)

Parental concerns over the appropriateness of fairy tales for young women and the perceived impressionability of the young female mind would continue into the nineteenth century, and would extend beyond the debate over fairy tales to question the suitability of novels for young women as well.

However, the novelty of Fielding's text is perhaps not in the fairy stories at all, but rather in the girls' life stories. Fielding's depiction of young girls in a contemporary environment was a first, and her giving voices to the children in dialogue as well as in their own descriptions of their lives, not only highlights the traditionally 'female art' of storytelling, but suggests the value and power of the girls' own voices in their growth and development. When discussing the metaphorical power of the female voice in fairy tales, Warner puts it this way: "Women's power in fairy tale is very marked, for good and evil, and much of it is verbal: riddling, casting spells, conjuring, hearing animals' speech and talking back to them, turning words into deeds according to the elementary laws of magic, and sometimes to comic effect" (168). Within the confines of patriarchal hegemony, women's power has always been tightly aligned with words.

Judith Burdan takes a Foucauldian perspective on the portrayal of the girls' life stories in *The Governess*. She states that the use of the "confession" as a disciplinary technique spread from religious to secular life throughout the eighteenth century. The confession required that the child speak for herself and tell her own story, and came to be seen not only as a form of discipline, but as authentication of one's individuality (8). As such, Fielding uses pseudo-biographies, to relate the girls' histories, faults and changed behaviours, in order to demonstrate a way of both monitoring and correcting character. As the girls live together and govern each other's behaviour within the safety of their garden, they begin to exhibit signs of the success of their panoptic community. This internalization of external controls - constant vigilance and fear of shame - was a method of discipline that John Locke preferred over punishment, and which he promoted in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. In his treatise, Locke stressed the importance of parents' constant, invisible observation, and in some cases, manipulation, to lead children to believe that they had determined a behaviour correction on their own. *The Governess*, like the many children's texts in the years that followed it, portrayed the children as contemplating and internalizing accepted forms of behaviour until they no longer required the intervention of an adult to correct them. Mrs. Teachum leaves the younger girls in the care of Jenny Peace, who models the self-control for her young charges, and by the end of the text, the younger girls have all followed suit.

Fairy Tales, Mothers, and Education

Although Fielding's text does support many of Locke's philosophies with regard to education, Julia Briggs argues *The Governess*, with its actively engaged characters demonstrates that the girls are not the "blank slates" that Locke describes. Briggs equates Locke's *tabula rasa* with a hierarchical, paternalistic model of rote learning and memorization – and notes that

Fielding's "feminine and democratic" model assumes the children have "selves" and models active participation in the learning process (68). Matthew Grenby's study of marginalia draws further connections in this regard to the real-life girls reading similar children's texts of the period (232). This evidence of girls' interaction and response to texts indicates that children of the period were active agents in their education -- long before Lewis Carroll mocked rote learning in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

What is interesting about Locke's philosophies, and particularly the importance he attributed to early education, is the way in which they indirectly enlarged the role of mothers. As women were the primary caregivers in the early stages of a child's life, their role as educators at home became more and more significant. These mothers found themselves responsible for teaching their youngest children to read, for example, and with very few tools to do so. Commercial children's literature did not quite establish itself until Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* in 1744. Before this, scholars assume Aesop's fables and fairy tales joined the ranks alongside Bibles in a mother's teaching arsenal.

Fairy tales had influenced children's reading at least since the French stories were brought to England at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and are clearly influential in the commercial children's literature of the latter half of the century. But Victor Watson's study of Jane Johnson's recently discovered nursery ephemera and stories, dated around 1740, reveals links to D'Aulnoy's baroque style, and suggests that mothers were using fairy tales and oral storytelling to teach children even before Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* of 1744.

Jane Johnson's nursery ephemera and stories offer insight into D'Aulnoy's influence in children's reading and instruction in the period. Jane's previously unpublished *A Very Pretty Story to Tell Children*, written for her own children in 1743, was made available in print by the

Bodleian Library in 2001. Jane's tale mimics D'Aulnoy's opulent baroque style, despite Jane's own personal religious austerity, and suggests that mothers teaching their children to read were already experimenting with ways to use fairy tales to both instruct and delight – even before Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*. Jane inserts her own children as characters in her story, and their performance of childhood works to instil Jane's ideal behaviour in her readers through their active engagement with the text. The voices of Jane's children are therefore both reflected in and shaped by her story.

> …as they were all at play together in a fine great parlour in Mr Alworthy's house, the door opened and there came into the room a fine chariot all over gold and diamonds; and it was drawn by six fine white lambs, dressed all over with flowers and ribbons, and the most beautiful little boy that ever eyes beheld seated on the coach-box, and two charming pretty little angels rode on two charming fine lambs by the chariot side. AS soon as they all came into the parlour Miss Bab and Master George, and Miss Lucy and Master Tommy were quite transported at seeing so fine a sight, and they all ran to meet this fine chariot; and as soon as they came near it, the two fine angels got down and took them by the hand and told them they were come with that fine chariot to fetch them to the Castle of Pleasure and Delights which stood about five miles of their house, and that there was a great many misses and masters there that wanted sadly to see them, and that if they pleased to go along with them Mr and Mrs Alworthy would give them leave to go and stay a month, and then they would bring them back again. (Johnson 73)

But unlike the critics' complaint about the French fairy tales, Jane Johnson's tale ends with the children advancing in life not as a result of luck, but of good behaviour:

> Miss Bab, Master George and Miss Lucy were beloved by everybody because they were so good, and they all grew up to be very tall and handsome, because they constantly held up their heads and turned out their toes, and that made them all look perfectly genteel, and be admired by everybody! And when they were old enough they were all married, the two ladies to two of the richest and handsomest of the little masters as they used to play with at the Castle of Pleasure and Delights; and Master George was married to a little miss that had the best sense, and the most good-nature of anyone there, and her that he admired the most the first time he went there… Master Tommy, who had been taught a lesson for his theft and lies, and who had been forgiven by his parents, was never fully restored in the eyes of his community and "grew very dull, held down his head, fell sick of a fever and died. (Johnson 77)

Jane's use of D'Aulnoy's fairy tale elements in an educational text is also interesting because the little book was written and dedicated to her children of both genders who were four and five years old at the time. Her dedication reads: "This story was made in the year 1744, on purpose to tell Miss Barbara Johnson and her brother Master George William Johnson, who took vast delight in hearing it told over and over again a vast many times by Jane Johnson" (77).

Yet, according to Ruth Bottigheimer, it was in this period that fairy tales in educational texts began to reflect an emerging gender divide. She notes that while boys' schoolbooks in the period "continued to purvey ancient classics", such as Greek mythology and epic poetry, girl's schoolbooks incorporated "modern" fairy tales. "The Battle of the Ancients and Moderns", she claims, "played out differently for boys and for girls in the period" (173). It seems, however, that this marked divide is more apparent in fiction written for adolescents than it is in texts for younger children, such as Jane's, suggesting that pedagogues were beginning to consider the

significance of narrative form in their texts for these older children, and specifically how that form might relate to gender.

There was certainly an increase in the use of the fairy tale form in fiction marketed particularly to adolescent girls in the eighteenth century, and one might argue that the phenomenon is partly explained by the motherly characters that fill the stories' ranks. In her discussion of what she refers to as "courtesy novels" of the eighteenth century, such as Haywood's *The History of Betsy Thoughtless* and Burney's *Evelina*, Lynne Vallone identifies missing mothers as the cause of a "crisis of education" which leads to the adolescent heroines' lack of understanding of social expectations. Vallone's study argues that female authors of the period were highlighting the importance of a mother-like-figure to ensure "generational transference of genderational education" (65). While Burney and Haywood's texts were read by young women of the century, Fielding's intended female audience was younger. *The Governess,* therefore, focuses less on courtship mishaps and misunderstandings, and instead on more age-appropriate subjects such as sibling rivalry and maternal obedience.

In an attempt to bridge home and school, then, *The Governess* offers "a maternal vision of education, by women for women, as exclusively female and as closely focused on sensibility as Locke's had been exclusively male and focused upon (good) sense" (Briggs 79). Like her French fairytale predecessors, Fielding uses maternal characters, both in the form of the governess Mrs. Teachum, and in the fairies and wise queens in her embedded tales, to impart wisdom on her girl readers. Perhaps she was herself reflected in her representation of Mrs. Teachum, or in Jenny Peace. According to Lewis Seiffert, on D'Aulnoy and the *précieuses*:

> it is possible to interpret the proliferation of the fairy character-type throughout the *contes de fées* at least in part as flattering portraits of salon women and, in the case of the

> women fairy-tale writers, self-portraits […] Controlling their own and others' destinies in ways unimaginable for seventeenth-century French women, fairies in their most ideal form, project decidedly utopian visions of femininity. (198)

Seiffert also adds that most fairies in the tales proliferating from the female writers of the salons are given limitations, perhaps reflective of the limitations these women felt themselves in patriarchal French society. In many of D'Aulnoy's tales, her fairy godmothers seem to be limited to using their powers of speech to advise and guide. In her story "Belle- Étoile", the fairy can change form from woman, to mermaid to dove, but when the children are trapped in their quest and ask for her help, she does not rescue them herself, but only assists the young princess by giving her advice. In the end, the fairy's powers of speech successfully guide the children to safety and a happy ending – much like our storyteller would hope to do herself in the real world.

The tales of D'Aulnoy and her contemporaries, suggests Warner, reveal much about their "feminist agendas". She writes:

> These tales are wrapped in fantasy and unreality, which no doubt helped them entertain their audiences – in the courtly salon as well as at the village hearth – but they also serve the stories' greater purpose, to reveal possibilities, to map out a different way and a new perception of love, marriage, women's skills, thus advocating a means of escaping imposed limits and prescribed destiny. (24)

In fairy tales a good mother takes much care to raise her daughters well. Seiffert stipulates that this is reflective of changing attitudes toward motherhood during the late-seventeenth-century, and that, within fairy tales of the period "…maternal figures seem to confirm the emerging desire to sentimentalize motherhood, to make mothers both a source and an object of

intense emotional attachment" (186). In D'Aulnoy's time, a woman's purpose was still to provide heirs for her husband's family, but significant attention was now being focused on her role in raising those children. A woman's virtue came to be linked to her abilities as mother, her emotional attachment with her children, and her success in raising them.

In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Mary Astell places an emphasis on an education for women that would produce serious mothers, and underlines the importance of a mother's involvement in their children's upbringing, particularly that of girls. She warns, "One would be apt to think indeed, that Parents shou'd take all possible care of their Childrens Education, not only for *their* sakes, but even for their *own*. And tho' the Son convey the Name to Posterity, yet certainly a great Part of the Honour of their Families depends on their Daughters" (60).

> And if Mothers had a due regard to their Posterity, how *Great* soever they are, they wou'd not think themselves too *Good* to perform what Nature requires, nor thro' Pride and Delicacy remit the poor little one to the care of a Foster Parent. Or, if necessity inforce them to depute another to perform *their* Duty, they wou'd be as choice at least in the Manners and Inclinations, as they are in the complections of their Nurses, lest with their Milk they transfuse their Vices, and form in the Child such evil habits as will not easily be eradicated. (61)

Astell's imagery reflects her belief in the importance of the motherly act of nurturing young children. As such, she defines the early education of children as a feminine act, equal in importance to a child's nourishment.

In this then, Astell and Locke agree. Pedagogues and philosophers, were quite clear in the first half of the century at least, on the importance of a mother's early involvement in the

education of children. By mid-century, even Richardson's *Pamela* reflected this consecration of motherhood, as his heroine takes on the education of her own young children, at home, using techniques, as Victor Watson has pointed out, very similar to those of Jane Johnson. Specifically, Pamela uses stories derived from personal experience, and specially designed for the recipients – much like Jane's little books for "Master George". What is interesting is that Pamela also exposes Locke's class assumptions when she talks about the ideal tutor that he describes: virtuous, well-bred, well-travelled. She comments that it is hardly possible to find someone like this "for this *humble* and *slavish* employment" (304). Locke had also advised against allowing children to mingle much with servants, but Pamela argues that this segregation would only encourage children to treat servants with disrespect – an opinion that was hotly debated in the years to come. The concern that something of such importance as teaching young children should not be left to the lower, uneducated and perhaps immoral ranks of society, such as servants and wet-nurses, was an argument that continued throughout the century, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. Pamela herself devotes six letters to Mr. B on her opinions of Locke's treatise on education and on the raising and educating their young son at home. Her letters reveal herself to be a loving mother who is engaged and interested in her child's education and moral upbringing.

Lewis Seiffert claims that while the pastoral setting, so frequently used in D'Aulnoy's fairy tales, reflects the author's criticism of the city and the court of Louis XIV, it is also indicative of the consecration of motherhood developing at the turn of the century (186). Fielding also capitalizes on the seclusion and safety of a pastoral setting in *The Governess*. This reflects her fairy-tale inspiration, but also underlines her connection to Astell's *Proposal* for a female-only learning community. Astell advocated for women to study and learn with, and

from, each other, without outside distractions from the busy, male-oriented, world around them. While the risk of the city and the external sphere had already for quite some time been considered masculine, the seclusion of the pastoral has often been aligned with femininity.

Astell's use of botanical metaphors in her text further underlines this. Her idea of a female landscape is a cultivated one. Early in her text she aligns women with plants, as she laments those who do not aspire to learn and think rationally: "How can you be content to be in the world like tulips in a garden to make a fine shew, and be good for nothing?" (54). "What a pity it is," she continues, "that whilst your Beauty casts a lustre round about, your Souls which are infinitely more bright and radiant, (of which if you had but a clear Idea, as lovely as it is, and as much as you now value it, you wou'd then despise and neglect the mean *Case* that encloses it) shou'd be suffer'd to overrun with Weeds, lye fallow and neglected, unadorn'd with any Grace!" (54).

That is, Astell's women are not reflections of the pastoral landscapes of the later nineteenth-century Romantics. They are rather more aligned perhaps with the enclosed, classically-inspired, purpose-built gardens of the early eighteenth-century. She continues her metaphor later in her text, noting, "The Soil is rich and would, if well cultivated, produce a noble Harvest, if then the Unskilful Managers not only permit, but incourage noxious Weeds, tho' we shall suffer by their Neglect, yet they ought not in justice to blame any but themselves, if they reap the Fruit of their own Folly" (Astell 60). The noble farmer, in this analogy, would provide education within a feminine space which is kept free of the "weeds" of temptation, jealousy, vanity and male scrutiny. The horticultural motif is replicated in many texts for, by, and about women in the eighteenth century. Perhaps this reflects contemporary eighteenth-century pedagogy, as Grenby

has pointed out, which considered botany to be a science particularly suited for female study (126).

In both Astell and Fielding's texts, a defined, cultivated feminine space would facilitate a higher level of learning and rational thinking. However, Fielding's young eighteenth-century readers familiar with the Bible – which is to say, all of her readers – would also understand that her pastoral setting is a reference to Eden – the scene of Eve's temptation, sin, and downfall. The intertextuality is most blatant in the opening chapter, during which the young girls fight over the largest apple in the garden:

> For now they all began again to quarrel which had the most Right of it, and which *ought* to have had it, with as much Vehemence as they had before contended for the Possession of it: And their Anger by degrees became so high, that Words could not vent half their Rage; and they fell to pulling of Caps, tearing of Hair, and dragging the Cloaths off one another's Backs. (Fielding 52)

The theme of Eve's fall to temptation is so consistent in feminine literature of the eighteenth century, it would be more surprising if there were *no* reference to Eden in a text for girls written during the period. Richard Barney considers the frequency of this metaphor in literature of the period, and suggests that female writers consistently used it to reinvent Eden for their readers "because that project could potentially accomplish two things: first, attacking one of the master narratives for explaining and justifying the inequality of the sexes; and second, finding a way to reclaim some kind of social, cultural or personal bliss that could generate genuine change in the world as women knew it" (314). For Astell, and for Fielding, that change meant improved female education, and with that, a new generation of responsible, nurturing mothers who would, in turn, sustain educational improvements for the future as well.

Fielding's imagery of the girls' fist-fight in the garden over what clearly represents the forbidden fruit supports her theme that no woman can be successful at the expense of her female peers. Her message: if women can eschew jealousy and respect each other, they can learn from one another and they can grow together. The secluded, female community allows for Fielding to explore young women's behaviour in isolation, away from the male gaze, and to highlight the temptations that come from within.

Julia Briggs also draws links between *The Governess* and *Pamela*, claiming Fielding was inspired by the episodes in the second volume of Richardson's work, in which Mr. B takes Pamela to see his illegitimate daughter at a boarding school. According to Briggs, *The Governess* also uses Pamela's model of "teaching by example". But while *The Governess* uses voice, conversation and spoken narration – forms traditionally associated with women to teach, Pamela further models "the writing process as a way of defining consciousness" (80). While the younger characters in *The Governess* relate their confessions to the group orally, Jenny Peace writes them down for them, underlining the importance of writing, particularly for older girls.

The link between reading, writing, and middle-class self-improvement is particularly important in literature for young people in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. While Ian Watt aligned the rise of the novel to the rise of the middle-class, Nancy Armstrong has suggested that the most important impetus was the rise of domesticity. She notes that Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* was the first text in which a female character expresses subjectivity, and that this provided a space in which women writers could express concerns about domestic life. Pamela, a middle-class servant girl, holds power over her aristocratic master, Mr. B, because she asserts her right to reject his sexual advances. Pamela's education and powers of persuasion "were her cultural capital, acquisitions that enabled her to save herself and change her situation" (Briggs

77), and characters in stories for pint-sized audiences used the power of reading and writing for similar results. A good example of this educational strategy is demonstrated in one of Newbery's most famous texts from 1765, *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise called Mrs. Margery Two Shoes*.

Figure 2 Title Page and frontispiece of an early edition of The History of Little Goody Two Shoes, Courtesy of The Toronto Public Library.

While *Pamela* may have paved the way for domestic fiction, it also paved the way for children's literature due to its promotion of middle-class ideologies, specifically the value of education. Pamela wins over Mr. B through her letters and journal. Her writing – the middle-class education provided by her father—is the means by which she travels up in the world. *Goody Two Shoes* follows the same pattern: Margery Meanwell begins as an orphan with only one shoe. She is successful in life because of her middle-class education and values of hard work, perseverance and benevolence to the less fortunate. Her reward is a full pair of shoes, employment as a teacher, and then marriage to a rich man.

In this way, Lissa Paul has pointed out, children's literature and marketing have perhaps always gone hand in hand. That is, even "Education is not above a kind of commercial promise,

as it is fundamentally supposed to produce a 'better' (somehow new and improved, more socially acceptable) person" (32).

In *The Making of the Modern Child*, Andrew O'Malley aligns the rise of the children's literature to the desire of late-eighteenth century educators to spread middle-class ideologies. He points to the example of Sarah Trimmer, who was known for her literary criticism in *The Guardian of Education* later in the century, and for her advocacy for religious education in the Sunday school movement. Trimmer was one of a group of writer-educators whose main influence was Evangelicalism. Evangelicals focused primarily on self-discipline and self-improvement, modeling their philosophies by performing good works among the poor, especially in the growing industrial areas of England. Their concern for social problems resulted in the foundation of several charitable and reform agencies. Hannah More was especially known for her work in this area, having invested great effort in the establishment of some of England's first Sunday Schools, and for her prolific career publishing religious texts and *Cheap Repository Tracts* for young readers.

Trimmer, for her part, endorsed the Sunday School Movement in her *The Economy of Charity*, noting that her chief objectives were "the reformation of manners, the implanting of religious knowledge, and the proper observance of the Sabbath-Day". However, her inherent class assumptions are clear when she writes, "God only knows what the lower classes of people will become if Sunday-Schools are suffered to drop and something farther is not done for their reformation" (Trimmer, *Economy of Charity*, quoted in Demers 187).

Sarah Trimmer was quite vocal about her dislike for the use of fairy tales in children's literature – a sentiment that was echoed by other rational moralists in the period, such as Hannah More and Mary Martha Sherwood. In her *Guardian*, she wrote specifically of d'Aulnoy's fairy-

tales: “But, alas! These books presented things as they ought to be, not as they are; and it was cruel to present to the view of youth enchanted pictures of golden days, whose spell must be so suddenly broken when they come to view the world as it is!” (Trimmer *Guardian* 144).

Trimmer’s review of Newbery’s *Mother Bunch’s Fairy Tales* “Partial, as we confess ourselves to be, to most of the books of the old school, we cannot approve of those which are only fit to fill the heads of children with confused notions of wonderful and supernatural events, brought about by the agency of imaginary beings” (Trimmer *Guardian* 135).

Trimmer’s review of Newbery’s *History of Tales of Past Times Told by Mother Goose* reveals an alignment with arguments against young women reading romance novels:

> Though we well remember the interest with which, in our childish days, when books of amusement for children were scarce, we read, or listened to the history of “Little Red Riding Hood,” and “Blue Beard,” &c, we do not wish to have such sensations awakened in the hearts of our grandchildren, by the same means; for the terrific images, which tales of this nature present to the imagination, usually make deep impressions, and injure the tender minds of children, by exciting unreasonable and groundless fears. Neither do the generality of tales of this kind supply any moral instruction level to the infantine capacity. (Trimmer *Guardian* 136)

It’s not that Trimmer was against all forms of fun in children’s literature – she just felt that, for certain children anyway, religion should be fun enough. She argues, “Even Geography, Writing and Arithmetic may be made, in some measure, subservient to religious instruction, by proper observations on the form and division of the earth among the different nations which inhabit it;

by a judicious use of copies; and by quotations relative to Scripture History" (Trimmer *Guardian of Education*, Quoted in Demers 186).

While the later Romantic critics such as Charles Lamb complained that Trimmer, More and their cohort of rational moralists eschewed fairy tales on religious terms, O'Malley suggests that Trimmer's concern with the fairy tale form was not that it is in opposition to religious thinking, but that it had the potential to subvert traditional class structures. Fairy tale characters were rarely happy with their lot, or place in society. Most often these characters aspired to joining the ranks of the nobility and when they did rise up in the world, it was due to luck or beauty, not hard work. Religious devotion aside – Trimmer's main focus, O'Malley claims, was to inculcate a resistance to aristocratic excess and to reinforce middle-class values in her young audiences. As Mitzi Myers put it, regardless of religious or political leanings, middle-class women writers shared the objective of "rehabilitating a degenerate culture through propaganda for enlightened domesticity and societal reform" – this meant rational education and training in domestic duty for girls (211). Both Myers and Andrea Immel have argued that the dichotomy of religious texts versus fairy tales at the end of the eighteenth century was a retrospective invention of the Romantics, and not representative of the true relationship between the work of the "Sunday School Moralists" and the fairy-tale form in the period.

Furthermore, in spite of her surface condemnation of fairy stories and romantic fiction, Trimmer relies on their influences in her own children's texts, including *Fabulous Histories,* which I will discuss in further detail in Chapter 3. To be sure, despite her outspoken criticism of fairy tales and fantasy, Trimmer wrote a very positive review hailing the morality of *The Governess* in the June 1802 issue of *The Guardian of Education*:

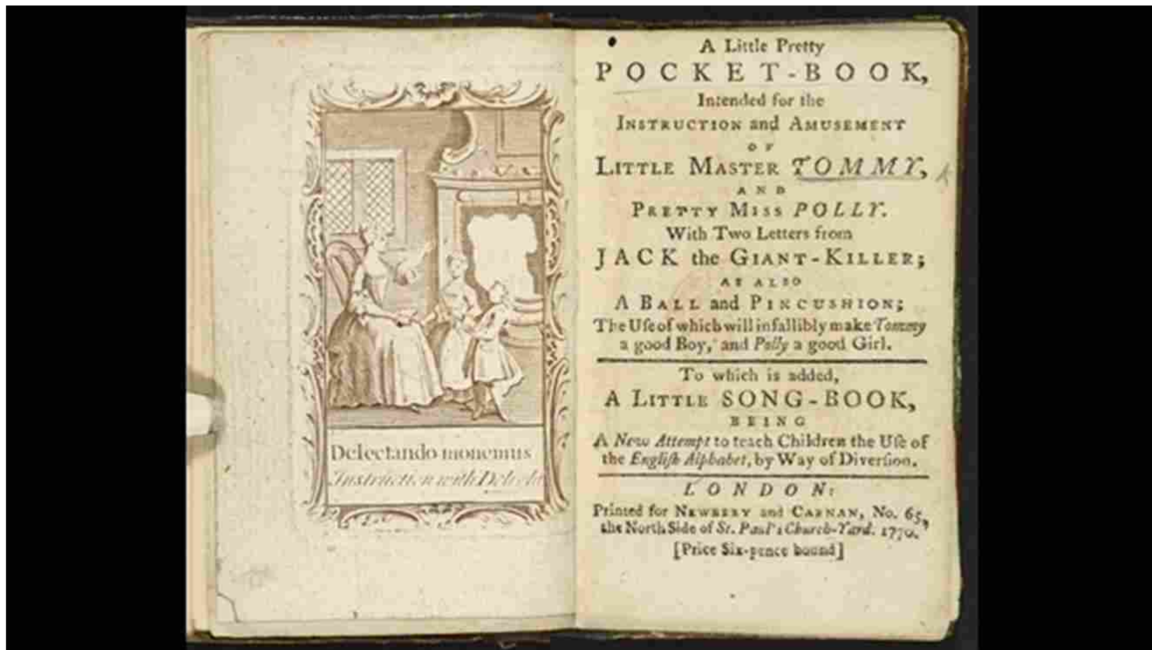
…we cannot but wish that this little volume, which had for its author one of the best female scholars England has produced, may be estimated according to its real merit, as long as the world lasts; for when such Works as this cease to be admired and approved, we may regard it as a certain sign, that good morals and simplicity of manners, ae banished from the system of English Education, to make room for *false Philosophy* and *artificial refinement*. (137-8)

Since the 1980s, many contemporary historians such as Pickering, Summerfield and Demers have continued to echo Romantic criticism of texts written for adolescent girls in the late eighteenth century, generally labelling texts by female authors of the period as “didactic”. This view often denies the possibility that young audiences enjoyed the texts, and suggests children were required to read them by well-meaning adults (Demers 122). But Grenby’s study of marginalia in these texts, including written questions and commentaries, statements of ownership and dates that passages were read, indicates an interaction and engagement with literature which is not entirely guided by parental control. As girls and young women were becoming a key market for literature in the period, authors writing for this demographic were working toward supplying a voice. Fielding’s focus on girls’ voices through confession, writing and the fairy tale form paved the way for authors to build on these techniques later in the century.

Chapter 2

Talking Pincushions: Mary Ann Kilner's Toy Stories and Young Readers

In 1744 John Newbery, a middle-class bookseller with a family of his own, published a sweet little book for young readers and, in doing so, captured the previously untapped market for children's books. *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* featured a collection of stories, folk tales and songs based on the alphabet, and was sold along with either a ball (for little boys) or a pincushion (for little girls). The toys were red on one side and black on the other, and children were meant to stick pins in either colour to record good or bad behaviour. Newbery's aim was to combine Locke's principles of rational thinking with amusement, thereby appealing to both caregivers and children alike. The frontispiece clearly defines the goal: "Delectando molemus: Instruction with Delight".



A Little Pretty
POCKET-BOOK,
Intended for the
INSTRUCTION and AMUSEMENT
OF
LITTLE MASTER *TOMMY*,
AND
PRETTY MISS *POLLY*.
With Two Letters from
JACK the GIANT-KILLER;
AS ALSO
A BALL and PINCUSHION;
The Use of which will infallibly make *Tommy* a good Boy, and *Polly* a good Girl.

To which is added,
A LITTLE SONG-BOOK,
BEING
A *New Attempt* to teach Children the Use of the *English Alphabet*, by Way of Diversion.

LONDON:
Printed for NEWBERY and CARNAN, No. 65, the North Side of *St. Paul's Church-Yard*. 1770.
[Price Six-pence bound]

Figure 3 Frontispiece and Title Page from a 1770 edition of Newbery's A Little Pretty Pocket-Book, courtesy of the Internet Archive.

Newbery found success in the growing market for children's books, and produced several favourites over the course of his 27 year career in the book business, including *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes* in 1765, which was discussed in Chapter 1. Though Newbery's texts produced for children satisfied eighteenth century conservative pedagogues with educational motives and moral messages, they were unique in their unapologetic marketing to children through play. The tiny, picture-filled books were attractive to look at and to hold, and the toys with which they were sold were appealing to little children. Newbery also excelled at a form of eighteenth-century product placement: He advertised his other titles within the stories of his children's books – thereby ensuring readers were exposed to and enticed by the next great read. Always a clever businessman, Newbery was aware that his readers included adult caregivers, and therefore also took to advertising his other products in his children's books, including Dr. Robert James' Fever Powder. Newbery had made much of his fortune off the patent of this product, and included a plug for it in *Goody Two Shoes.* Margery's father, in fact, dies as a result of being "seized with a violent fever in a place where Dr James Fever Powder was not to be had" (Newbery, *Goody Two Shoes* 10).

The popularity of Newbery's children's books and toys continued through the latter half of the century, and his promotion of learning through play was remembered fondly by the Romantics who grew up reading his books. These playful texts were often referred to in juxtaposition to some of the conservative or evangelical works of female writers later in the century, such as Sarah Trimmer, Hannah More and Ana Laetitia Barbauld. Charles Lamb famously expressed his frustration:

> 'Goody Two Shoes' is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; and the shopman at Newbery's hardly deigned to reach them off

> an old exploded corner of a shelf, when Mary asked for them. Mrs. B's and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant & vapid as Mrs. B's books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the shape of knowledge, and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learnt that a Horse is an animal, & Billy is better than a Horse, and such like; instead of that beautiful Interest in wild tales, which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to Poetry no less in the little walks of Children than with Men – Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history! Damn them! – I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those Blights and Blasts of all that is Human in man & child. (Lamb, i, 326)

Though the legacy of conservatives like Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More has been lasting, literature written for young people in the late eighteenth century was not limited to work such as theirs. In fact, their publisher, John Marshall, was well aware of the commercial potential of producing texts for this newly determined demographic, and there is evidence to suggest he sought out and supported other authors for the marketability of their writing for young people (Darton 164).

John Marshall took over his father's printing business in 1779, and ran it in partnership with his mother Eleanor and his cousin James, until 1789, when he bought out the others and took on the business alone. Besides children's books, Marshall printed and sold letterpress ballads, songs, and what we would now call chapbooks. He became a freeman of the Stationers' Company in 1778, which meant that he was then able to register new titles in his own name – a

step which afforded a level of copyright protection. Before 1782, most children's titles published by Marshall were either complete piracies or at least highly derivative of other works -- especially of popular children's books which had been published previously by John Newbery. Marshall's *The Renowned History of Primrose Prettyface* (circa 1781), for example, in which the protagonist is a young girl who achieves social advancement through reading, is clearly a copy of Newbery's *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765).

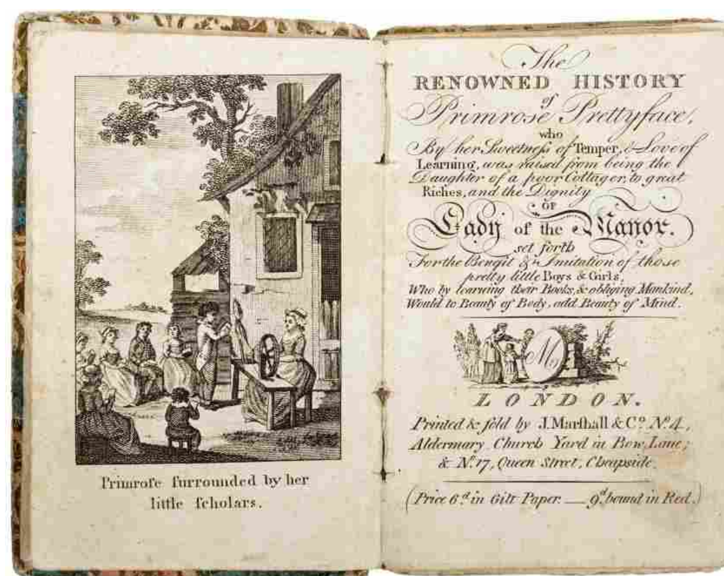


Figure 4 Frontispiece and Title Page from 1785 edition of The Renowned History of Primrose Prettyface, courtesy of The Osborne Collection of the Toronto Public Library.

Printing texts for children proved profitable enough that Marshall began to seek out authors to produce original children's fiction for him to publish. In 1782 he began registering original titles with the Stationer's Company in his own name – his first being *The Imperial Spelling Book*, by "C. Bolton, Schoolmaster". David Stoker has noted that Marshall was not particularly consistent in identifying himself as publisher on the titles he produced early in his career. However, as he became more known as a printer specializing in children's books, Marshall was more careful to claim his work, and his publication information is more regularly and

prominently displayed in the books he produced after 1782 (Stoker 115). This, as well as frequent newspaper advertisements for Marshall's books in the *London Chronicle,* the *London Advertiser*, and *The Times* between 1780 and 1793 indicate the increasing importance of publishing children's texts as a commercial venture in the years nearing the end of the eighteenth century. By 1793, Marshall's published catalogue lists more than 100 children's books.

This day are published, in [illegible], Price [illegible] each, half bound,
By JOHN MARSHALL and Co. No. 17, Queen street, Cheapside,
THE JUVENILE TATLER;
By a Society of Young Ladies,
Under the Tuition of Mrs. TEACHWELL.
THE FAIRY SPECTATOR;
Or, the INVISIBLE MONITOR;
By Mrs. TEACHWELL and her Family.
J. MARSHALL and Co. of Aldermary Church-yard, inform the Nobility, Gentry, and Heads of Schools, that they have opened a more commodious Shop, at No. 17, Queen street Cheapside, for the sale of their Publications for the Instruction and Amusement of Young People.
It being their intention to keep a large Assortment of Children's Books, in various bindings, Dissected Maps, &c. and to collect every New Publication and Scheme [illegible] in Education, they respectfully solicit the Nobility, Gentry, and Heads of Schools, for their patronage and [illegible].

MONEY.

Figure 5 Marshall's June 1789 advertisement in the Times for Eleanor Fenn's The Juvenile Tatler and The Fairy Spectator, and a description of his new bookshop. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.

In February 1796 Marshall was appointed as the sole printer of Cheap Repository Tracts for the evangelical writer, Hannah More. The Cheap Repository was a series of moral and religious tracts conceived by evangelical writer Hannah More as an alternative to the bawdy chapbooks and ballads that flourished in the late eighteenth century. A strong supporter of literacy, More had personally contributed to the establishment of several Sunday schools, with the aim of educating the less fortunate. However, she was concerned that the newly literate lower classes were reading inappropriate material, and that these reading practices were responsible for increasing political and social discord (Pedersen 84). Structurally, Susan Pedersen asserts that

the Cheap Repository tracts "follow a predictable formula. Most begin by describing a single central character, usually poor, who is put to some kind of trial. The character either responds well and is moderately rewarded or goes dramatically downhill and dies repenting" (Pedersen 88).

The Tracts were printed in large numbers, but their volume, it should be noted, does not necessarily equal popularity among readers. As they were purchased in bulk by parish representatives who placed them in Sunday school classrooms, left them in public houses, and handed them out freely to the poor, it is impossible to know if the tracts were actually popular with young people. Whether or not they were read, the substantial numbers of the tracts meant for a lucrative publishing contract for Marshall. When a dispute with Hannah More in 1797 led to his dismissal as printer for the Cheap Repository, Marshall briefly experimented with his own tracts in 1798-9. By the new century, however, Marshall was focusing all of his attention on literature for the education and entertainment of young people, producing miniature libraries as well as games, which further blurred the lines between toys and educational tools.

In these years nearing the end of the century, Marshall's publishing house was located at St. Paul's Churchyard, within a tight concentration of intellectuals and authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, William Blake, Thomas Paine, Maria Edgeworth, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Jane and Ann Taylor and Sarah Trimmer. These authors all wrote fluidly across genres and for various age groups. As Lissa Paul puts it:

> No one seemed to worry too much about authors crossing genre or age borders. Only late in the twentieth century does the idea of writing for both adults and children become unusual enough to be flagged as out of the ordinary. The fluidity of the Enlightenment authorial voice becomes especially interesting in contrast to the twenty-first century use of the term

"crosswriting" (as developed in work by postmodern scholars Sandra Beckett, Uli Knoepflmacher, and the late Mitzi Myers) to suggest that authors writing for both children and adults are doing something out of the ordinary. (22)

Eighteenth-century lines between children's literature and enlightenment philosophy were indistinct – with authors easily venturing into both realms and simultaneously publishing for both children and adults. While the later Romantics, as did Lamb, often painted many of these authors to be conservative and didactic (a dirty word!), their texts for young people actually reflect their enlightenment philosophies of thinking, the excitement of revolutionary France and America, and envision "possibilities for the ways in which a democratic state with an enfranchised, educated population might function" (Paul 16).

Paul contrasts these enlightenment children's texts with those of what she refers to as the Romantic "endumbment", during which time children were sheltered to maintain innocence, and ignorance of the adult world (Paul 162). The books written by John Marshall's arsenal of children's authors in the late eighteenth century promote and encourage John Locke's enlightenment philosophies of rational thinking for children. The result were texts aimed at thinking and knowing young people who were eager to absorb and learn from their books. Authors of Marshall's circle, I argue, knowing their young readers were eagerly absorbing popular literature for adults at the time, focused their attention on leveraging the narrative devices and techniques used in those texts to develop the growing genre of literature for young people.

Matthew Grenby's study of marginalia and inscriptions in eighteenth-century children's books shows that adolescent girls were by far the largest consumers of children's books by the end of the eighteenth century (56-7). Authors and publishers wishing to capture market share

were, I argue, aware of the literary tastes of these readers, and worked to incorporate elements from genres of adult literature that had already been growing in popularity for some time with this demographic. While some critics, the Romantics included, have argued that young people's literature of this time period eschewed and reacted against young people reading popular fiction, I contend that these authors deliberately leveraged elements of romances, gothic fiction and fairy tales, which were particularly popular with young female readers at the time, to make their texts appealing to this lucrative audience. Just as they do today, adolescent girls functioned as a cultural force in the eighteenth century. It was therefore a commercially viable project to attract and sustain the attention of these teenaged girls.

Talking Pincushions will investigate the narrative devices used to engage and amuse these readers in the novels of Mary Ann Kilner (1753-1831). Mary Ann, and her sister-in-law Dorothy Kilner each published several novels for children in the late eighteenth century, and their texts are regarded as the earliest examples of children's "it-narratives", or stories told from the point of view of inanimate objects or animals. The Kilners worked to find key elements to satisfy the child reader, and they found the picaresque style of the it-narrative particularly useful for developing a connection between their child readers and their protagonists. Having only published texts for child audiences, the Kilners remain largely under-studied, but their texts demonstrate an understanding of the child's increasing awareness of power imbalances in the larger, adult world. Furthermore, their popularization of non-human narrators has become perhaps the single most important device in children's literature.

Mary Ann and Dorothy Kilner, sisters-in-law, were employed by John Marshall in the 1780s to produce several children's texts, including readers, music books and religious advice in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. During their most prolific years, the sisters-in-

law also experimented with the emerging novel form, producing a number of children's novels between them for Marshall's publishing house. Historians of children's literature generally recognize the period as a break from the wholly instructional texts of the previous 40 years. That is, for the first time, children's authors were writing not just what they thought children *should* be reading, but what children might *like* to read. While long out of print, the Kilners' texts are notable because they were the first to employ the picaresque style of it-narrative for the express purpose of engaging their child readers. I argue that the Kilners' it-narratives were quite sophisticated in their employment of the genre for the purposes of the instruction and delight of their child readers. The Kilners were the first to capitalize on the appeal of this form for the child reader.

Since the 1980s, scholars such as Mitzi Myers have drawn attention to the Georgian tradition of women writing for children. But, to date, most have considered these texts for their instructional purpose and for what they can reveal about women's thinking in the period. While Myers worked to reveal ways in which the form of the texts supported the didactic and cultural goals of their female authors, I propose to consider the techniques used for the purpose of "delighting" their young readers. Kilner was deliberately developing a genre with its own specific markers, and her talking toys deserve therefore a focused study. What might they tell us about eighteenth-century youth, or about what eighteenth-century women writers thought about girls and the reading experience?

Mary Ann and her sister-in-law Dorothy, both found some initial success publishing didactic literature with John Marshall. However, it was Mary Ann's first fictional text, *The Adventures of a Pincushion* (around 1780), that brought about a change in thinking about literature for young people. It signaled the Kilners' first foray into the picaresque novel for

children – and the beginning of what has become one of the most popular narrative devices in children's literature: the empowerment of the child, and the creation of collusion between protagonist and reader against larger, often adult, power.

As a narrative structure, the picaresque form involves a double-pronged approach aiming to satisfy both the adults who were purchasing the books, and the children who would be reading them. It enabled the authors to produce texts that were meant to both instruct and delight. In Mary Ann Kilner's preface to *The Adventures of a Pincushion* she sets out her agenda: "it has been the design of the following pages, carefully to avoid exciting any wrong impression, and, by sometimes blending *instruction* and *amusement*, to make it the more easily retained" (vi).

And, in *Memoirs of a Peg-Top*, published probably within the year:

> Those *Trifles* that amuse in life,
>
> Promote a higher end;
>
> Since *Reason* in this lighter dress,
>
> With pleasure we attend. (Title page of *Memoirs of a Peg-Top*)

Texts to "delight" younger children had been popular since Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*. These were pretty books with pictures and gilt edges, simple words and large print. However, adolescents who were able to read fluently and who had outgrown perhaps the content of these nursery rhymes were eagerly consuming gothic literature, romances, and popular novels – in some cases to the dismay of their parents and adult caregivers. Marjory Fleming's diaries from 1810-11, (transcribed here in their original spelling), indicate clearly that

the eight-year-old girl could easily be reading novels – either with the permission of adults, or without:

> Love I think is in the fasion for ever body is marrying there is a new novel published named selfcontroul a very good maxam forsooth Yesterday a marrade [man] named Mr John Balfour Esq offered to kiss me, & offered to marry me though the man was espoused, & his wife was prsent, & said he must ask her permision but he did not I think he was ashamed or confounded before 3 gentelman... (Fleming 42)

> In the love novels all the heroins are very desperate Isabella will not alow me to speak about lovers & heroins & tiss too refined for my taste a lodestone is a curious thing indeed it is true Heroick love doth win disgrace is my maxim & I will follow it for ever &… (Fleming 44)

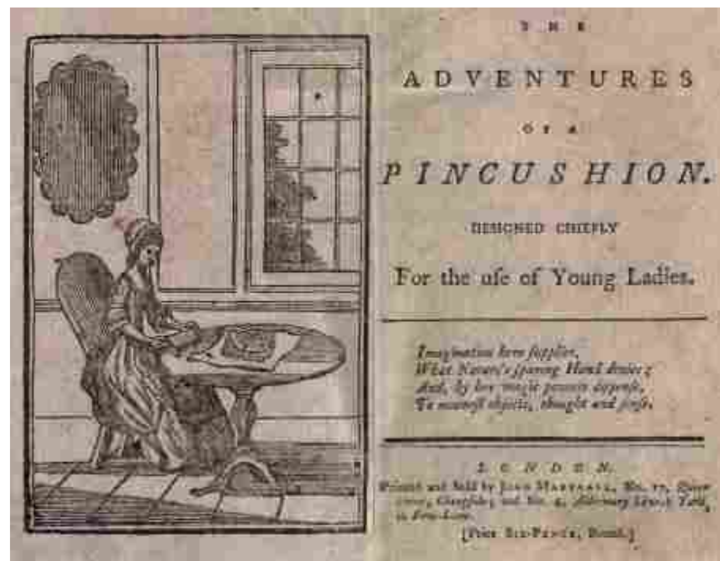


Figure 6 Frontispiece and Title Page from an early edition of Kilner's The Adventures of a Pincushion, courtesy of the Internet Archive.

While authors such as Kilner were working toward texts that would interest young people, they were cognizant of the need to please the adults who would be purchasing their

books. It-narratives offered a didactic opportunity. In many ways, the “adventures” of Kilner’s pincushion – that is, her being lost in a messy room, stuffed in a pocket, stuck under a cabinet – seem to be little more than vehicles for the moralizing thought to be typical of children’s literature of the period. But they are a break from other children’s texts in the latter part of the century, which in many cases had no real plot at all. What is interesting are the diachronic aspects of the Kilners’ it-narratives – that is, how the Kilners found ways to use narrative techniques that were traditional and expected by adult readers, yet in new ways to address the interests of their child readers for the first time.

It-Narratives, the Picaresque, and Panoptic Power

Kilner’s toy stories reflect her combination of popular devices from both adult and children’s literature of the period to produce fresh texts aimed at slightly older children than nursery rhymes or even Newbery’s books. In particular, she made use of a unique literary phenomenon that had emerged earlier in the century. The “it-narrative” or “novel of circulation” involved a story told form the point of view of a typically inanimate object, generally presented as a sort of “memoir” of its adventures as it is passed from one owner to the next. In the case of earlier texts such as Charles Gildon’s *The Golden Spy* (1709), or Johnstone’s *Chrysal: Or, The Adventures of a Guinea* (1760-5), the inanimate object was money, narrating its adventures as it was passed from human to human. The form soon expanded to other objects, namely articles of clothing, such as shoes and embroidered waistcoats, and then pets, such as Francis Coventry’s *The History of Pompey the Little: Or, the Life and Adventures of a Lap-dog* (1751).

Imagination here supplies,

What Nature’s sparing hand denies;

And by her magick powers dispense,

To meanest objects, thought and sense. (Kilner *Pincushion* Title Page)

It-narratives fell out of fashion with adult readership near the end of the eighteenth century, and were overshadowed by the novel and its tendency toward realism. However, recent scholarship in "thing theory" has led to a renewed interest in the genre, and they have received some attention of late. Bill Brown writes in his essay "Thing Theory":

> As they circulate through our lives, we look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture – above all, what they disclose about *us*), but we only catch a glimpse of things. We look through objects because here are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts. A *thing*, in contract, can hardly function as a window. We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily. The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation. (Brown 4)

What gives an object its "thingness"? Whereas Heidigger may have claimed an object becomes a thing when it is no longer useful to us, Brown argues it is the result of a subjective response – whatever it is about the object that captivates or attracts the viewer, user, you (Brown 22-3).

Robin Bernstein argues that since its inception, children's literature and things have always been linked through play. Even when toys are not provided with the book (as in Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*), children have always performed and revised what they read, actively engaging with their texts through play with other toys. On the objects themselves, Bernstein asks:

> What historically located behaviours did this artifact invite, and what actions did it discourage? The goal is not to determine what any individual did with an artifact but rather to understand how a nonagential artifact, in its historical context, prompted or invited – scripted – actions of people who were agential and often resistant. The act of scripting, that issuing of a culturally specific invitation, was itself a historical event – one that can be recovered and analyzed as a fresh source of evidence. (165)

Kilner's pincushion, then, invites the performance of middle-class, domestic, feminine industry. It is humble and unassuming, (being made of fabric scraps), but a necessary and useful household object.

Kilner's "things" underline the gendered and classist expectations of behaviour conformance. In his book *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century*, Andrew O'Malley "ties the evolution of the idea of "the child" to the growth of the middle class, which used the figure of the child as a symbol in its various calls for social reform" (Book description). Mary Ann Kilner's Pincushion is a material object -- not purchased, however, but made by its first owner using scraps of leftover silk. Its very fabric is of middle-class pedigree, and its existence a physical representation of feminine industry and usefulness. In keeping with what Myers has called "the bourgeois reinvention of womanhood in the stylish new mode of enlightened domesticity" (34), Kilner

advocated for the improved education of young girls, particularly with regard to "useful" domestic skills. The growing middle class had little use for the infantilized women criticized by Chapone (1773) and later by Wollstonecraft (1792). Kilner's pincushion not only symbolizes the necessity and value of women's domestic work, but regularly calls attention to desirable middle-class values for her readers:

> Miss Charlotte, though her Mamma had given her as much silk as her sister, had only cut it waste; while Martha, after she had finished me, had saved the rest towards making a housewise for her doll. I could not help reflecting when I saw all *Charlotte's* little threads and slips littering the room; what a simple method many little girls are apt to get into, of wasting every thing which their friends are so kind as to give them, and which, properly employed, might make them many useful ornaments for their dolls; and sometimes pretty trifles for themselves. (*Pincushion* 16)

However, though the object-narrator of Kilner's book for girls is a practical pincushion, her boys' books featured toys as their narrators. *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* follows the same minimal plot lines and didactic overtones, but the choice of object-narrator is obviously gendered. Kilner's male-oriented text features the active toy experiencing play, while the pincushion's "adventures" reach a climax when she is tossed under a cabinet and cannot roll herself out.

The gender-specificity of Kilner's texts is further expressed in her titles (the subtitle for *Adventures of a Pincushion* is "Designed Chiefly for the Use of Young Ladies"), and within the narrative. For example, in *Memoirs of a Peg-Top*, the toy falls into the hands of Sophy, a young girl who, it is joked, will never be able to make it spin as well as her brother, Edward. While their father admonishes Edward for teasing Sophy, he <u>does</u> maintain that a top <u>is</u> probably

“improper for a girl” (73). However, Kilner uses the story of Sophy, Edward and the peg-top to bring up a concern of her own, and of many women writers who, while making headway in this new genre of children’s literature, did struggle to be taken as seriously as their literary brethren. Her words, delivered through the children’s wise father, are directed at Edward and at the young boys of his generation:

> To exult with a pretended superiority over the girls, as you are apt with an air of insult to express yourself, and to sneer at their amusements, while you deny them a share in yours, is a proof of the weakness of your understanding; but will never exalt you in the opinion of men of sense. (*Peg-Top* 71)

But, if we are comparing *Pincushion* and *Peg-Top*, there is at least one other very noticeable gender-specific difference between the two narratives. While the peg-top’s plot hinges on the active and first-hand experiences of the toy – spinning, rolling, winning the game – the pincushion’s immobility forces it to rely passively on second-hand accounts to advance the storyline. Much like Newbery’s gender-specific toys sold with his *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* – a ball for boys and a pincushion for girls – Kilner’s stories feature an active toy for boys and a passive domestic item for girls. Kilner’s pincushion not only promotes female middle-class domestic usefulness, it is undoubtedly a “she”. As such, she garners the sympathy and commiseration of her girl readers, who experienced similar immobility and dependence.

The pincushion, representing a young girl, must take care to associate with only the right kind of society, should keep herself clean, useful and in good working order. She must educate herself (our pincushion learns to read from the old letters in which she is wrapped to stay clean) and she must strive to provide a good moral example for others by sharing what she has learned. Our pincushion has provided us with her memoirs for this purpose. As she has no hands, she

owns that she was required to ask for help in this matter. A pen who has also fallen under the cabinet has agreed to write her story for her.

> Long have I remained in this dull state of obscurity and confinement, unable to make known my distress, as I want the power of articulation: at least my language can be only understood to things animate as myself. A pen, however, which fell down near me, engaged to present these memoirs to the world, if ever it should be employed by the hand of kindness, to rescue my name from oblivion. Should the eye of youth read this account with any pleasure, it is hoped the candour of generosity will overlook its imperfections; and should fate, some fortunate moment of futurity, again restore me to the possession of Miss *Meekly*, or any of her companions, my gratitude will engage me to thank the publick for its indulgence, and to continue the account of my adventures. If I am not so happy as to meet with approbation, I shall at least have the consolation to reflect, that these pages have suggested no wrong ideas to the youthful mind, have given no encouragement to vanity, nor exhibited any improper example with commendation; which is what better Authors, and works of higher genius cannot always be happy enough to boast. Such as it is, I submit this account of myself to the world, and only desire them to remember, in the words of the admired *Gay*, That
>
> '*From objects most minute and mean,*
>
> *A virtuous mind may morals glean."* (*Pincushion* 54-55)

The it-narrative does more than garner empathy and commiseration of the girl reader, however. It-narratives, especially with their relationship to the picaresque, have been seen by some scholars as criticizing the increased consumerism of the period. And, certainly in their adult forms, it-narratives openly satirize social inequality. As David Rudd has noted, the

eighteenth-century it-narrative highlights the increasing dependence of the propertied classes on, well, property, for their well-being (Rudd 249). Rudd goes on to specify that the children's book market "was working hard to define and gender the 'proper' and 'propertied' child, showing children not only how to deport themselves, but how to play, and what to play with" (Rudd 248). Rudd ends his analysis with this statement about the didactic value of the children's texts. However, the Kilners' use of the it-narrative does something else. As Lynn Festa puts it, the tales things tell "explain how boys and girls become good masters and mistresses of that portion of the world over which they hold sway" (310). The truth being, of course, that while "that part of the world" is rather small, being mistress over it is empowering all the same.

Furthermore, as with adult readers of the traditional picaresque, (which often featured a child narrator), child readers are encouraged to sympathize with the powerless object-narrator. That is, faced with a child reader, the Kilners needed to work with protagonists who were comparatively smaller and more in need of protection. The child reader understands perhaps the pincushion's feeling of voicelessness in a world of seemingly unfair adult advantage – where power is distributed not by merit, but apparently by wealth and size.

Kilner's novel broke from the Georgian tradition in children's literature in that her picaresque framework involves, not as Myers suggests, "plots that link character and consequences" ("Impeccable 39), but rather a protagonist dependent on a combination of luck and the whims of those who possess it. Like her young readers, Kilner's pincushions, peg- tops and whipping tops are usually defenseless under circumstances that are entirely out of their hands: the pincushion is dropped and mauled by a cat, and the peg-top is lost to a bet, for example. In all cases, the objects provide commentary on the vices and virtues of the possessors

they observe, while commiserating with their child readers about the helplessness of the small in the world of the tall.

Yet, in spite of *feeling* powerless, the object-narrators of Kilner's texts do pass moral judgement on their human possessors, and reach out to child readers on such issues as neglect and abuse. Unlike their contemporaries, who Myers suggested were concerned with exemplifying "enlightened maternal affection" in their texts (40), the Kilners used their it-narratives to draw attention to the child as a marginalized and voiceless dependent. While, on the surface, the texts advocate the proper care of playthings, they also indicate an underlying preoccupation with the child's dependence on the care and nurturing of virtuous adults.

Picaros since Lazarillo del Tormes have generally been employed to highlight the vices of society, and to satirize notions of social and moral superiority. Kilner's use of the picaresque in her novels also highlights the significance of scrutiny and observation. *Adventures of a Pincushion* and *Memoirs of a Peg-top*, for example, were both published with woodcut illustrations, almost all of which depict not the objects, but the human characters they observe. The texts remind both child and adult readers to be on their best behaviour at all times. Lynn Festa argues for a religious motive, saying: "the omnipresent surveillance of persons by their possessions serves as a powerful reminder of the all-seeing eye to which all mortal creatures are accountable in the end" (310). But the all seeing-eye of the Kilners' texts is not just the godly one. The child, like the pincushion, is often overlooked and forgotten, but is always seeing, always watching.

The object-narrators would seem to be as objective as possible in their perspective – unrestricted by issues of age, class or gender. But, as soon as they are animated, the items become subjects, and inevitably pass judgement on their possessors. The position of surveillance

is empowering, and puts the child reader in a position of moral superiority as she reads of the vices and mistakes of other children and adults in the texts. Our pincushion comments: "So cowardly and uncomfortable does the thought of a wrong action make those who have committed it, even when they are not certain it will be publicly known" (*Pincushion* 24).

The it-narrative follows a structure similar to that of the picaresque. The underprivileged picaros, often children or servants, generally travel from place to place through the text, witnessing and experiencing a series of misadventures and satiric episodes meant to point out society's failings. More often than not, the inanimate objects pass judgement over their possessors, despite their dependence on them.

> …in Charles Gildon's inaugural it-narrative, *The Golden Spy* (1709), a story owing its title to Apuleius and its narrative to a collection of vocal coins, the narrator confesses he has edited his material for fear that money's scandalous revelations should "destroy all Confidence betwixt Man and Man, and so put an End to human Society" (Gildon 1709: 116). The impetus is not towards sociability but its very opposite: humans are exposed as hypocrites by things whose motive is not a principle of moral honesty and social unity but feelings of contempt and revenge. (Lamb *Implacability*)

Kilner's Pincushion passes judgement as she observes her human possessors, both adults and children. In most cases, girls exhibiting cheerful obedience and domestic industriousness are praised. For example, she compares her creator, Martha, with her sister Charlotte:

> I surveyed them both as I lay on the table, where my Mistress had placed me to stick her pins in as she took them out of a shirt collar which she was putting on, *Martha* looked so placid and cheerful, and seemed to speak so kindly when she asked a question, that it

made her really charming; while *Charlotte*, who had a very pretty mouth, and very regular features, stuck out her lips in a manner so unbecoming, and tossed about her head with such very illiberal jerks, that she lost all her natural advantages in her wilful ill humour. (*Pincushion* 19)

Meanwhile, adults in the text are also being watched by Kilner's object-narrator. In almost all cases these adult-characters are women – a mother, a governess, a poor farmer's wife – and they too are subject to the pincushion's criticism. However, most are praised for exhibiting middle-class values: industriousness, cleanliness, humility. Mrs. Airy is the first adult we encounter. She is the mother of the pincushion's creator, Martha, and represents a prime example of ideal middle-class motherhood. She provides guidance to her young daughters about maintaining their innocence and humility:

> I would have you, my good girls, possess that desirable degree of proper courage, as never to feel ashamed of speaking when it is necessary; but I think it is an unpleasing sight to perceive a young woman, or child I should say, for *Lucy* is young enough for that epithet, affecting to understand every thing, and giving her opinion unasked, upon subjects, which frequently expose her ignorance and presumption. This is aiming at a character to which she has no pretensions; and by wishing to rise into a woman, before she has reached the age of understanding, she is despised for her vanity, and loses that esteem she might have attained by a proper degree of humility, and a better knowledge of her station… remember, that, if you assume airs of womanhood, and affect to be thought farther advanced in age, you will have the less allowance made for any errours you may commit, and consequently meet with contempt where you might otherwise have escaped censure. Youth, and inexperience, are justly allowed to excuse any slight inadvertence in

manners, or want of grace in appearance; but if you chuse to be thought of more consequence, you must likewise expect, that the notice you may attract will not always be favourable to your vanity. (*Pincushion* 34)

Dialogue was a popular device in children's literature of the period, and Kilner makes use of it extensively in *Pincushion*. Mitzi Myers points out that conversations were used frequently in Georgian didactic texts to impart moral lessons, and are a good example of pedagogic theory of the period directing fictional technique (Myers 38). This is, no doubt, the case in texts such as Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life: With Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections and form the Mind to Truth and Goodness (1788)*, and even Dorothy Kilner's own *Familiar Dialogues for the Instruction and Amusement of Children of Four and Five Years Old (1781).* However, in the case of Kilner's object-narratives, the dialogue is always overheard. The pincushion's eavesdropping on conversations throughout the text was the Kilners' way of incorporating this traditional instructional element of dialogue within a plot, of sorts. But, furthermore, the object's "overhearing" reflects a child's experience listening to the conversations of adults. This act of surveillance is empowering to the child reader who, through the picaresque objects, witnesses the faults of both child and adult human characters in the text. She is therefore in an all-knowing position, the embodiment of Foucault's panopticon, able to judge and scrutinize behaviour.

Realism & the Rising Novel

When discussing the Kilner's approach to their eighteenth-century audience, Matthew Grenby notes, "Readers of their books were more likely to be disciplined by a parent than to find themselves in any of the specific sets of circumstances described in cautionary tales… The idea of the Kilners was to provide a practical and applicable system of discipline, rather than mere

and random moral lessons, and to unite parents and children in the common cause of social education" (Grenby, *Hockcliffe*). Kilner's *Pincushion* includes extensive descriptions of children in their domestic lives: at work, with family and at play. These scenes are influenced no doubt by the rising popularity of the novel and its tendency toward realism. In the case of domestic fiction, this involved such details as imagery of home and garden, descriptions of domestic work and life, conversations and dialogue between women and families. In Kilner's fiction for young people, domesticity includes children at play. Here, the pincushion observes the girls:

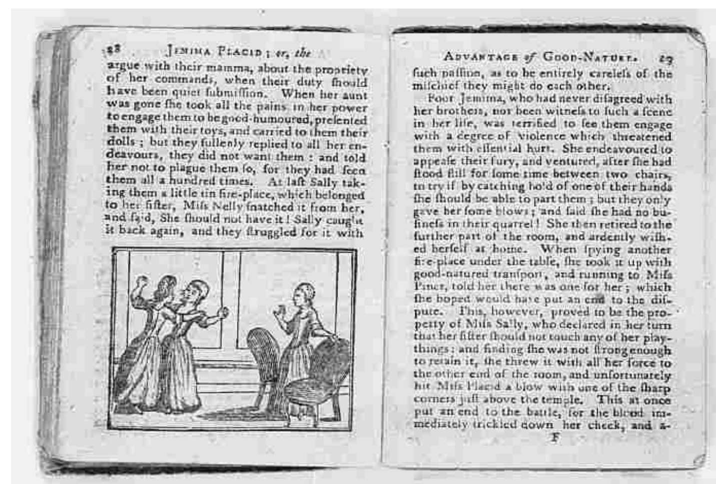
> They amused themselves with playing on the harpsichord, while Miss Martha personated the musick-master, and Charlotte chose to teach them dancing. Some part of the evening they played at going to the exhibition; and just as they determined to visit the pictures, the footman came to acquaint the young ladies, that their coach was ready. (Pincushion 40)

In many cases, Kilner develops realistic domestic scenes by illustrating disagreements among siblings, or between child and parent. Her pincushion is born out of an activity given to two sisters by their mother, in an attempt to keep them out of mischief. The text opens with a description of the eldest daughter, Martha, watching her mother sewing and not sitting properly on her chair. The chair tips:

> …she tumbled down backwards, and in her fall proved the occasion of a great deal of mischief, by oversetting a curious set of tea china, which her sister *Charlotte* was playing with; and which she had received as a present the day before from her grand papa. Charlotte was so enraged at the loss of her playthings, that without offering to help her sister, she gave her a slap on the face, and told her she was very naughty to spoil things in

such a manner by her carelessness and that she would break her plates whenever they were in her way. She was proceeding in this manner, when Mrs. *Airy* thought it time to interfere, and was extremely angry with *Charlotte* for her warmth. (Kilner 10)

Child's play has always had the potential to turn violent. Kilner's realistic descriptions of domestic life, therefore, reflect this. In her *Jemima Placid; or the Advantage of Good Nature*, written around 1783, Kilner describes a violent fight between sisters, with an accompanying woodcut to illustrate the dramatic event:



28 JEMIMA PLACID; *or, the*

argue with their mamma, about the propriety of her commands, when their duty ſhould have been quiet ſubmiſſion. When her aunt was gone ſhe took all the pains in her power to engage them to be good-humoured, preſented them with their toys, and carried to them their dolls; but they ſullenly replied to all her endeavours, they did not want them: and told her not to plague them ſo, for they had ſeen them all a hundred times. At laſt Sally taking them a little tin fire-place, which belonged to her ſiſter, Miſs Nelly ſnatched it from her, and ſaid, She ſhould not have it! Sally caught it back again, and they ſtruggled for it with

ADVANTAGE *of* GOOD-NATURE. 29

ſuch paſſion, as to be entirely careleſs of the miſchief they might do each other.

Poor Jemima, who had never diſagreed with her brothers, nor been witneſs to ſuch a ſcene in her life, was terrified to ſee them engage with a degree of violence which threatened them with eſſential hurt. She endeavoured to appeaſe their fury, and ventured, after ſhe had ſtood ſtill for ſome time between two chairs, to try if by catching hold of one of their hands ſhe ſhould be able to part them; but they only gave her ſome blows; and ſaid ſhe had no buſineſs in their quarrel! She then retired to the further part of the room, and ardently wiſhed herſelf at home. When ſpying another fire-place under the table, ſhe took it up with good-natured tranſport, and running to Miſs Piner, told her there was one for her; which ſhe hoped would have put an end to the diſpute. This, however, proved to be the property of Miſs Sally, who declared in her turn that her ſiſter ſhould not touch any of her playthings; and finding ſhe was not ſtrong enough to retain it, ſhe threw it with all her force to the other end of the room, and unfortunately hit Miſs Placid a blow with one of the ſharp corners juſt above the temple. This at once put an end to the battle, for the blood immediately trickled down her cheek, and a-

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Figure 7 Woodcut depicting an argument between Miss Sally and Miss Nelly, in Jemima Placid; or the Advantage of Good-Nature, 28-29. Courtesy of Hockcliffe Project.

While disagreements, fighting and violence between human characters are witnessed and described by the Kilner's pincushion, the object itself is also subjected to violence. In once scenario, a group of jealous lower-class school-children fights over the pincushion, and she is ultimately stolen. The event leaves her weathered and misshapen: "Whereas, by all eagerly snatching me at once, they dirted my outside, and pulled me quite out of shape; together with making them all very angry, and foolishly commencing a quarrel, of which the first consequences were the wounds I have mentioned" (*Pincushion* 75). These schoolchildren,

described as being “quarrelsome” and “ill-humoured”, engaging in a violent scuffle over a satin pincushion can be read as representing concerns over the values of the rising literate classes. As more people were educated, acquiring goods and raising themselves up into the middle class, the desire for educators to curb greed and jealousy among young people grew stronger. Much stress is placed in the text on knowing one’s place in society and being grateful. The pincushion observes at least two girls at each level of society, one exhibiting good humour, industriousness and humility, and the other, by comparison, exhibiting idleness, ill-humour, jealousy or vanity. Readers are encouraged to emulate the former, no matter what their position in society may be. When the pincushion is not suggesting these behaviours directly, the reader hears them indirectly through the voice of a motherly figure, such as a mother, governess, teacher or grandmother. These realities of the home were not, however, simply didactic strategies. I venture to argue that Kilner was leaning toward techniques that were growing popular in fiction for adults, and which her young audience was already enjoying. Very few would argue that realism in adult novels should be attributed solely to its pedagogical value. The popularity of domestic fiction, introspective characters and reflection appealed to authors like Kilner, who experimented with these techniques for her young readers who, just as their adult counterparts, were bound by the constraints of gender and class.

Many of the Pincushions “adventures” are not hers at all, but stories she overhears mothers telling their daughters, as in the story of Miss *Eliza* who elects to go out without the permission or supervision of her parents and is consequently run over by a horse:

> But during her absence from home, an unexpected accident punished the imprudent Miss *Lloyd* for her disobedience and untruth, in a manner which will give her cause for repentance to the latest period of her life; for as she was crossing a road in her return, a

> horse which had been tied to the rails of a house at a little distance, broke the bridle which confined him, and galloped away full speed, unrestrained by any opposition, until his passage the unfortunate Miss *Lloyd*, who did not perceive his approach, was thrown down, and broke her leg in such a terrible manner, as to occasion her being a cripple ever after. (Kilner *Pincushion* 47-8)

Figure 8 Woodcut depicting horse accident, in The Adventures of a Pincushion, 48. Courtesy of GoogleBooks.

Here, the danger of girls leaving the family home unaccompanied is detailed explicitly in the content of Kilner's texts. But perhaps less obvious are the inherent allusions to concerns about girls growing older and leaving the family home for that of a future husband. The pincushion's reflections on leaving her family and, more specifically her mother, for the first time, echoes the concerns of many young women looking ahead to their future lives:

> Miss Meekly's bib was unpinned, and Martha gave me into her hand in a hurry, while she was looking for her cloak. So without recollecting that I was another's property, Eliza, put me into her pocket, made a very elegant courtesy, and stept into the carriage. I felt really very sorry to part from a family with which I had been some time connected; and to one of whom I owed my being a Pincushion. But my new mistress was so very

engaging, that I was in hopes she would take care of me, and not leave me about to the mercy of a little kitten, who jumped into her lap the moment she got home. (*Pincushion* 39)

It is no accident that the pincushion refers to herself as "another's property". Kilner's text alludes to the apprehensions of young women at this stage of life – specifically highlighting the concern that a future husband will be a good provider and caregiver. Bonnie Blackwell sees a homology between the object-narrator and the sexually exploited female body. In her 2007 essay she states that "the central contradiction of female lives explored by the it-narrative is how women may remain uniformly yielding and compliant so that they might be patient, submissive mothers and wives, yet be prevented from surrendering their power to the wrong owners" (268-9). "Possessed you must be", Blackwell quips, "but take care to have a genteel buyer" (271).

The pincushion's hope that she will be in good hands also suggests similar concerns regarding a young woman's behaviour and the company she keeps in her youth. Whether they were with peers, teachers or family members, eighteenth-century young women venturing out beyond the home and domestic sphere were vulnerable to scrutiny, and their reputations were at risk of severe damage. Kilner's text reminds young readers of this when the pincushion is dropped by her careless new owner, leaving her powerless to defend herself against the family cat. The result is a violent physical attack during which the kitten toys with the pincushion, and then tosses it aside, leaving it wedged under a bookcase:

> *Eliza* was employed in putting a pair of ruffles into her jacket, and I lay in her lap securely as I imagined, until a carriage stopping at the gate, she precipitately jumped up to look out at the visitors, and in her haste let me fall upon the floor. Her motion was so sudden and unexpected, that I could not save myself, or check the velocity with which I

> was impelled. So that I unfortunately rolled on, until I touched the edge of a bookcase, and discovered myself to Mrs. Puss, who hooked me with her claws, and twirled me round several times, with as much dexterity as if I had been spinning; or, to use a more proper simile, as if I had represented a mouse. I afforded her great entertainment for some time, until at last I found myself a second time under one of the feet of the bookcase, and so fast wedged in, that it was beyond the art of even a kitten's invention, to extricate me from my situation. (*Pincushion* 54)

Throughout the text, as the Pincushion is roughly handled, used, touched, dropped or lost, she increasingly deteriorates in appearance, usefulness and desirability. Ultimately, she perishes in a pile of chicken scraps and manure.

> Mrs. *Joice*, who had been clearing away the breakfast things, folded me up in the table cloth, and carrying me under her arm to the poultry yard, shook me out with the crumbs. She turned round at the same time, to speak to a gardener, who was emptying some weeds out of his blue apron upon a dunghill, and did not see my fall. After her departure, I was pecked at alternately by almost all the fowls, until at last I was tossed by a bantam hen, under a little water tub, where I have lain ever since. My last unfortunate adventure has so dirtied my outside, that I should not now be known. But if the recital of what has hitherto befallen me has at all engaged the reader's regard, I hope I shall not lose their approbation from a change of situation of appearance. The catastrophe which has thus reduced me, was entirely unexpected; and should teach them that no seeming security can guard from those accidents which may in a moment reduce the prospect of affluence to a state of poverty and distress; and therefore it is a mark of *folly*, as well as *meanness*, to be

> proud of those distinctions, which are at all times precarious in enjoyment, and uncertain in possession. (*Pincushion* 103)

This graphic representation of feminine aging speaks to young adolescent readers, highlighting the importance of choosing companions wisely and maintaining a spotless reputation. However, it also achingly highlights the fragility of female dependence on their possessors. Kilner was keenly aware of the risks young women faced when relying on the decisions of adults and men, and her texts reflect these concerns in language and content suitable for her young readers.

On Writing, the Epistolary Form and Female Subjectivity

Interestingly, much like Richardson's *Pamela*, these characters model the expression of subjectivity through writing. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong argues that Pamela's middle-class upbringing and education have armed her with the power of words – her only ammunition to resist Mr. B's sexual advances. Through her letters, Pamela relates her own story and in doing so, develops her own sense of self – she is not described through the eyes of a male narrator. The epistolary form of the narrative also empowers Pamela to view and scrutinize Mr. B's behaviours to the reader. Armstrong notes, "It is no ordinary moment in political history when a male novelist imagines a woman whose writing has power to reform the male of the dominant class" (Armstrong 120). Similarly, Kilner's pincushion views, forms judgements, and relates the details of the humans who possess her. Whereas Pamela's work transforms Mr. B, in Kilner's texts the reformation is on the part of the reader, who is gently advised to lead a modest life, be good to servants, not speak out of turn, and to know her place.

Through the telling of her own story, the pincushion does develop subjectivity but is not rewarded in the end with marriage or fine home. While Pamela, much like Goody Two Shoes, models the ways in which her middle-class education leads to a lifetime of riches and happiness, Kilner's learned pincushion is sadly doomed to a much less happy ending among the barnyard refuse.

Interestingly, in spite of the pincushion's need for a neighbouring pen to write the text for her, she is capable of telling her own story and is never interrupted by a narrator. Often, in the traditional it-narrative, a narrator does break into the speaking object's story, to further relay a moral or lesson for example, and in doing so compromises the object's subjectivity and reasserts their owner's power over them. "Narrative interruptions and the physical degeneration of objects together foreclose the subjectivity of sartorial objects, relaying how stories about speaking garments mute the very objects they seek to animate. These narratives ultimately contain their protagonists, limiting their narrative abilities and reducing them to the status of mere object. Such narrative interruptions reassert the difference between people and things by weakening the subjectivity of garments, positioning them as subordinate to the arbitrary power of their owners" (Wigston Smith 74). Wigston Smith further points out that, while objects in these it-narratives depend on human interaction and circulation, it is "the closed, dark space of the wardrobe" which animates them. While their narrative capacity depends on human interaction, it is this dependence which "ultimately compromises the object narrator's ability to complete its story" (75). While Kilner's pincushion is not interrupted by a human narrator, her dependence on her possessors mirrors the dependence of her readers on their parents and future husbands. She describes the frustration of an adolescent over the restrictions and confinement experienced as a result of this dependence, and models self-reflection through writing as a worthy behaviour for

young women experiencing a similar impatience. The feelings she describes while stuck under a bookcase could easily be the words of a teenaged girl confined to her bedroom:

> I had lain for so long in my dismal confinement that I began to despair of ever presenting the world with any second part of my adventures. And yet, thought I, it is very hard that a *Pincushion* so new, so clean, and so beautiful, that might have a thousand opportunities of seeing the different manners of mankind, should be thus secluded from company, and condemned by the playful freaks of an insignificant kitten thus to pass away its best days in obscurity. And here let me take this opportunity to suggest a useful hint to my young readers, which, as my inactive situation allowed me sufficient time for reflection, I had frequently reason to feel the force of; namely, That although I fretted and fumed every day at my unfortunate condition, I never found it was at all improved by it, or that my ill humour in the least degree made me happier, or assisted my escape.
>
> When I determined to submit quietly, I was as happy as any *Pincushion* in such a state of retirement could be. But when in a cross fit I tried to roll myself from under the bookcase, I found the attempt was impossible to accomplish, and I hurt my sides against the foot of it. The space was so small between the bottom of my prison and the floor, that, I had no hopes of escape, as it was impossible for any broom to find its way under; or otherwise the cleanliness of Mrs. *Stanley's* maid would certainly have effected my deliverance. But, alas! of this I had no prospect; and though my endeavours were fruitless, it taught me such a lesson of contentment, as I wish every little reader of my memoirs, may remember, and copy in their own conduct. For if they are tired of working, reading, musick, drawing, or any other employment at home; or what is frequently the case, are impatient of the confinement and disagreeable circumstances of

> being at school, I would have them take my advice, and try to amuse themselves when they have opportunity, and wait with patience until they are a proper age, either to leave the place they dislike, or have overcome the difficulty of learning those accomplishments which are necessary to be acquired. For they may depend upon it, that fretfulness and ill humour will make every condition unhappy; while a resolution to be pleased, and make the best of everything, is the only method to be agreeable to others, or comfortable themselves. The foot of the bookcase will press the closer, when we petulantly try to escape; and though *children* are not *Pincushions*, yet they will find, that whenever they are fretful and dissatisfied, they will be unhappy, and never succeed in any thing they undertake. (*Pincushion* 58-9)

Like any generation of adolescents, Kilner's young audience feels the frustration of restrictive parents, and rules that seem to limit freedoms. The pincushion draws upon the popular technique of realism in the novel to appeal to her readers, while promoting patience, submission, and reflection in confinement.

Gothic Romances

While the pincushion advocates quiet submission, a young woman's desire to break free from confinement is an underlying theme in much of the period's emerging gothic fiction. John Townsend argues that children's literature emerged largely as a reaction to the popularity of adult Gothic romance, noting that Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* and Newbery's *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes* were published in the same year, 1764, and were in complete contrast. However, he suggests that, in contrast to gothic romances' "unsuitable" storylines and perverse focus on the forbidden, eighteenth-century children were meant to covet educational texts that "seasoned sound instruction with tame delights that came from light whimsy rather than the more

piquant pleasures of a good shiver" (Intro 2). He further claims that "the Gothic was soundly suppressed in children's literature in favour of morally uplifting texts that suited the desires of adults to construct an innocent child that could be trained up into a rational adult of Enlightened values" (Intro 2).

I would argue, however, that rather than deny the popularity of the gothic romance, Kilner's approach was to include elements of the gothic in her work, and to capitalize on the popularity of the genre. In fact, while Townsend states that didactic texts of the latter part of the eighteenth century were "designed to take the Gothic story's place" (Intro 2), there is evidence that the Kilners and some of their peers were working to *include* elements of the genre in their stories for adolescent girls.

The most obvious, perhaps, is the animation of everyday domestic objects, which is in line with the uncanny aspects of eighteenth-century gothic literature. Botting describes the uncanny, noting: "When inanimate objects like statues or portraits start to move, or when machines or corpses come alive, the contours of the world in which one defines oneself seem to have changed radically to suggest that, in horror, reality's frames have ceded to supernatural forces or to powers of hallucination or conscious desire" (Botting 8). If we look at the relationship between confinement and the uncanny animation of everyday objects, we can consider, that the object's personification reflects the limitations on the oppressed subject. Portraits appearing to be alive, for example, are a common motif in gothic fiction. In Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*, Julia believes the miniature of the Marchionness breathes and looks at her with penetrating eyes. Volz comments that an animate portrait's significance "lies in its capacity to serve as a visible intermediary between literal and metaphorical manifestations of female oppression" (103), but more importantly, for the heroine, that "The imagination is free even

when the heroine is physically confined" (106). Kilner's pincushion, while confined under the bookcase, has the powers of her imagination and her education to reflect and tell her own story. The young reader, limited to the confines of the parents' home, may understand and feel the same.

Lamb also connects the it-narrative and gothic genres through their commonality of animated "things". He notes that while it-narratives have often been read and theorized as comic narratives, their all-seeing, all-knowing objects are as sinister as the anthropomorphized objects of gothic literature. He remarks:

> Whether it is owing to its origin and terminus in the narratives of slaves, or to its coincidence with the financial revolution and the growing unaccountability of mass human behaviour, or to the growing appetite for print ephemera, or to the end of feudal tenures and the resulting anomalies of personal portable property, or to the irreversible metamorphoses precipitated by the holocaust, ordinary things situated in banal circumstances develop a salience that has nothing to do with symbolism or hidden meaning. They are just there, eying their human adversaries, implacable and meditating affronts. (Lamb *Implacability*)

The gothic fiction of Anne Radcliffe differed from many of her predecessors in that her female heroines were detectives of the supernatural. Mysteries, ghosts, and the reasons behind moving objects were sussed out by intelligent young female characters, usually while in a state of confinement. A connection is often made between heroine and reader – sometimes even questioning the validity of, or poking fun at, the narrative itself. Deidre Lynch writes,

> Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho [...] ponders its enchantments' staying-power. Following her escape from Udolpho, where unexplained coincidences and mysterious voices predicting peril have led her almost to doubt her sanity, the heroine discovers her experience repeating itself. Her new place of refuge may likewise harbor supernatural forces. 'I perceive,' said Emily smiling, 'that all old mansions are haunted.' The smile prompts us to smile. It's as if Emily herself were amused by her creator's hyperbolic plotting – and as if Radcliffe were anticipating her book's future lampooning. (Lynch "Gothic" 49)

While Radcliffe builds this connection with her reader, and works toward explanations of the supernatural by the conclusion of her works, Kilner justifies the animation of her pincushion in the first chapter:

> …*Martha* made choice of a square piece of pink sattin, which she neatly sewed and stuffed with bran, and which, gentle reader, when it was finished, was the identical *Pincushion* whose adventures form the subject of this little volume. Assuming, therefore, the title of an Historian, or Biographer, which is generally understood to mean a person who is writing an account of his own, or another's actions, I shall take the liberty to speak for myself, and tell you what I saw and heard in the character of a *Pincushion*. Perhaps you never though that such things as are inanimate, could be sensible of any thing which happens, as they can neither hear, see, or understand; and as I would not willingly mislead your judgement. I would, previous to your reading this work, inform you, that it is to be understood as an imaginary tale, in the same manner as when you are at play, you sometimes call yourselves gentlemen, and ladies, though you know you are only little boys, or girls. So, when you read of birds and beasts speaking and thinking, you know it

> is not so in reality, any more than your amusements, which you frequently call *making believe*. To use your own stile, and adopt your own manner of speaking, therefore you must imagine that a *Pincushion* is now *making believe* to address you, and to recite a number of little events, some of which really have happened, and others might do so with great probability; and if any of the characters here represented should appear to be disagreeable, the Author hopes you will endeavour to avoid their failings, and to practice those virtues or accomplishments which render the contrary examples more worthy of imitation. (Kilner *Pincushion* 13)

Assuming the voice of an adult, the object-narrator connects and speaks directly with the young readers, referencing *making believe* as an explanation of how a pincushion could talk. The pincushion is speaking to the thinking and knowing child of the Enlightenment in much the same way that Radcliffe's gothic heroines speak to the thinking and knowing young woman.

Contrary to Townsend's suggestion, there is evidence to suggest that children of the eighteenth century were reading all manner of books, including both children's "didactic" texts, nursery stories AND gothic romances. Austen's irreverent *Juvenilia*, written while she was an adolescent, parodies gothic romances as well as didactic texts and other work intended for child audiences, such as Goldsmith's *The History of England*. Marjory Fleming's diaries indicate clearly that the eight-year-old girl was a reader of gothic and romantic fiction, and enjoyed the thrill of the supernatural.

The eight year old's literary tastes are varied. While she refers to the works of Trimmer, Edgeworth and More, she also writes, "…I am reading the Mysteries of udolpho & am much interested in the fate of poor poor Emily" (Fleming 14), and "There is a book thats is caled the Newgate calender that contains all the Murders, -- all the Murders I say, nay all Thefts &

Forgeries that ever commited. & fills one with horror and consternation" (Fleming 47), and "We are reading a book about a man went into a house & he saw a sack & he went & look into it & he saw a dead body in it" (Fleming 37).

The gothic influence on Fleming's imagination is further exposed in her own journals. Here the girl describes her governess sleepwalking:

> Some days ago Isabella had a tereable fit of the toothake and she walked with a long nightshift at dead of night like a gost and I thought she was one she prayed for, tired natures sweet restorer bamy sleep but did not get it a ghostly figure she was indeed enought to make a saint tremble it made me quever & shake from top to toe but I soon got the beeter of it & next morning I quite forgot it… Superstition is a very very mean thing & should be despised & shuned. (Fleming 6)

The last sentence here is the most telling about her parents and educators' concerns about gothic texts.

Often Marjory's writing reveals her own thoughts cut short by teachings from a watchful adult. For example: "At Breahead there is a number of pictures & some have monstrous large wigs; Every body just now hates me & I deserve it for I don't behave well" (36), and "Miss Potune is very fat she pretends to be very learned she says she saw a stone that dropt from the skies, but she is a good christian" (42). In this way, Fleming's diary shines some light both on the thoughts and reading habits of 8 year old girls, as well as on what parents and educators expected of girls her age in the period. However, Majory's own short poems reveal popular literary influences of the time. Marjory used her diary to record her little poems at any time, suggesting that they were not always, if ever, structured writing exercises given by her

governess, and cousin, Isabella Keith. For example, this little ode is written upside-down at the bottom of a page of the journal, as Marjory at that moment was relegated to the foot of the bed she was sharing with her cousin:

Isa's Bed

I love in Isas bed to lie

O such a joy & luxury

The bottom of the bed I sleep

And with great care I myself keep

Oft I embrace her feet of lillys

But she has goton all the pillies

Her neck I never can embrace

But I do hug her feet in place

But I am sure I am contented

And of my follies am repented

I am sure I'd rather be

In a small bed at liberty

(Fleming 14)

Fleming’s journals reveal the young girl’s attempts to use language derived from romantic literature, as well as the influence of supernatural elements of gothic texts. For example, romantic language abounds in her descriptions of the landscape around her:

> I love to walk in lonely solitude & leave the bustle of the nosey town behind me & while I look on nothing but what strikes the eye with sights of bliss & then I think myself transported far beyond the reach of the wicked sons of men where there is nothing but strife & envying pilfering & murder where neither contentment nor retirement dweels but their dwels drunken. (Fleming 7)

> The trees do wave their lofty heads while the winds stupendous breath wafts the scattered leaves afar off besides the declifities of the rocks leaves that once was green and beautifull now withered and all wed away scattering their remains on the footpath and hightroads &c &c. (Fleming 12)

> … Ah me peradventure, at this moment some nobel Colnel at this moment sinks to the ground without breath; -& in convulsive pangs dies; it is a melancholy consideration. (Fleming 42)

Marjory sometimes distinguishes between what is considered proper behaviour for women and men, however her description reveals an underlying questioning of male superiority:

> Fighting is what ladies is not gualyfied for they would not make a good figure in battle or in a dual Alas we females are of little use to our country & to our friends, I remember to have read about a lady who dressed herselfe in mans cloths to fight for her father, woman are not half so brave as her, but it is only a story out of Mothers Gooses Fary tales so I do

not give it credit, that is to say I do not belive the truth of it but it matters little or nothing. (Fleming 52)

Marjory clearly enjoys the gothic and romantic texts that she reads, but her journals show that she has been receiving instruction about what texts she should be reading, as well as what is considered true (as in male) literature. For example, she writes: "Tom Jones & Greys Elegey in a contry Church yard are both excellent & much spoke of by both sex particularly by the men" (Fleming 52), and "Tomson is a beautifull author & Pope but nothing is like Shakepear of which I have a little knlege of" (Fleming 44), and finally, "I get my poetry now out of grey & I thin[k] it beautiful & Majestick but I am sorry to say that I thi[nk] it is very Difficult to get by heart but we mus bear it well" (Fleming 31).

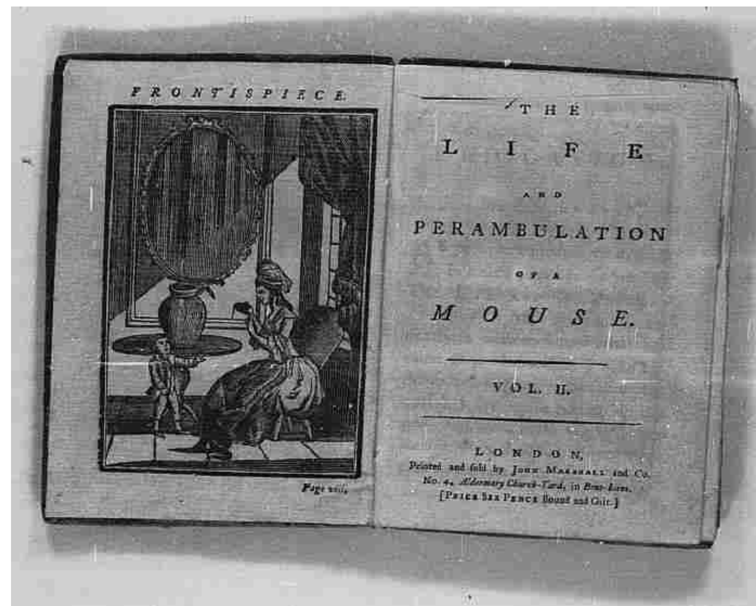
While gothic fiction may have been a part of Marjory's reading repertoire, it is clear from the above examples that the male-authored canon was still considered the more "worthy" literature for study. Superstition and the uncanny, the great features of gothic romances, aroused the imagination and were frowned upon by pedagogues for young readers. Maria Edgeworth, while attempting to utilize the gothic form in her own *Castle Rackrent: An Hibernian Tale*, at the same time was careful to assure her readers of *The Parent's Assistant* that "care has been taken to avoid inflaming the imagination", and in *Practical Education*: "The early associations which we perhaps have formed of terror, with the ideas of apparitions, and winding sheets, and sable shrowds, should be unknown to children" (Vol I, 140-141). Townsend argues that "Writers of Gothic romance for adults could not bring the same conventions to bear when contemplating the case of literature for children" (23). This is not to say that it was not done. However, it took the creativity of writers like Kilner, who were focused on this specific juvenile demographic to do it.

50 years after Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel*, it is still our tendency to describe the development of the novel in his terms. And, just as adults can tend to view children as simply smaller versions of ourselves, we have often approached literature for young people in the same way. But, what if we looked back at these early examples of children's novels and considered them not in light of Watt's trajectory, but as having taken their own developmental path, which may not always coincide with that of their adult counterparts? The success of Kilner's approach, and therefore her legacy, lies in the fact that through her strategies of empathy, collusion and empowerment, child readers are able to see themselves in these novels. Kilner engaged in an act of subversion – while on the surface, her novels communicate the dictates of their author, publishers and buyers, they effectively engage with the child reader through popular forms, and invite them to feel empowered in an adult-centric world.

Chapter 3

Talking Mice: Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*, Animal Narrators, and the Young Middle-Class Reader

Around 1784, Mary-Ann's sister-in-law, Dorothy Kilner, took the children's it-narrative to a new level with the publication of *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*. Here was a text that employed the picaresque form, with an animal protagonist that bridged the gap between inanimate and human in his ability to move and to talk. Whereas Mary Ann's pincushion tells the reader that she is unable to speak to humans, Dorothy's mouse relates his story to a narrator who writes it out for him. In choosing an animal over an inanimate object for a protagonist, Dorothy was able to develop her text in line with the self-reflexive character development becoming popular in novels at the time. Furthermore, Kilner's representation of an animal building a friendship with a human paved the way for a rich relationship in the future between animal protagonists and young readers.


FRONTISPIECE.

Page viii.

THE
LIFE
AND
PERAMBULATION
OF A
MOUSE.

VOL. II.

LONDON,
Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co.
No. 4, Aldermary Church-Yard, in Bow-Lane.
[Price Six Pence Bound and Gilt.]

Figure 9 Frontispiece and Title Page from early edition of Dorothy Kilner's The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse. Volume II. Courtesy of The Hockcliffe Project.

Traditionally, children's literature historians such as Summerfield, Pickering and Demers have taken a broad view that the late eighteenth-century was a time of religious indoctrination and stifling rationalism. Many critics still focus their study on the more *interesting* decades of the nineteenth century, and some continue to work through theoretical approaches that seem only to work when this period of Romanticism is the starting frame of reference. Even Mitzi Myers, who in the 1980s resurrected the children's texts of the more famous Mary Wollstonecraft and Maria Edgeworth, focused primarily on proving their worth as something feminine and separate from what the male Romantics had valued. This is not to say that a feminist approach is not useful in the study of literature for young people. Nor does it deny the adult ideology inherent in any children's text. But, as both Jacqueline Rose and Perry Nodelman have argued, children's literature, and children's literary criticism, are forms of colonization. Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate the ways in which critical theory is applied, particularly to texts which are written for young readers in the eighteenth century. A deeper study of Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* reveals complex character development and an interrogation of social hierarchies. Much more than a simplistic animal story, *Mouse* is aimed at the thinking, knowing youth of the Enlightenment.

Dorothy Kilner and Her Critics

Despite being quite prolific children's writers of the 1780s, there is not much written about the Kilners. Both wrote anonymously, with Dorothy using the pen name "M.P" (for Maryland Point – where she lived) and Mary Ann using "S.S." (Spital Square), and they were, by all appearances, John Marshall's most popular authors of the 1780s. According to Samuel Pickering, of the thirty books which were featured in an advertisement for Marshall's publishing

house in 1785, fourteen were written by Dorothy Kilner, and six were written by Mary Ann (186).

In his *Children's Books in England*, Darton differentiates the Kilners' writing from that of the conservative Sarah Trimmer, saying that Mary Ann was "an observer who was not wholly lost in the moralist, any more than was her sister-in-law, the spontaneous chronicler of mice", and noting that "The Kilners, unlike Mrs Trimmer, did not suffer from the importance of philanthropy" (163). Overall, Darton's somewhat tongue-in-cheek review of the Kilners' work is positive, but brief: He highlights Mary Ann's "Pincushion masterpiece" (163), and notes that Dorothy's *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* displays "an easy freshness hardly seen until *Alice* appeared eighty years or so later" (161).

Although *Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* is probably Dorothy Kilner's most famous text, it has not been given much critical consideration. In the 1980s, when Myers drew attention to female-authored children's books of the late eighteenth century, there was suddenly an interest in reviving the conversation about these texts, but the critical theory applied was not particularly productive. In 1989, for example, Beverly Lyon Clark attempted a then-popular deconstructive reading of Dorothy Kilner's work. However, she focused solely on the lesser-known *Anecdotes of a Boarding-School; or, An Antidote to the Vices of Those Useful Seminaries* (1790), dismissing *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* as a text that "draws least attention to gaps and contradictions" due to its episodic, picaresque form which "effectively naturalizes – defuses – potential inconsistency" (Clark "Reconstructing Dorothy Kilner" 59). In 2010, Jane Spencer does consider *Mouse* in more detail, and focuses on the text as it pertains to the increased eighteenth-century interest in natural history, sympathy and the treatment of animals. Spencer's argument is that this led to a heightened concern for animal welfare in the following century,

when these children became adults. She describes the eighteenth-century association of children with animals in this way:

> Children, perceived as less rational and closer to nature than adults, were thought to have a special affinity with animals. Animal stories were intended to educate children into their full humanity, both through natural history lessons that taught them animals' and their own places in God's creation, and through the anti-cruelty message that educational theorists from John Locke onwards agreed was crucial to the production of humane citizens. (Spencer 470)

Kilner's text is often referred to in anthologies or discussions of early children's literature, but is rarely analysed critically or considered within its socio-historical context. To begin with, I would like to argue that Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* is a novel, and takes the form of an early Bildungsroman.

On Subjectivity the Bildungsroman, and Gender

Unlike Mary Ann's toy-protagonists, Nimble the mouse has a name, and experiences emotions, behavioural motives and morals of his own. In each chapter Nimble describes a different adventure: being chased by a cat, tortured by a child, trapped in a jar, lost in the snow, etc.. At first glance, the story may seem similar to her sister-in-law's "it-narratives". But Dorothy's protagonist differs from Mary Ann's because her mouse possesses agency. Whereas the pincushions and peg-tops depend on humans to move, lose, steal, sell, share, break or repair them, Nimble and his brothers venture out into the world on their own feet in a coming-of-age story containing many of the formal elements now considered characteristic of a Bildungsroman. That is, Nimble's story begins with leaving the nest, then includes a quest (in search of a lost brother), emotional loss (a brother's death), the development of friendships during his epic

journey, conflict between protagonist and society, and an ultimate understanding of his own maturity in his new life abroad.

We learn the mouse's name is "Nimble" not because he introduces himself, but because his brother addresses him later on in the text:

> 'In the meantime, do pray, Nimble' said he, addressing himself to me, 'come with me to some other place; for I long to taste some more delicate food than our mother has provided for us… (Kilner *Mouse* 16)

However, the narrator does hint at the name's suitability in her first description of him running up the side of her chair "with all the nimbleness of its species" (8).

Nimble has a name and he may possess agency, but it is stunted by his size, station and species. While, unlike the pincushion, he may move and speak on his own, Nimble's quest and coming-of-age are subject to the limitations of a rodent. Throughout his journey he must depend on the humans in his environment: from the shelter and food he is able to pilfer, to the act of writing his history. For example, the narrator describes Nimble's behaviour when he comes out of hiding, weak and starving, and his improved condition after she feeds him:

> …I had the satisfaction of seeing him eat very heartily of it; after which he seemed much refreshed, and began to move about a little more suitably to his name; for, in truth, when I first found him, no living creature in the world could appear less deserving of the appellation of Nimble. (72)

Not only is Nimble dependent on the Narrator for food and protection in this moment, he is reliant on her gaze and her description of him to attribute his name. However, it is significant that, of the four brothers, only Nimble's name reflects his subjectivity, through a representation of his quickness. The other brothers' names, Brighteyes, Softdown and Longtail carry meaning

only in how they appear to others – an indication that Nimble is a protagonist with the ability to act, learn and grow. This story, then, is one of a mouse's coming-of-age – an early Bildungsroman for a young eighteenth-century audience of thinking and knowing adolescents.

It is interesting to note that although her narrator is female, Dorothy's protagonist in this case is male. In fact, whereas Mary Ann's gendered it-narrators experienced environments and adventures meant to appeal specifically to either girl or boy readers, Dorothy's mouse experiences scenarios with an equal mixture of male and female characters and behaviours, which seems to imply that for *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*, Dorothy's intended audience was perhaps a broader one than that of her sister-in-law.

In many ways Nimble's story reads as an epic. The little mouse espouses many of the virtues expected of Kilner's middle class readers, but he also reveals some of his flaws in the text – which allows young readers to see themselves in his story. Nimble sets out on a journey to find his lost brother, and his adventures along the way are described in exciting detail. Here, he relates how he and his brothers manage to escape from the housekeeper:

> In vain we sought all round the room for some avenue whereat we might escape; the apartment was too well fitted up to admit the smallest crack, and we must then certainly have been destroyed, had we not, with uncommon presence of mind, run up the back of the lady's gown, by which means she lost sight of us, and gave us an opportunity to make our escape as she opened the door to order the cat to be brought in. We seized the lucky moment, and, dropping from her gown, fled with the utmost haste out at the house door, which happened to be wide open, and I, without once looking behind me, ran on till I discovered a little crack in the brick wall, which I entered, and which, after many turnings and windings, brought me to this house… (66)

Nodelman describes the quest as a typical coming-of-age plot development. He notes that a storyline of this nature, which focuses on leaving the nest and discovering oneself through adventure, generally differentiates literature for adolescents from literature for children, which almost always returns the child home at the end of the story (Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*, 59). *Mouse*, then, would seem to engage these adolescent readers, looking for adventure and seeing, perhaps, some reflection of themselves.

The Bildungsroman often follows this general plot trajectory. In their 1983 text *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, Abel, Hirsch and Langland argued that the prototypical Bildungsroman was masculine in nature, and that women grow and develop subjectivity not from leaving the nest and asserting independence, but from developing their community and growing their home. In *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*, Roberta Seelinger Trites notes a similarity between the domestic fiction to which Abel, Hirsch and Langland are referring, and twentieth-century children's fiction with young female characters. Kilner's *Mouse* predates any of these texts, as well as the Bildungsroman concept, which is generally accepted to have originated with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* in 1795. However, it is interesting to note that Nimble's adventures, while leading him away from his childhood nest, take him into the home and care of another. His subjectivity is therefore defined not by independence, but by community. This suggests that Kilner wrote not for specific genders, but rather for an intelligent eighteenth-century young reader, well-enough versed in the classics to understand the epic quest, yet still yearning for the comforts and support of home.

Social Hierarchy and Colonization

Much of Kilner's novel is devoted to describing the human conversations and interactions that Nimble witnesses, with class differences, rather than gender differences, being of primary

focus. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that Dorothy chose a tiny mouse to relay these messages concerning the treatment of all living things with equal civility, regardless of station in life. For example, while Nimble and his brothers hide in a food cupboard, they overhear a mother reprimanding her daughter for being rude to her Nurse:

> "Then why," rejoined Mrs. Artless, "should you speak crossly to anybody, particularly to servants and poor people? For to behave so to them, is not only cross, but insolent and proud. It is as if you thought that, because they are rather poorer, they are not so good as yourself; whereas, I assure you, poverty makes no difference in the merit of people; for those only are deserving of respect who are truly good; and a virtuous beggar is far better than a wicked prince." (Kilner *Mouse* 20)

Kilner was not the first writer to use animals as a vehicle to discuss issues of class and social hierarchies. Ana Laetitia Barbauld's wrote her poem "The Mouse's Petition" while staying with her friend, philosopher and scientist, Dr. Joseph Priestly, 1771. This was before her works for children, *Lessons for Children* in 1778, and *Hymns in Prose for Children*, in 1781. As the story goes, Priestly had been catching mice in traps around the house and using them as test subjects for various types of suffocating gases. William Turner later wrote of the incident:

> It happened that a captive was brought in after supper, too late for any experiment to be made with it that night, and the servant was desired to set it by till next morning. Next morning it was brought in after breakfast, with its petition twisted among the wires of its cage. It scarcely need be added, that the petition was successful. (Turner, " Mrs. Barbauld", *Newcastle Magazine*, 4 1825: 184, Quoted in Feldman 58)

Jane Spencer has written about the relationship between changing ideas about animals in the period and the popularity of animal it-narratives in the eighteenth-century. She reminds us of

Lynn Hunt's "empathy-altruism hypothesis" – the idea that "eighteenth-century narrative, with its concentration on encouraging the reader to identify with another's sensations, was instrumental in the development of fundamental changes to social attitudes" (8), and notes that this extended to attitudes about the treatment of animals. This assumes that "The Mouse's Petition" is a protest against the use of mice in scientific experiments. However, except for the one reference to "a free-born mouse", the following stanzas from Barbauld's poem could easily be read as a plea for universal *human* rights – an argument of particular significance during this time of class unrest in Europe and the abolitionist movement in England:

> If e'er thy breast with freedom glow'd,
>
> And spurn'd a tyrant's chain,
>
> Let not thy strong oppressive force
>
> A free-born mouse detain.
>
> …
>
> The well taught philosophic mind
>
> To all compassion gives;
>
> Casts round the world an equal eye,
>
> And feels for all that lives.
>
> …
>
> Beware, lest in the worm you crush
>
> A brother's soul you find;
>
> And tremble lest thy luckless hand
>
> Dislodge a kindred mind.
>
> …

Or, if this transient gleam of day

Be *all* of life we share,

Let pity plead within thy breast

That little *all* to spare.

…

Kathryn Ready argues that Barbauld was more likely writing about the relationship between rich and poor, but that her critics, and those of Priestly, commonly associated the poem with animal cruelty. In Ready's opinion:

> The critical reception of the poem succeeded not only in burying her liberal Dissenting agenda, but also in allying her with Priestley's political enemies and arguably fueling the feeling that later culminated in the 1791 Church and King riots. As such, "The Mouse's Petition" marks an important case study in the historical reception of women's writing about animals, warning against a tendency towards distortion and simplification. (93)

Male readers and critics have regularly dismissed women's writing of the period as unpolitical. However, the idea that texts written by women were often simplified by their critics is an interesting one here, because it causes us to reconsider texts for young readers, such as *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse,* as allegories of human society and therefore a platform for the writers' social critiques. That is, texts about animals are probably never really just about animals. Harriet Ritvo has even gone so far as to point out that the hierarchical arrangements in children's scientific texts and natural histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could be interpreted as allegories and justifications of the hierarchies of human society (Ritvo *Learning from Animals*). However, in the case of women's writing, the possibility that a text about animals could be read beyond its face value is often overlooked. Where Kilner's critics

generally praised *Mouse* as a delightful work for children, none have considered it as a reflection of her social ideologies.

Tess Cosslett notes that social hierarchy can be addressed differently in children's literature, depending on the various political persuasions of their writers. She argues, for example, that Thomas Day uses animal stories to even the playing field, whereas Mary Wollstonecraft reinforces the hierarchy to show that children are only slightly above animals – likely to elevate grown-up women (Cosslett 41). Spencer argues that Kilner's text, like Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, advises children "to be kind to animals as the only creatures over whom they have power, and where that kindness itself will separate them from the objects of it" (476). This suggests that Kilner's aim was to enforce a type of social hierarchy – elevating and defining her readers as middle-class, by encouraging a shared value of practicing kindness to those below. This is interesting in a time of political unrest and resistance to the aristocracy, particularly among the rising labouring classes in France and the United States. While Kilner's text supports universal benevolence, it does make clear arguments for children to value middle-class ideology over behaviours considered typical at either end of the social spectrum. The aristocracy is represented as wasteful and cruel, and the lower classes represented as wild and uneducated.

Kilner's writing, like that of Barbauld, should be unpacked beyond its face-value and investigated as the politically-charged work that it is. According to Johanna M. Smith, "Children's literature might reflect or maintain dominant ideologies, but it might also shape or undermine dominant ideologies, by offering children tools for reappraising their social and political situation" (175). Smith argues, for example, that a close reading of Patricia Wakefield's children's geographies and travel books reveals her criticism of the slave trade and her support of

the abolitionist movement. Dorothy Kilner shared this line of thinking. Her 1786 children's novel *The Rotchfords*, which includes a large section about the experiences of an escaped slave boy, educates her young readers about the injustices of racial prejudice and she criticizes the slave trade severely:

> Nor can it be wondered at, when they poor wretches, are torn from every comfort, from freedom, country, relatives and friends, bound and forced by cruel whippings on board of vessels, and carried off from every thing they hold dear and valuable in life; - when the parent is torn from his family, the father from his child, the husband from his wife, the child from its parent, and separated under the agonizing idea that it is not only for ever, but that it is to become, to be sold, the slave of a foreign, distant and cruel master; When every tie that God and nature has sacredly cemented is thus torn asunder, and all by white men professing themselves Christians, can it be wondered at, that they should imbibe the strongest prejudices against the whole race of whites… (259-60)

In this latter half of the eighteenth century, the high traffic of slaves by British traders raised economic, political and moral concerns. Antislavery sentiment was expressed by the literary community in the form of abolitionist campaign texts, fiction and poetry. For example, at the request of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1788, Hannah More composed "Slavery: A Poem", which was then widely circulated by anti-slavery committees.

More's text denounces the trading of human beings, and she evokes empathy from her readers through a graphic description of kidnappings and transport:

> Whene'er to Afric's shores I turn my eyes,
>
> Horrors of deepest, deadliest guilt arise;
>
> I see, by more than fancy's mirror shown,

> The burning village, and the blazing town:
>
> See the dire victim torn from social life,
>
> The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!
>
> She, wretch forlorn! is dragged by hostile hands,
>
> To distant tyrants sold, in distant lands!
>
> Transmitted miseries, and successive chains,
>
> The sole sad heritage her child obtains!
>
> Ev'n this last wretched boon their foes deny,
>
> To weep together, or together die.
>
> By felon hands, by one relentless stroke,
>
> See the fond links of feeling nature broke!
>
> The fibres twisting round a parent's heart,
>
> Torn from their grasp, and bleeding as they part.
>
> (More 832)

As Jane Spencer has noted, eighteenth-century literature, with its concentration on encouraging the reader to identify with another's sensations, was instrumental in the development of fundamental changes to social attitudes (476). She links this to Adam Smith's understanding of sympathy as an act of imaginative projection of the self into another's sufferings" (474):

> Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations… By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we

> conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him. (Smith, Adam 2)

In her attempt to arouse sympathy from her readers for her little mice, Kilner takes a similar approach to More. Using Nimble's first-person descriptions of the events, she enables readers to put themselves in his place. When the authors feels her readers' imaginations may need some assistance, she utilizes human characters in the story to fill in gaps. For example, when a little boy tortures and suspends Brighteyes by his tail over a hungry cat, Kilner spells out her lesson through the boy's father's admonishment:

> …every action that is cruel, and gives pain to any living creature, is wicked, and is a sure sign of a bad heart. I never knew a man who was cruel to animals kind and compassionate towards his fellow-creatures; he might not, perhaps, treat them in the same shocking manner, because the laws of the land would severely punish him if he did; but if he be restrained from bad actions by no higher motive than fear of present punishment, his goodness cannot be very great. A good man, Charles, always takes delight in conferring happiness on all around him; nor would he offer the smallest injury to the meanest insect that was capable of feeling… (34)

The father then whips the boy as punishment. And when the boy cries that he does not like to be hurt this way, the father replies:

> "Neither did the mouse," replied his father, "like at all to be tied to a string, and swung about by its tail; he did not like it, and told you so in a language which you perfectly well understood; but you would not attend to its cries: you thought it pleasure to hear it squeak, because you were bigger, and did not feel its torture. I am now bigger than you,

> and do not feel your pain. I therefore shall not yet leave off, as I hope it will teach you not to torment anything another time."(35)

The lesson to her readers then is not simply to value the traditional "golden rule". Kilner's readers are encouraged to understand that power imbalances do exist – but they should not be exploited or used to inflict pain on others. Similarly, while More's agenda in "Slavery: A Poem" may be to evoke sympathy from her readers for the plight of the enslaved, and thereby to support the abolitionist movement, she does not promote social equality. Her descriptions of the African people as wild and uneducated indicate clearly that she does not place them on par with her middle class readers:

> What wrongs, what injuries does oppression plead
> To smooth the horror of th'unnatural deed?
> What strange offence, what aggravated sin?
> They stand convicted – of a darker skin!
> Barbarians, hold! th'opprobious commerce spare,
> Respect his sacred image which they bear:
> Though dark and savage, ignorant and blind,
> They claim the common privilege of kind;
> Let Malice strip them of each other plea,
> They still are men, and men should still be free.
> (More 832)

While More encouraged empathy for the African people and wrote about freedom for all men, she was not necessarily writing about racial equality. That is, the abolitionist movement does not negate the fact that late eighteenth-century imperialism continued to support a power

imbalance between races – a hierarchy of colonizer presiding over the colonized. Out of this thinking grew efforts to "civilize" colonized groups through religious evangelism and education in the decades to follow. Kilner's mouse too is civilized through his domestication. He learns to trust the narrator for food and protection, and even the dictation of his story is a form of literacy and education. He leaves the nest as an animal, the story of his life is full of the dangers a wild creature must suffer, and his survival depends on the very basic necessities of life: food and shelter. As he is domesticated and educated by the Narrator, he becomes civilized and his life is made easier.

Perry Nodelman suggests that adult writers of children's books have consistently supported the civilizing mission first undertaken by these early authors for children. In his latest text, *The Hidden Adult*, Nodelman argues that, since children's literature as we know it was developed during this imperialist period, the colonizing ideology that was dominant at the time seeped into children's texts as well (272). Just as Britain, as an imperialist power, dominated and colonized nations around the world, so too do adults dominate and colonize childhood. The child is represented as the opposite of the adult: wild, uneducated, naive, unsophisticated, innocent. But it doesn't end there, because the imperialist's mission of civilizing the "savages" of colonized countries is mirrored also in the adult agenda to "civilize" the child in children's texts. The child is expected, after all, to grow up. To want to become an adult. Nodelman's language evokes Kipling's *The White Man's Burden* when he points out the colonial ideology that is inherent in children's literature, saying with irony: "of course, a major responsibility of power is to work to teach that which is other, opposite, and inferior to learn better, to cease to be other, to become more like you" (68). In *Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*, Kilner evokes sympathy to encourage kindness and benevolence toward animals, younger siblings, servants and

people of the lower classes – but her mission to 'colonize' the child reader as the Narrator colonizes Nimble.

On Sympathy and the Novel

While some critics may argue that the anti-slavery writing of the period simply encourages readers "to objectify the victims of slavery and indulge in the self-congratulatory pleasures of pitying them," Jane Spencer argues that children's animal stories are "too committed to the cause of rational education to indulge in excesses of sentiment" (Spencer 476). Yet, Kilner's novel goes beyond the typical 'rational education' Spencer refers to, and incorporates depictions of great emotion. Nimble experiences thrill, adventure, horror and heartbreak, eliciting empathy from his readers. Here, he describes witnessing his brother's capture, torture and death:

> Softdown, who, till the thread was tied, had patiently continued perfectly quiet, could no longer support the pain without dismal cries and anguish; he squeaked as loud as his little throat would let him, exerting at the same time the utmost of his strength to disengage himself. But in such a position, with his head downward, in vain were all his efforts to procure relief; and the barbarous monster who held him discovered not the smallest emotions of pity for his sufferings…and I had the inexpressible affliction of seeing the inhuman wretch hold him down upon the hearth, whilst, without remorse, he crushed him beneath his foot, and then carelessly kicked him into the ashes… My own blood runs cold within me at the recollection of seeing Softdown's, as it spirted from beneath the monster's foot, whilst the crunch of his bones almost petrified me with horror. (Kilner *Mouse* 27)

Young eighteenth-century readers, many of whom who had likely seen or helped the household staff trap and kill mice, would appreciate the realism of the scenario. And the gothic-inspired descriptions of crunching bones and spurting blood would thrill even Kilner's least sympathetic

readers. Interestingly, Nimble's description of his brother's killer as a "barbarous monster" and "inhuman wretch" indicates that, from the mouse's perspective, a creature lacking sympathy or remorse cannot be human. Young readers were encouraged to be considerate of others, particularly those who are below them in the social hierarchy – whether it be due to age, class, gender or species.

Certainly, after Rousseau, children and animals were increasingly considered to have a close relationship. As Jane Spencer comments: "Children, perceived as less rational and closer to nature than adults, were thought to have a special affinity with animals" (470). Spencer goes on to assert that the eighteenth-century discourse on sensibility began to assert the right of non-human animals to consideration, and that these two factors combined led to early Romantic interest in the natural world and animal activism (470). But while later Romantic texts, as Spencer suggests, may have leveraged this relationship for the prevention of animal cruelty, Kilner surely recognized that stories from an animal's perspective engaged child readers at least in part because the two share a similar voicelessness and dependence in the adult world. In her examination of eighteenth-century animal stories, Spencer notes:

> …they regularly drew on works of natural history that disseminated new observations of animals' forms and habits and sometimes upheld, sometimes questioned, the line dividing 'man' and beast… they entered the debate about animals' mental capacities then being conducted in terms of animals as machines versus animals as sentient beings and instinct versus capacity for reason, and replaced in our own time by behaviourists and mentalists discussing the question of animal cognition. They took part in the incomplete but significant shift in animal representation from the fabular, the allegorical and the satirical to the naturalistic, the empathetic and the inwardly focused. In particular, they pioneered

> narrative attempts to imagine the subjective experience of non-human animals. Drawing on the various techniques being developed by novelists from Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson onwards to represent 'fictional minds', they applied them to the narrative creation of animal minds. (Spencer 471)

Spencer then notes: "It is through the narrator's sympathetic identification with his brother's feelings that the suffering of a mouse is made significant, while the child reader is encouraged through a similar act of imagination to respond both to Softdown and Nimble as if they were brothers, by extension of the concept of kin to the mouse" (476). If children are not inherently closer to animals, the connection is certainly encouraged by authors such as Kilner, who evokes sympathy from her readers' imagination for the plight of her furry little protagonist.

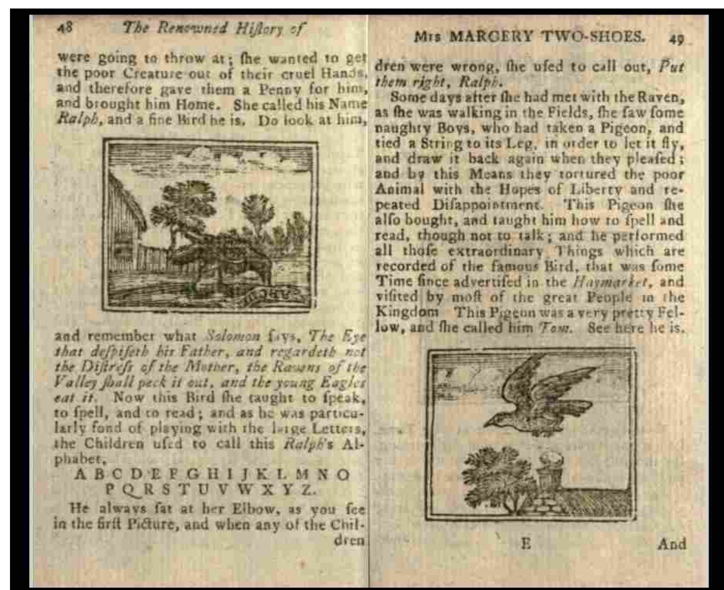
Dialogue, Morality and Learning from Animals

While the Kilners' stories are often considered together, it is important to note that Dorothy's text differs from the it-narratives of her sister-in-law because her animal-protagonist and human narrator engage in dialogue. While Mary Ann's pincushions and peg-tops are able to somehow write their own narratives, but are unable to speak to humans, Nimble the mouse recounts his adventures to the narrator. The narrator's ability to understand and converse with the mouse is not shared by the other humans in the story, but it is an indicator of her inherent goodness.

> "Will you write my history?" You may be sure I was much surprised to be so addressed by such an animal; but, ashamed of discovering any appearance of astonishment, lest the mouse should supposed it had frightened me, I answered, with the utmost composure, that I would write it willingly, if it would dictate to me. "Oh, that I will do," replied the mouse, "if you will not hurt me." "Not for the world," returned I. "Come, therefore, and sit upon

my table, that I may hear more distinctly what you have to relate." It instantly accepted by invitation, and with all the nimbleness of its species, ran up the side of my chair, and jumped upon my table; when, getting into a box of wafers, it began as follows. (Kilner *Mouse* 8)

Margery Two Shoes' inherent "Goodness" is represented in her magical attraction and acquisition of animals as she becomes a successful teacher. At her school she walks "about with the raven on one shoulder, the pigeon on the other, the lark on her hand, and the lamb and the dog by her side" (Newbery, *Goody*, 81), and she teaches them to read. Many of the accompanying woodcut illustrations in the book therefore depict animals. Perhaps Newbery, who may well have written the story, was simply making use of stock printer's images on hand from the many educational books he published. Whether the animal appearances in *Goody Two-Shoes* represent a business decision, or exploit the prominence of animals in children's books, or signify Goody's goodness, they add a dimension to the story for readers to see and discuss, even when these details do not seem to fit the rest of the story (Brown 356).



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were going to throw at; ſhe wanted to get the poor Creature out of their cruel Hands, and therefore gave them a Penny for him, and brought him Home. She called his Name *Ralph*, and a fine Bird he is. Do look at him,

and remember what *Solomon* ſays, *The Eye that deſpiſeth his Father, and regardeth not the Diſtreſs of the Mother, the Ravens of the Valley ſhall peck it out, and the young Eagles eat it.* Now this Bird ſhe taught to ſpeak, to ſpell, and to read; and as he was particularly fond of playing with the large Letters, the Children uſed to call this *Ralph*'s Alphabet,

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z.

He always ſat at her Elbow, as you ſee in the firſt Picture, and when any of the Children

Mrs MARGERY TWO-SHOES. 49

dren were wrong, ſhe uſed to call out, *Put them right, Ralph.*

Some days after ſhe had met with the Raven, as ſhe was walking in the Fields, ſhe ſaw ſome naughty Boys, who had taken a Pigeon, and tied a String to its Leg, in order to let it fly, and draw it back again when they pleaſed; and by this Means they tortured the poor Animal with the Hopes of Liberty and repeated Diſappointment. This Pigeon ſhe alſo bought, and taught him how to ſpell and read, though not to talk; and he performed all thoſe extraordinary Things which are recorded of the famous Bird, that was ſome Time ſince advertiſed in the *Haymarket*, and viſited by moſt of the great People in the Kingdom. This Pigeon was a very pretty Fellow, and ſhe called him *Tom*. See here he is.

E And

Figure 10 Margery Two Shoes rescues and teaches Ralph the Raven and Tom the Pigeon to read, in a 1785 edition of The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes. Courtesy of The Internet Archive.

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continue Fools all their Days. The whole World ought to be made acquainted with her Caſe, and here it is at their Service.

The Caſe of Mrs MARGERY.

Mrs *Margery*, as we have frequently obſerved, was always doing Good, and thought ſhe could never ſufficiently gratify thoſe who had done any Thing to ſerve her. Theſe generous Sentiments naturally led her to conſult the Intereſt of Mr *Grove*, and the reſt of her Neighbours; and as moſt of their Lands were Meadow, and they depended much on their Hay, which had been for many Years greatly damaged by wet Weather, ſhe contrived an Inſtrument to direct them when to mow their Graſs with Safety, and prevent their Hay being ſpoiled. They all came to her for Advice, and by that Means got in their Hay without Damage, while moſt of that in the neighbouring Villages was ſpoiled.

This made a great Noiſe in the Country, and ſo provoked were the People in the other Pariſhes, that they accuſed her of being a Witch, and ſent *Gaffer Gooſecap*, a buſy Fellow in other People's Concerns, to find out Evidence againſt her. This Wiſeacre happened to come to her School, when ſhe was walking about with the Raven on one Shoulder, the Pigeon on the other, the Lark

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on her Hand, and the Lamb and the Dog by her Side; which indeed made a droll Figure, and ſo ſurprized the Man, that he cried out, A Witch! a Witch! upon this ſhe, laughing, anſwered, A Conjurer! a Conjurer! and ſo they parted; but it did not end thus, for a Warrant was iſſued out againſt Mrs *Margery*, and ſhe was carried to a Meeting of the Juſtices, whither all the Neighbours followed her.

At the Meeting, one of the Juſtices, who knew little of Life, and leſs of the Law, behaved very idly; and though no Body was able to prove any Thing againſt her, aſked, who ſhe could bring to her Character? *Who can you bring againſt my Character, Sir*, ſays ſhe.——There are People enough who would appear in my Defence, were it neceſſary; but I

Figure 11 Mrs. Margery Two Shoes, with her animal friends about her, from a 1785 edition of The History of Little Goody Two Shoes. Courtesy of The Internet Archive.

It should be noted that the adult Margery is accused of being a witch as a result of her closeness to animals. However, she takes down her accusers with the comment: "…you will find, that the true Source from whence Witchcraft springs is *Poverty, Age* and *Ignorance;* and that it is impossible for a Woman to pass for a Witch unless she is *very poor, very old* and lives in a Neighbourhood where the People are *void of common Sense*" (83). Goody Two Shoes is as much about class prejudices as it is about literacy.

Like Goody Two Shoes, heroines of fairy tales have often been depicted as being close to animals. Bettelheim points out that in many versions of Cinderella, for example, Cinderella's goodness is represented by her friendship with birds and mice (253-258). This perhaps is drawn from the idea that animals are more innocent or pure, closer to the earth and perhaps therefore even wiser than men. Many texts featuring animal mascots or, like Kilner's, animal protagonists, imply that humans can learn from the animals around us. Some of the earliest examples would

undoubtedly be the fables of Aesop, which were highly popular in the mid-eighteenth century due, in part, to Samuel Richardson's translation published in 1740.

Tom Keymer's study of *Pamela*'s intertextual references to Aesop's fables draws our attention to the fact that Richardson produced this edition of the fables in the same year that he published *Pamela.* Keymer counts references to four fables in *Pamela*, but of particular interest here is her direct reference to "City Mouse and Country Mouse". Pamela compares her own constant feeling of jumpiness with that of the little mice in the fable while they are at court. After being terrified mid-snack by a crew of noisy servants, the Country Mouse exclaims: "Well! My court sister, says she, if this be the sauce to your rich meats, I will even back to my cottage, and my mouldy cheese again; for I had much rather lie nibbling of crusts, without fear or hazard in my own hold, than be mistress of all the delicates in the world, and subject to such terrifying alarms and dangers" (Aesop 9).

The moral of this well-known tale takes many forms over the centuries, depending on the edition. However, in most instances the mice simply decide that the grass is not always greener, or "to each his own". Richardson's adaptation, on the other hand, leaves no doubt for his young readers. His scathing reflection of the perils of court which follows the fable is longer than the tale itself, and begins as follows:

> How infinitely superior are the delights of a private life to the noise and bustle of a public one! Innocence, security, meditation, good air, health and unbroken rest, are the blessing of the one; while the rages of lust and wine, noise, hurry, circumvention, falsehood, treachery, confusion, and ill health, are the constant attendants of the other…to say nothing of the innumerable temptations, vices and excesses of a life of pomp and pleasure… (Aesop 9)

Pamela, of course, echoes these sentiments. Mr. B represents a life of rakish, aristocratic, excess. For the heroine, and for Richardson, there is virtue in the simplicity of poverty. This sentiment carries throughout the century – particularly in literature for young women. Conduct manuals of the period insist that only a quiet, private, industrious upbringing will render morally respectable, middle-class young women. And it is precisely this audience of quiet, privately educated young women that Marshall's authors were addressing in the late eighteenth century. With their texts competing alongside gothic romances and early adventure novels, the ideology that we would all be better off safe at home is clearly laid out in black and white.

Like Richardson's Country Mouse, Kilner's mouse also laments having given in to the temptations of indulgence. After leaving their comfortable country home in search of more interesting food, Nimble and his brother are discovered by servants. Softdown is enticed into a trap by a particularly special bit of gourmet cheese and killed. In this sense, Kilner's moral is even more gruesome than Richardson's: covet something that is above your station and you will eventually be squashed under foot.

> "When," said I, addressing myself to my brother, "when shall we grow wise, and learn to know that certain evil always attends every deviation from what is right? When we disobeyed the advice of our mother, and, tempted by cakes and other dainties, frequently returned to the same dangerous place, how severely did we suffer for it! And now, by our own discontent, and not being satisfied when so safely though more humbly lodged, into what trouble have we not plunged ourselves? How securely have we lived in the barn for the last seven months, and how happily might we still have continued there, and it not been for our restless dispositions? Ah! My brother, we have acted foolishly. We ought to have been contented when we were at peace and should have considered that if we had

not everything we could wish for, we had everything that was necessary; and the life of a mouse was never designed for perfect happiness. Such enjoyment was never intended for our lot; it is the portion only of beings whose capacities are far superior to ours. We ought, then, to have been contented, and, had we been so, we should have been as happy as our state of life can admit of." (Kilner *Mouse* 58)

Authors such as Kilner generally linked morality with middle-class values. But perfectly moral protagonists, such as Newbery's Goody Two-Shoes, have, compared with the more developed characters of later novels, often been considered somewhat two-dimensional to modern readers. Deidre Lynch has further argued, however, that writers of fiction, specifically fiction for children, early in the eighteenth century, were less interested in character interiority and depth than in legibility and outward appearances. Lynch also argues that by the turn of the century, moral exemplarity in novels gave way to the development of sympathy of readers for a text's characters. Authors did this, she notes, by creating characters with believable faults as well as virtues, who struggled internally with moral dilemmas. This interiority supported readers' identification with characters, and became the novel's prime concern as a literary form. Jackie Horne suggests that while early on in the century children's authors worked to distance their work from the novel form, which conservative pedagogues considered highly suspect, specifically with regard to women and the lower classes, by the end of the 18th century, writers for children were finding ways to use the form, discovering that the readers' sympathy and identification with less-than-perfect, believable characters proved an effective way to deliver their didactic messages.

Still, the possibility that young readers may identify *too* closely with a mouse-hero, or take his adventures *too* literally is evidently still a concern. To remedy this, Dorothy takes great care

in the Introduction to inform her little readers, in case there could be any confusion, that her story is fiction: "But, before I proceed to relate my new little companion's history, I must beg leave to assure my readers, that *in earnest*, I never heard a mouse speak in all my life; and only wrote the following narrative as being far more entertaining, and not less instructive, than my own life would have been" (Kilner *Mouse* 8).

Dorothy Kilner, like Mary Ann, Ellenor Fenn and even Sarah Fielding, chose to avail herself of romantic and fairy tale influences while still keeping the text morally didactic. However, some more conservative authors and critics did not necessarily approve of the romance, adventure, or heightened aspirations of the protagonists in fairy tales. Sarah Trimmer, known for her reviews in *The Guardian of Education*, reviewed *Primrose Prettyface* (a Goody Two Shoes knock-off, in which the heroine rises to riches through literacy): "Without such a conclusion of the story, we should think this a very proper book of amusement for children; but it certainly is very wrong to teach girls of the lower order to aspire to marriages with persons in stations so far superior to their own, or to put into the heads of young gentlemen, at an early age, an idea, that when they grow up they may, without impropriety, marry servant-maids" (Trimmer *Guardian* 436). Trimmer preferred modest tales promoting middle-class values, not Cinderella stories which glorified the upper classes. The ideal middle-class child would also be respectful of her place in society – she does not aspire to anything that is too great.

Literacy and Middle-Class Youth

Just as Ian Watt aligned the rise of the novel with the rise of the middle class (Watt 48), Andrew O'Malley aligns the rise of children's literature in the eighteenth century with the rise of the middle class and the desire to inculcate middle-class values in child readers (O'Malley 1). These values include a willingness to work hard, to learn to read and write, to lead honest, moral

lives and to share one's education with others. As such, the protagonists of popular stories such as *Goody Two-Shoes* and *Primrose Prettyface*, unlike Cinderella, proved their worth by more than mere industry, obedience and luck. "It was their scholarship which earned them the love and esteem of their parents and their peers, which got them noticed by their social superiors, and which eventually resulted in their social advancement" (Grenby, *Hockcliffe*). Rational education and critical thinking were idealized in early children's literature as the paving stones of the path to success.

The eighteenth century saw an increased interest in rational education, learning and critical thinking, which resulted in a rise in literacy rates in England. As most children's literature historians agree, many parents and educators were inspired by Locke's theories of education and followed his advice to make reading an enjoyable activity for children. In his *Some Thoughts on Education*, Locke advises that "as soon as [the child] begins to spell, as many Pictures of Animals should be got him, as can be found, with the printed names to them, which at the same time will invite him to read, and afford him Matter of Enquiry and Knowledge" (259-60, section 156). Pedagogues and publishers in the century to follow took Locke's advice, decorating their printed materials with woodblock cuts of animals – only sometimes relevant to the text itself. In Gillian Brown's study of Locke's recommendations, she even notes a resulting influence in art of the period, commenting: "In eighteenth-century painting, the pedagogical importance of animals for children translates into the vogue of pairing children with animals, as if animals are child familiars or aspects of children" (353). Children's literature of the latter part of the eighteenth century commonly depicted animals and children together. A closeness and kindness toward animals was a key indication that the protagonist espouses desirable, middle-class values, and would display a similar benevolence toward the less fortunate. *Goody Two*

Shoes is a prime example, as the heroine not only achieves education for herself, but then manages to share her wealth of knowledge with others – including her animal friends. As Patricia Crain notes: "Directly addressing the new child of vernacular pedagogy and satirizing classical learning, *Goody* represents the alphabet as universally available, even to the most abject; nature itself, in the person of Goody's mascots, seems to want to distribute the alphabet freely" (231).

Literacy, in eighteenth-century terms, may have meant more reading than writing, but the increased numbers of published readers, school texts and children's books focusing on rational education indicates there was a clear upward trend in a structured approach to teaching children of all social levels to read – generally with the understanding that, like *Goody*, education led to social improvement. "In *Goody*, literacy is meant to be an inalienable property that can be absorbed into the person, supplementing the Lockean formulation that a person has "property in himself," and extending this entitlement to the smallest orphan girl". According to Crain, this non-material property "offers a purchase for subjectivity, especially for those for whom other forms of property, perhaps even especially property in the self, are problematic – the dispossessed, women, children, the poor, slaves" (232).

She will never be queen, but through learning to read, Goody Two Shoes becomes self-sufficient and earns a living and an estate. Matthew Grenby notes, "the promise of riches through learning was central to the marketing strategy of children's literature, as developed by John Newbery and continued by John Marshall. Just as it was expected that Cinderella would marry a prince, so it was necessary that Primrose Prettyface would become Lady of the Manor" (*Hockcliffe*). Of course, just as we have seen in Richardson's *Pamela*, the concept of literacy being the key ingredient to social betterment is not restricted to children's literature. In her study

of *Goody Two-Shoes* Patricia Crain highlights the popularity of the theme as well as the experimentation that was happening in the field: “Like other children’s books of the time, *Goody* cannibalizes genres: satire, mock epic, ghost story, fairy tale, primer, courtesy or conduct book, picaresque, fable, adventure. *Goody* shares with other “adult” eighteenth-century novels the riches – (or at least competency)- to rages- to riches trajectory, and an episodic, digressive narrative, and even contains a mini-novel (a twelve-page *Vicar of Wakefield*-like-tale), as though advertising the genre to the next generation of consumers” (215). In fact, reading and the improvement of one’s mind through literacy is truly a type of marketing in itself. In her discussion of eighteenth-century children’s publishing and product placement, Lissa Paul points out that “Education is not above a kind of commercial promise, as it is fundamentally supposed to produce a ‘better’ (somehow new and improved, more socially acceptable) person” (32). It seems that, from its earliest development, children’s literature and marketing have always gone hand-in-hand, with the target audience being the educated youth of the rising, financially and socially powerful, middle-class.

Sarah Trimmer argued that education should be gendered and class-specific, but believed that middle-class values were important for children of all classes to emulate. In her children’s book, *Fabulous Histories*, the Robins, representing a lower-middle-class family, display values of industriousness and contentment with their lot, while the middle-class children are encouraged to treat them with benevolence, but not too much charity, lest the Robins should forget their place, or become indolent and lazy (like the lapdog). Aristocratic excess is also criticized in her text, however, in the boys who engage in cockfighting, and other wasteful, inconsiderate activities. “Happy would it be for the animal creation, if every human being, like good Mrs. Benson, consulted the welfare of inferior creatures, and neither spoiled them by indulgence, nor

injured them by tyranny! Happy would mankind be, if every one, like her, acted in conformity to the will of their Maker; by cultivating in their own minds, and those of their children, the *divine principle* of UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE" (Trimmer 214).

As Jane Spencer has noted, "In the Aesopian tradition animals stand for something else, usually some aspect of human behaviour, and their fables are the vehicle for moral warnings of political satire" (471); as such, Trimmer's stories also invite a metaphorical reading of the characters' behaviour, and often her Robin family's actions parallel those of the human family in her text. While Trimmer's message in *Fabulous Histories* may be meant to promote rational-thinking, middle-class family values, and kind behaviour toward animals, she makes use of fairy tale elements and romantic sensibility to engage her young audience. For example, when Mother and Father Robin say good-bye to their adolescent children who are about to leave the nest, Father Robin's speech is sober and clear in its middle-class expectations:

> You must be sensible, my dear young ones, that, from the time you left the egg-shell till the present instant, both your mother and I have nourished you with the tenderest love. We have taught you all the arts of life which are necessary to procure your subsistence, and preserve you from danger. We have shewn you a variety of characters in the different classes of birds, and pointed out those which are to be shunned. You must now shift for yourselves: but before we part, let me repeat my admonition, to use industry, avoid contention, cultivate peace, and be contented with your condition. Let none of your own species excel you in any amiable quality, for want of your endeavours to equal the best; and do your duty in every relation of life, as we have done ours by you. To the gay scenes of levity and dissipation prefer a calm retirement, for there is the greatest degree of happiness to be found… (Trimmer 201-2)

However, Trimmer's Mother Robin, who originates from a lower class background and who has little education, says goodbye to her children by evoking the heroine speeches of popular romantic fiction of the period:

> Adieu, ye dear objects of my late cares and solicitude! May ye never more stand in need of a mother's assistance! Though nature now dismisses me from the arduous task which I have long daily performed, I rejoice not, but would gladly continue my toil, for the sake of its attendant pleasures. O! delightful sentiments of maternal love, how can I part with you? Let me, my nestlings, give you a last embrace. (Trimmer 202-3)

The contrast between these speeches indicates clearly to young readers which of the parents' behaviours should be emulated. Excessive sentiment is represented as feminine, lower class, and verges on the ridiculous, while reason and adherence to duty are demonstrated as masculine and middle-class traits. Even more clear is the contrast between the domestic and external spheres. Mother Robin describes her sentiment from the domestic perspective – the home she will never leave. Her baby birds are leaving the nest and she will remain there with no children left to care for. The resulting speech is guilt-inflicting and veers toward selfish. Whereas Father Robin imparts his goodbye wishes through a description of their future adult life – and the value they will add as outside of the maternal home.

Eight-year-old Marjorie Flemings's journals comment on a wide variety of texts that she was reading with her teenage cousin and governess, and indicate that the books selected for her reading combine gothic romances with other, perhaps more conservative fiction, such as Shakespeare's plays, the Spectator, poetry by Pope and Scott, Tomson's *Seasons*, More's Cheap Repository tracts, and popular children's tales by Maria Edgeworth ("Miss Egwards tails") and Sarah Trimmer. In some cases, Marjory's descriptions are quite detailed and, from them,

contemporary readers can begin to understand the eighteenth-century child's reception of these texts. For example, Marjory writes of Trimmer's work: "I like to read the Fabulous historys about the historys of Robin Dickey flapsay & Peccay & it is very amuseing for some were good birds and others bad but Peccay was the most dutifull & obedient to her parents" (Fleming 5). Marjory's writing was overseen by her cousin and governess Isabella, and sometimes her words are edited to meet with Isabella's approval. For this reason it is difficult to tell if Marjory's seeming preference for "Peccay" and her dutiful behaviour are written simply to satisfy the insistence of her teacher. It is likely – based on Marjory's description of the book as "amuseing" because of both the good and bad birds – that she enjoyed the adventures of the Robins more so than the didactic messages of the humans in the text.

The Romantic authors in the years that followed felt that, if left in a natural state, unburdened by adult restriction or education, and allowed to run "wild" so to speak, the child's imagination was something to be celebrated, cherished and protected. Grenby and Reynolds note that "the increasingly popular Romantic conception of the child is a figure with both a heightened emotional sense and close connection of the state of nature" (190). The Romantic child was considered to be at its most innocent in its wild state -- in a Garden of Eden, as yet untouched by the demon of experience or the "civilization" of the adult world. In Emile, Rousseau rejects the doctrine of original sin, arguing that humankind's first, natural impulses were always innocent and good, and that only exposure to the wickedness of the outside world would lead to a child's downfall. He writes that "the first impulses of nature are always right" (66) and implores mothers to cultivate their children in isolation to preserve their natural innocence – even using botanical metaphors to deliver his message:

> It is to you that I address myself, tender and foresighted mother, who are capable of keeping the nascent shrub away from the highway and securing it from the impact of human opinions! Cultivate and water the young plant before it dies. Its fruits will one day be your delights. Form an enclosure around your child's soul at an early date. Someone else can draw its circumference, but you alone must build the fence. (38)

Rousseau's innocent child was considered closest to nature. Kipling's *Jungle Book*, for example, arose out of this kind of thinking. For Kipling, the child character, Mowgli, can represent this natural childhood innocence as well as the "savage" Indian. Both, he suggests, begin in this natural, wild, imaginative state, but must be "civilized" to become respectable, middle-class adults. Kipling, like Kilner, appears to suggest that this act of civilization, of "colonization" as the responsibility, or burden, if you will, of the adult author.

Chapter 4

Talking Girls: Teenage Dialogue, Humour, and Subjectivity in Ellenor Fenn's School Stories for Girls

I see the writer flirt her ink about with a satirical grin

-- Ellenor Fenn, *School Occurrences*

While it is generally accepted that the concept of the "teenager" is a twentieth century construct, it is evident through differences in register, complexity of language, and content, that the authors writing for Marshall's publishing house had identified adolescent girls as a distinct audience. Ellenor Fenn, who will be the subject of this chapter, even wrote under two separate pen-names – perhaps to distinguish her work for older readers from that of the younger set. Her reading primers and games for young children, for example, were often published under the pseudonym "Mrs. Lovechild", while her texts addressing adolescent girls on themes of education, behaviour, courtship and marriage were narrated by "Mrs. Teachwell" and "Mrs. Foresight".

One approach that has often been used to garner the attention and interest of adolescent girls was to use forms and devices that had been traditionally considered feminine, such as highlighting mother/daughter relationships and female communities, and mimicking oral storytelling techniques. But Ellenor Fenn was subversive for her use of fairy tale and gothic features in her texts, both genres being popular in the period with adolescent girls, though disapproved of by most conservative pedagogues at the time, including Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More, as we have seen. Furthermore, Fenn was unique in her conscious appropriation of teenage "snark", and appropriated teenage dialogue in such an early text for young women. Her attribution of a voice to these young characters suggests a particular interest in, and celebration

of, adolescence that is not seen again until the young adult fiction of the latter half of the twentieth century. Fenn's deliberate copying of teenage register is a technique that she may have been the first to exploit in order to encourage narrative intimacy with her readers.

On Mothers as the First Teacher

In the last two decades of the 18th century, Fenn produced several texts for adolescent girls which focused on mother-daughter relationships, and on the development of community. In the prefaces of her many books, Fenn regularly stresses the importance of a mother being the primary educator of the children in the family whenever possible. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* Locke suggested that servants and the lower classes were superstitious, unfit teachers – a sentiment that is echoed by pedagogues throughout the century. But Fenn's work reflects the century's increasing interest in motherly affection, and suggests that acting as primary caregiver and educator is the only proof of this love. She describes the ideal mother as follows, in *The Female Guardian*: "She lives only for her children; she renounces dissipation and pleasures, to devote herself entirely to their education; passes the day in giving them lessons, and a part of the night in studying in order to instruct herself for them, sacrifices with joy, her youth, her time!" (23), and quotes Montague to assert the importance of a mother's teachings to the development of a child, saying: "The first rudiments of education are usually received from women; perhaps I might assert, that the most essential parts always are. In what important light does this consideration place the female character!" (*Female Guardian* 35).

Fenn also suggests that only a mother will be able to love her children enough to provide them with a solid, rational education. She addresses the prologue of *Rational Sports* (1783) to "real mothers, not ladies who leave their offspring to imbibe the follies of the kitchen, whilst they roam to places of diversion" (xvii). Fenn believed firmly in early childhood education, and

that the mother was essential in this role. In particular, she insisted that a girl's earliest experiences with her domestic environment laid the foundation for her future happiness. Fenn writes, "This sounds high in speaking of a child, but it is only *sound* – all things have small beginnings; that stately Oak was once an Acorn" (*Rational Sports* xiv). She therefore saw mothering as very important work. She notes in her prologue to *The Rational Dame:* "Would mothers be persuaded to rear the being to which they have given birth; what might – what might <u>not</u> be done?" (ix). Fenn's books for the youngest readers place mothers in a role of primary significance, and her adolescent fiction investigates the negative results of ineffectual mothering in those early years, often in humorous ways.

Fenn, as well as many of her fellow pedagogues, echoed Locke's concerns that servants were unfit caregivers and teachers for the children of privileged families. While Locke was concerned that children raised by servants would be exposed to superstitions and behaviours that were beneath them, some of Fenn's peers argued that children raised by servants were too often coddled and were at risk of developing feelings of grandeur. In *Practical Education*, the Edgeworths devoted an entire chapter to keeping children away from the servants. However, Jane West, in her *Letters to a Young Lady* argued against separating children and servants, saying it would just increase animosity. She comments instead that "A wicked servant cannot corrupt a child who is early endued with good principles, unless parental neglect puts it into the power of the dependant" (211).

Dialogue and the Professionalization of Pedagogy

Class distinctions are further complicated when governesses are taken into account. Neither servant, nor family member, the traditional governess occupied an awkward space in the spectrum. These professional pedagogues, often educated, unmarried women, became members

of the household and were charged with the education of the young girls in the family. But, in the latter decades of the century, as the middle class grew, families began to question the usefulness of the subjects traditionally taught to daughters. French, drawing and music seemed little more than ornamental accomplishments. And, while they were perhaps appropriate for idle, aristocratic ladies, they served little purpose for middle-class wives and mothers.

When critics weigh in on the topic of late eighteenth-century pedagogy, the general consensus is that education for young women was supported as long as it sustained women's social roles – limited simply to marriage and motherhood. Both men and women in the period questioned the relevance of traditionally feminine accomplishments such as music, dancing and drawing to a wife's life. However, most were in agreement that a girl's education was necessary prepare her for life as a wife and mother, which should include teaching children (Percy 80).

While thinkers began to reconsider traditional curricula for girls' education, the period also experienced a rise in the professionalization of pedagogy, and the "domestication of education", as Julia Briggs has pointed out, by women (71). Spending a great deal of time with children, women such as Maria Edgeworth, the Kilner sisters, and Fenn, took their personal and professional experience from the home and classroom and used it to produce books that supported and explained their teaching methods. Anne Thackeray Ritchie wrote in *A Book of Sibyls*, "Someone asked Miss Edgeworth how she came to understand children as she did, what charm she used to win them. 'I don't know… I lie down and let them crawl over me" (127). And in her preface to *The Parents' Assistant* (1796), Edgeworth herself writes: "Those only who have been interested in the education of a family, who have patiently followed children through the process of reasoning, who have daily watched over their thoughts and feelings; those only who know with what ease and rapidity the early associations of ideas are formed, on which the

future taste, character and happiness depend, can feel the dangers and difficulties of such an undertaking" (*Parent's Assistant* iv). These female pedagogues had first-hand child-rearing and teaching experience, and put it to work in their texts. However, they were not without their opponents. Some traditionalists questioned the authority of women in matters of education. But, as Lissa Paul has pointed out, "For a woman to be both learned and literary in the late eighteenth century seemed something of an oxymoron, though no one was worried about the credentials of a man with no child-rearing experience writing a child-rearing manual" (Paul 102). She is, of course, referring to Rousseau, who after abandoning his own children, went on to write *Émile*, which was touted by many as the foremost child-rearing manual of its time.

Just as Maria Edgeworth is known to have relied on her experience with her many step-siblings, Ellenor Fenn benefitted from teaching her nieces and nephews for many years. She is frank about the necessity of this experience for those writing to children in her Preface to her *Fables in Monosyllables* (1783), one of her early texts for beginning readers, making perhaps a direct allusion to Rousseau: " 'Nul de nous n'est assez philosophe pour savoir se metre à la place d'un enfant' Yet those who are mothers must strive to do it; and defy the derision of such as – 'never had a child'" (Fenn *Fables in Monosyllables* xiii).

Born Ellenor Frere in 1743, Fenn is perhaps better known for the educational toys and games she developed for younger children, and which John Marshall produced, in the mid-1780s. Brian Alderson and Felix de Marez Oyens mention Fenn's work briefly in their bibliographic survey of early children's book publishing in England, but limit their discussion to her work for younger children, specifically *Cobwebs to Catch Flies* (1783) and *Fables* (1783) (Alderson 65). According to Darton, "Her earliest children's books were written – and actually made by her, binding and all – for her nephews and nieces. She also set up Sunday Schools in her village and

revived the cottage spinning industry: and she invented a *Game of Grammar*" (164). This game, known as *The Grammar Box* was produced and sold by Marshall, and aimed at the younger set, still learning to read and write. Fenn designed flashcards and games to accompany some of her books, and to help make learning an enjoyable pastime. Fenn states in her preface to *The Rational Dame*: "In making amusement the vehicle of instruction, consists the grand secret of early education" (iv). Andrea Immel describes her as a "pioneer in the development of modern child-centred pedagogy" (215), since she was perhaps the first to develop commercially produced games and toys to assist in teaching literacy and numeracy to young children.

Many conservative pedagogues, such as Jane West, rejected the notion that learning should be made fun for children – a philosophy suggested by Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and further popularized by Rousseau in his mid-century text *Émile*. West criticizes "the pains that are taken to make instruction wear such an agreeable habit, that children may be cheated or played into learning, rather than obliged to apply to it as a labour and a *duty*… the greatest danger arises from the moral injury which the character may receive by being thus early habituated to do only such things as are perfectly agreeable" (188).

Fenn, on the other hand, was an advocate of Locke's suggestion that learning to read should be an enjoyable venture. Furthermore, Gillian Brown notes, "the material paraphernalia with which eighteenth-century publishers embellished and sold children's books thus bear witness to Locke's understanding that mental processes rely on images, whether actual, remembered, or imagined" (353). Since the 2005 discovery of Jane Johnson's hand-made teaching aids dated around 1744, it is clear that Fenn had not invented teaching aids nor educational games. However, her familiarity with children and teaching allowed her to

capitalize on what mothers had already been producing to teach their children at home for many years.

Figure 12 Ellenor Fenn's The Grammar Box, produced by John Marshall around 1783. The goal was to produce sentences using the two-sided cards. Seen here is one of the only surviving copies, housed in the Osborne Collection at the Toronto Public Library.

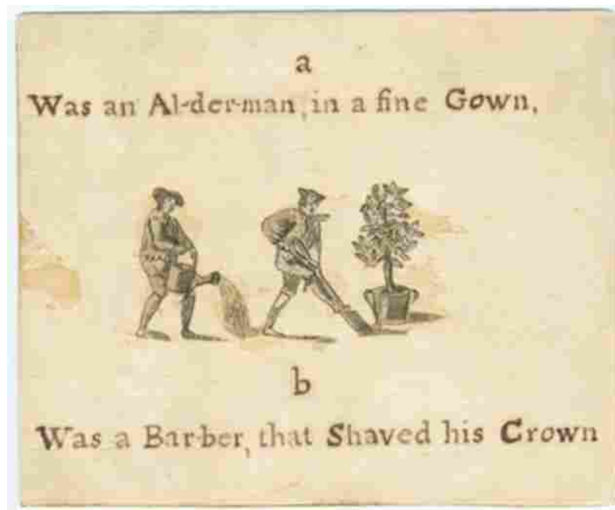
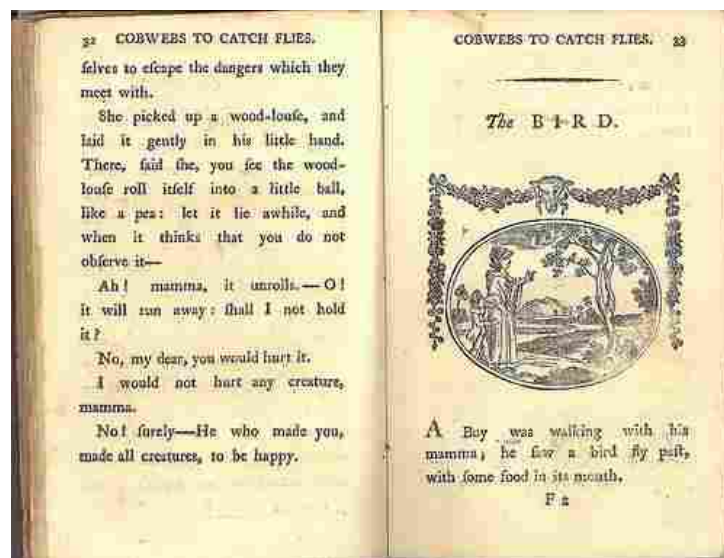


Figure 13 Some of Jane Johnson's Nursery Ephemera. Courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Even Margery Meanwell, that is, Newbery's Little Goody Two Shoes, makes games to teach herself, and others, to read. Locke's suggestion then, that children "be taught to read, without perceiving it to be anything but a Sport" (256, section 149), was taken to heart by many eighteenth-century parents, authors and pedagogues, including Fenn.

Gillian Brown has also underscored the significance of the pictorial nature of quotations and dialogue on a page, arguing that the popularity of the conversational style and question-and-answer format of educational texts in the period, used especially by Fenn, arose out of Locke's initial connection of childhood education and visual aids. Brown comments:

> Children with reading experience know the signs of conversation in books, the look of the page and symbols on it that indicate characters are speaking. Printed marks work like pictures in catching the eye and cueing the viewer/reader to pursue a conversation, though one in which the reader imaginatively listens instead of speaking. So seeing printer's symbols for conversation is like seeing a picture, and embarking upon a train of associations The pictorial character of print itself suggests the aptness of pairing words with illustrations (Brown 355).


32 COBWEBS TO CATCH FLIES.

felves to efcape the dangers which they meet with.

She picked up a wood-loufe, and laid it gently in his little hand. There, faid fhe, you fee the wood-loufe roll itfelf into a little ball, like a pea: let it lie awhile, and when it thinks that you do not obferve it—

Ah! mamma, it unrolls.—O! it will run away: fhall I not hold it?

No, my dear, you would hurt it.

I would not hurt any creature, mamma.

No! furely—He who made you, made all creatures, to be happy.

COBWEBS TO CATCH FLIES. 33

The B I R D.

A Boy was walking with his mamma; he faw a bird fly paft, with fome food in its mouth.

F 2

Figure 14 An example of dialogue in an early edition of Fenn's Cobwebs to Catch Flies. Courtesy Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection.

Fenn made particular use of dialogue in her texts. Her *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, a reading primer for very young children, combines conversational, question-and-answer format, pictures and large print – the latter had been identified as useful for new readers by Ana Laetitia Barbauld

in her *Lessons for Children* (1778-9), and continues to this day to be the standard in texts produced for early readers. Fenn feels that her approach to portraying children's dialogue authentically is valuable. In the preface to her *Fables in Monosyllables*, she writes: "No office is *mean* which concerns the health (corporeal or mental) of the rising generation. Why then do I make apologies for my infantine dialogue?" (*Fables in Monosyllables* xii). In her discussion of Maria Edgeworth's Rosamond stories of the same period, Mitzi Myers stresses that children's dialogue in fiction "evinces late eighteenth-century attitudes toward the child and toward the representation of the colloquial, nonstandard language quite different from Romantic literary history's clichés, which stigmatize pre-Wordsworthian childhood as arid and authoritarian" (Myers, *Rosamond Reading* 61).

Fenn was an advocate of allowing children to speak and write for themselves. In her preface to *Juvenile Correspondence* (1783), which is laid out as a set of letters between children, she advises mothers: "Begin early – before the little creature can hold a pen – allow him (as a gratification) to dictate to you a letter to his absent brother – a letter to his maid above stairs – a letter to any body – let him tell his *own* tale, in his *own* words…" (Fenn *Juvenile Correspondence* xiv). Gillian Brown has pointed out that these dialogues in early children's texts functioned as a form of intertextuality: "publishers usually framed juvenile books as chatty letters or addresses to children which mentioned persons and events that children might know from other contexts and other books. The intertextuality of the books both models and encourages conversation" (Brown 355). Myers suggested that intertextual references in eighteenth-century children's literature "foregrounds child talk and thinking, democratizes knowledge, and questions cultural canons and hierarchies. It brings popular juvenile works within the same frame of reference as acknowledged masterpieces, affirms childhood's own

world of allusion and affectivity, and depicts in some detail how children interact with what they read" (Myers *Reading Rosamond Reading* 63). Fenn uses intertextuality frequently in her own work. In *Juvenile Correspondence*, for example, the children are encouraged to write a letter about their experiences watching the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> "In the play, a man comes in with an ass's head on; and we almost died with laughter at that. The song
>
> 'Come follow, follow me,
>
> Ye fairy elves that be:
>
> Come follow Mab your queen,
>
> And trip it o'er the green,'
>
> Was sung sweetly. --- I dare say that many a little heart besides mine danced to the sound. – Jenny and I were ready to jump up and join in the chorus – singing,
>
> 'Hand in hand we'll dance around,
>
> For this place is fairy ground.'
>
> I could talk of the play all day." (*Juvenile Correspondence* 87)

Also letters between the children about excursions become a sort of youthful travel writing. For example, John writes to William about his visit to "Mrs. Wright's Waxworks" and his visit to the Tower to see the animals. Edward writes to William about seeing the Automaton and his visit to Cox's museum. Jane writes an account of the "Italian puppet show Fantocini", saying "I shall never care for an inaminate doll again" (Fenn *Juvenile Correspondence* 94). Through her child characters' dialogue and their depiction of their interactions with reality and

with other texts, contemporary readers are able to imagine the eighteenth-century child's perspective. As Mitzi Myers noted "In reviewing the ways that children's subjectivity is constructed and represented in past literature, conversational scenes of instruction and depictions of reality prove especially helpful, because the characters' interaction with others and with text models for child readers of the story as well as for modern critics how the world and the work interact, how a narrative educates as well as what it discusses" (Myers *Reading Children* 48).

Moral Exemplarity and Fiction for Young Readers

Though Fenn's texts and games for these young children are what she is best known for today, it is her dialogue in fiction for older girls that is really inspired. Between 1780 and 1790 Fenn wrote several texts specifically for adolescent girls. Set in boarding schools and aimed at young female readers, Fenn's texts for adolescents were deemed didactic and therefore un-interesting by the Romantics, who favoured fantasy and adventure, innocence and gardens. As Mitzi Myers and many since have argued, children's literature scholarship continues to labour under Romantic assumptions about childhood as an innocent, ignorant, carefree and separate space from the thinking adult world that surrounds it. But Fenn's adolescent girls show themselves to be thinking and knowing children of the enlightenment.

Her *School Occurrences,* written for a teenage audience, is set in a boarding school for girls, and deals with themes of courtship and the development of personal relationships. Each chapter laments the results of one of the girls being either motherless, or having had an incompetent mother, and shows how the schoolmistress, Mrs. Teachwell, attempts to repair the damage done. In general, the ill-behaved girls of Fenn's texts outnumber the good ones. Ineffective parenting in early childhood has led to selfishness, impertinence, negativity, vanity, etc. etc. But, the school community does include a variety of characters, exhibiting both bad and

good behaviours. In fact, it is notable that while every text has its share of mean girls: "Miss Pert" ,"Miss Cheat", or "Miss Sneer", there is at least one "Miss Friendly" to model good behaviour. The binary opposites play off each other in a type of Derridean "différence", which works, perhaps, to better highlight the good girls' virtues.

This moral exemplarity reflects the conventions of non-fiction history writing, Jackie Horne has suggested, a genre that she argues early authors of children's literature were emulating. Horne claims that, as these texts were didactic, authors were interested in the "moral exemplarity" of their characters, much in keeping with Samuel Johnson's contention, in *Rambler 4,* that characters should not be ambiguous, lest readers be misled into emulating vices over moral behaviour. Perfectly moral protagonists, such as Margery Meanwell in Newbery's *The History of Goody Two-Shoes,* have, compared with the more developed characters of later novels, often been considered flat. In his survey *Children's Books in England,* Harvey Darton shows a preference in general for humour and fiction than for any type of moral didacticism in children's texts. Authors of moral tales between the years of 1790 and 1820, he says, "were far better at telling a story than at constructing one. Their very themes made for feebleness of plot… Most of the heroes and heroines, or, if you will, villains or naughty children, were no more than those brats of the moveable-head books: the same waxen face fitted into a succession of stiff bodies" (Darton 165). But Deidre Lynch has argued that writers of fiction, specifically fiction for children, early in the century, were less interested in character interiority and depth than in legibility and outward appearances.

An alignment with non-fiction is evident in the title of such fictional texts as Eliza Haywood's *The History of Betsy Thoughtless.* But in *Betsy Thoughtless*, aimed at young women rather than young children, Haywood has produced characters whose ambiguity leans towards

the realism that became more important in novels as the form developed. Betsy, though flawed, is redeemed by the end of the text. Lynch argues that by the turn of the century, moral exemplarity in novels gave way to the development of sympathy of readers for a text's characters. Authors did this, she argued, by creating characters with believable faults as well as virtues, who struggled internally with moral dilemmas. This interiority supported readers' identification with characters, and became the novel's prime concern as a literary form. Horne suggests that while early on in the century children's authors worked to distance their work from the novel form, which was considered highly suspect in literary circles and among educationalists, specifically with regard to women and the lower classes, by the end of the 18th century, writers for children were finding ways to use the form, discovering that the readers' sympathy and identification with less-than-perfect, believable characters proved an effective way to deliver their didactic messages.

In the Edgeworths' *Practical Education*, novel-reading for young women is ill-advised – the authors suggesting that novels are too sensational, leaving women bored with real life. The educators advised that women addicted to novel-reading, "have accustomed themselves to such violent stimulus that they cannot endure the languor to which they are subject in the intervals of delirium. Pink appears pale to the eye that is used to scarlet, and common food is insipid to the taste which has been vitiated by the high seasonings of art" (297). Maria Edgeworth's fictional *Belinda* is subtitled "A Moral Tale", and the text overtly pokes fun at the novel form throughout. Furthermore, the Virginia St. Pierre subplot reveals what Edgeworth perceives as the "imaginative dangers of passively receptive reading" (Campbell 161). But while Edgeworth may disapprove of sensational novels, she depends on character interiority, the hallmark of the novel genre, in much of her work for children. Her famous child-protagonist, Rosamond,

regularly deals with moral dilemmas and child-readers are encouraged to sympathize with her, despite her many faults and vices.

Certainly, women's behaviour was a central concern throughout the century – particularly the behaviour of the unmarried adolescent. While at the beginning of the century, Nancy Armstrong has pointed out, conduct literature for women encouraged the development of traditionally aristocratic accomplishments such as music, dancing and dress, later books such as Fordyce' *Sermons* were aimed at a rising middle class of readers who were eager to learn how to behave. These later conduct manuals and pedagogical treatises focused less on outward appearances and showy accomplishments, and more on developing useful domestic skills. Aristocratic excess and frivolity was demonized in fiction, and middle-class values were venerated. Conservative pedagogues such as Jane West, asked:

> Education should be suited to the rank in life, the fortunes, and the connexions of our children. To be really more refined that those around us is a misfortune, and a fruitful source of unhappiness to a delicate reflecting mind… Do French, drawing, dancing, music, skill in dress, and all the pretty train of little graces and diminutive airs, which are so sedulously inculcated on the daughters of inferior tradesmen, yeomen, and mechanics, promise to be of real advantage to them? (West 229-30)

And the Edgeworths contended that music, dancing and drawing only encouraged vanity in young women and, anyway, "the market of accomplished young ladies is saturated" (*Practical Education* 336)– a complaint echoed by Caroline Bingley in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* some years later.

Ellenor Fenn exemplified this thinking in her texts for adolescent girls. For example, in her *School Occurrences*, she provides this exchange between Mrs. Teachwell, a visitor, and the mother of a student, when asked if music is taught at the school:

Mrs. Teachwell:	No, Ma'am. We have but few who learn. I never encourage it.
Stranger:	Surely it is very pleasing.
Mrs. Teachwell:	It is; but when one considers the time that must be sacrificed to make a tolerable proficiency, I think the acquisition does not answer.
Stranger:	And drawing?
Mrs. Teachwell:	Mr. *Wad* teaches a few of my ladies. *That* is rather more useful; but where there is a love for books it is not wanted.
Mrs. Sprightly:	I think with you, that they are both of use (where there is not a taste for reading) to supply innocent amusement, without having recourse to trifles. (Fenn *School Occurrences* 111)

By the turn of the century, authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft were condemning Rousseau's influence, arguing for real education for middle-class young women which would focus not on aristocratic frivolities but on practical, rational subjects. Wollstonecraft's position, much like Maria Edgeworth's, was that Rousseau's teachings were so damaging as to produce infantilized women who were incapable of caring for themselves or their families. Domestic fiction in the latter part of the century also often focused on the fallacy of training women to be weak and dependent on men. Female protagonists, such as Mary in Hays' *A Victim of Prejudice* were often preyed on, rather than protected by, the men in their lives, and characters like Inchbald's Miss Milner in *A Simple Story*, show that women raised without a rational education

were also unable to think critically about, or understand the consequences of, their behaviour. Domestic fiction also became a forum for women writers to express desire, and their concerns about issues such as marriage and the home, and to consider the behaviour of men from a woman's perspective.

Fairy-tales and Fiction

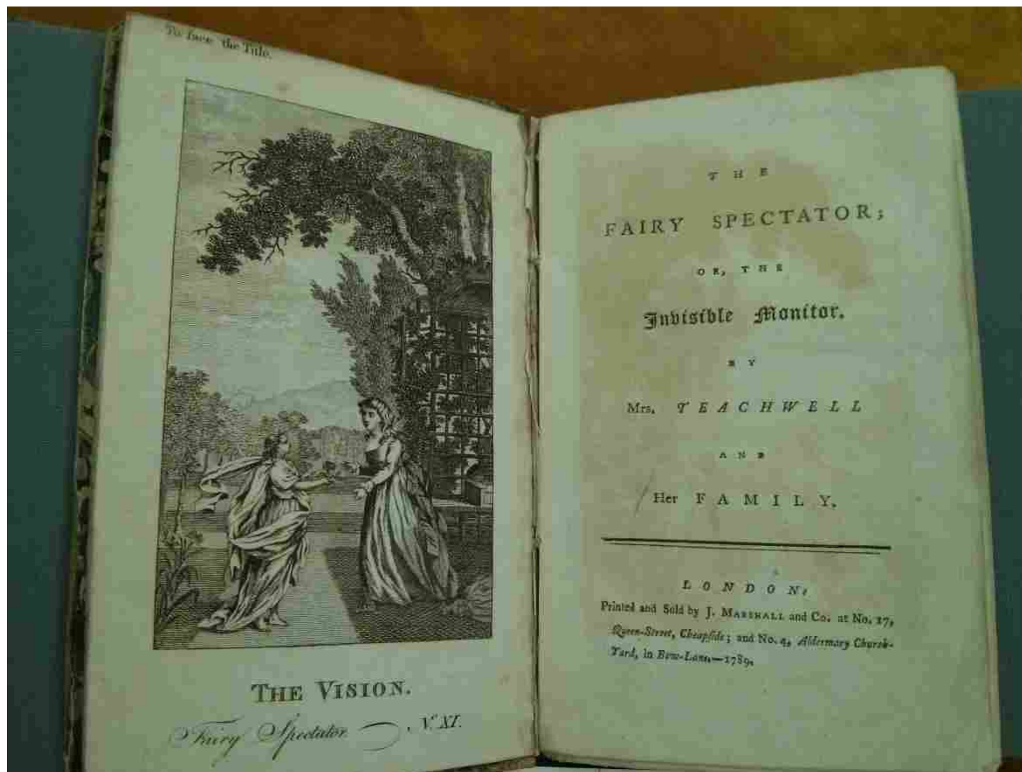
Matthew Grenby has pointed out that the majority of children's fiction produced in the latter half of the century was geared specifically to girl readers, and his study of marginalia and inscriptions has shown that the majority of surviving children's books from this latter half of the eighteenth-century were owned, or at least inscribed with the names of, girls (60). Grenby has also revealed the degree to which readers were actively involved in performing the constructions of the text. Marginalia shows that girls were performing parts of dramas and dialogues – conversations and question and answer formats were popular forms in girls' literature of the period, suggesting that young girls were thinking and knowing readers, and not just passive recipients of ideology. Furthermore, intertextual references, such as Fenn's children rhapsodizing over the fairies in *A Midsummer Nights' Dream*, suggest what real readers in the period knew, were discussing, and would have liked to read more about. The reference to fairies may perhaps have been a subversive poke at the likes of Sarah Trimmer and the rational moralists, who argued so vehemently against girls reading fairy stories.

Fenn's use of good girl/bad girl binary oppositions could also be considered in light of the fact that her work was highly influenced by the fairy tale genre, which makes frequent use of the contrast and balance between good and evil characters. There is good, and bad, in all of us, after all. In many of her texts Fenn leans heavily on fairy tale tropes: magical creatures and objects, fairy godmothers, and the like. She calls for the use of a "fairy wand" to help her

describe her setting in her introduction to *The Fairy Spectator* (iii), and related a series of stories filled with enchanted gardens, magical lockets, mirrors, dolls and fairies. She also devotes a chapter to physiognomy, and magical descriptions of face transformations. Of course, physiognomy itself has a fairy tale link, with good princesses always being beautiful and evil villains often being ugly.

The Fairy Spectator follows the growth of a girl (Miss Child) whose fairy guardian guides her in some essential decision-making and leads her into adulthood. In the final chapters, Miss Child proves herself to be a responsible young woman and therefore worthy of becoming a guardian herself – a sign that she is no longer a child. She chooses to become a doll, takes the name "Amiable", and proceeds to monitor and guide the younger girls at the school. Miss Child proves herself by rejecting the gift of an enchanted object: she is offered a purse that is always full of money, a bonnet that will take her wherever she wants to go, or a ring that will make her invisible. It is a test, however, and she passes by deeming the gifts imprudent. But this is not Fenn's rejection of all things magical. Enchanted objects prove useful in the text to teach young women to keep their behaviour in check. The magical mirrors, for example, show Miss Child how her actual behaviour compares with what her behaviour should be according to culturally-accepted norms. Miss Child is presented with the mirrors and is told: "Look in this – nay, never start; you must first see your faults, before you can mend them. To me you appear just as deformed without the glass, whenever you are ill-disposed, or act unworthily" (*The Fairy Spectator* 38-9). A magic locket changes colour with her disposition, so that she will always be warned when she is veering away from the sweet, pleasant disposition that is expected of a young woman. Also, as a fairy guardian, she passes on what she has learned by giving a magic

rose to Miss Playful. When she exhibits “naughty passions” she will be pricked by its thorns, and when she exhibits generosity and obedience it smells sweeter.


To face the Title.

THE VISION.

THE

FAIRY SPECTATOR;

OR, THE

Invisible Monitor.

BY

Mrs. TEACHWELL

AND

Her FAMILY.

LONDON:

Printed and Sold by J. MARSHALL and Co. at No. 17, Queen-Street, Cheapside; and No. 4, Aldermary Church-Yard, in Bow-Lane.—1789.

Figure 15 Title Page and Frontispiece of The Fairy Spectator, 1789. Courtesy of Osgoode Collection of Children’s Literature, Toronto Public Library.

Fenn was an advocate of learning from the experiences, and mistakes, of others. She writes about ill-behaved girls so that readers may learn from their erroneous ways, and proved that, contrary to conservative opinion, even magical beings and talking animals could be vehicles for delivering a good moral. She also believed that her good readers could learn from the mistakes of a disobedient or mischievous character without emulating her. In her 1795 text *The Life of a Bee, Related by Herself*, meant to be part natural history, part allegory, Fenn’s narrating Bee says to her daughter “Listen therefore to the story of my life, that by learning to avoid my errors, you may learn also to avoid my misfortunes” (2). Her story, overall, is one of a girl/bee—who disregards her mother’s good advice and leaves the hive too soon. In spite of some scientific

inconsistencies relating to the child-rearing habits of honeybees, Fenn's text is believable for its unusual and realistic dialogue – especially that of the teenager. The adolescent bee, for example, often speaks in sarcastic tones, suggesting that teenage eye-rolling plagued eighteenth-century parents as much as it does modern ones. "Truly" the teenaged bee sneers at her mother's warnings, "it must be very perilous in this delightful sun-shine! and to revel in the sweets of these lovely flowers that on every side appear so inviting! My mother is so fond of nursing, that she would fain have kept me at home with the thoughts of imaginary dangers, but, thanks to my courage and penetration, I have been able to frustrate her design" (13)

This type of talk-back and adolescent grumbling is not particularly common in eighteenth-century depictions of girls. Although we do see occasional examples of sarcasm and misguided attempts at wit in the voices of the misbehaving girl-characters in early novels such as *Evelina*, *Betsy Thoughtless* and *The Female Quixote*, by the nineteenth century adolescent girls are conspicuously voiceless. Romantic reverence of childhood and of the mother rendered female adolescence a liminal, and therefore subversive, stage of life which was downplayed, if not outright deleted from literary portrayals of female development. Nineteenth-century girls were depicted in literature as children until they were married, reflecting the infantilized women that Wollstonecraft lamented in her work.

It is refreshing, then, to read Fenn's appropriated teenage dialogue in such an early text for young women. Her attribution of a voice to these young characters suggests a particular interest in, and celebration of, adolescence that is arguably denied her successors until the latter half of the twentieth century, and the likes of Judy Blume. Fenn's deliberate copying of teenage register is a technique that she may have been the first to exploit in order to encourage narrative intimacy with her readers. This intimacy makes use of exactly the kind of restricted narrative perspective

which John Stephens has argued produces "a discourse very restricted in vocabulary, register and syntax" creating "extremely solipsistic subject positions for character-narrators which are then replicated by readers". This, he argues, "swamps the audience's subjectivity, leaving nothing for it to do" as the "narrative address never extends beyond the narrator's own solipsistic enclosure" (Stephens 252-3). Stephens also points out that realism always feels more didactic, which is probably why the Romantics and the authors associated with the later Golden Age of Children's Literature leaned toward fantasy in their fiction. However, Fantasy inculcates ideology too, just in a different way. Fenn was acutely aware of this fact, and makes reference to the value of the fantastic in literature for young people when she writes in her preface to *The Female Guardian*:

> "I have likewise observed that indirect admonition is often the most successful. *The Juvenile Tatler*, *The Female Guardian*, or my *Fairy*, are more agreeable monitors than Mrs. Teachwell. A tale, a fable, a character, will often serve to reform a slight error in one of my young folk, whilst it spares her from the mortification of my reprehension…We should endeavour to render medicine palatable." (*Female Guardian* 10)

Her experimentation with Fantasy in her fiction for young people underlines exactly what Stephens argued two centuries later.

Gothic Fiction

Fenn is also going against the grain in her advocacy of reading gothic fiction – namely, *The Castle of Otranto* – devoting two full chapters of *The Female Guardian* to a discussion of the novel's morality and heroines worth emulating. She comments, "I DARE not place *The Castle of Otranto* in Mrs. Teachwell's library (it is not suited to the perusal of early youth) yet I wish young ladies to read abundance of beautiful passages which are interspersed through the whole work; no so much for the sake of the elegant language, as the delicate morality (Fenn

Female Guardian 89). She then quotes extensively from the text, praising the "heroic sentiments" of the male characters, and the "delicacy" of the female ones. She uses a passage from one of Mathilda's speeches to emphasize the importance of obedience to one's parents: "I should not deserve this incomparable parent if the inmost recesses of my soul harboured a thought without her permission" (Fenn *Female Guardian*, 92).

Radcliffe was hugely popular, particularly with young female readers, in the late eighteenth century. Her last two novels fetched advances that were unheard of at the time: £500 for *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and £800 for *The Italian* (133). In her journal, eight-year-old Marjory Fleming describes reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho* with her 17 year old cousin, and governess:

"I am reading the misteris of udolpho with Isabella and am much interested with them…" (Fleming 8), and written upside down, to show her position in the bed: "At Breahead I lay at the foot of the bed becase Isabella says that I disturbed her repose at night by contunial figiting and kicking but I was very well contunaly at work reading the Arabin nights entertainments which I could not have done had I slept at the top. I am reading the Mysteries of udolpho & am much interested in the fate of poor poor Emily" (14). It seems even eighteenth-century children loved a spooky story when they could get it. Marjory's journal also includes her thrilled reaction to reading "the Newgate calender that contains all the Murders,- all the Murders I say, nay all Thefts & Forgeries that ever commited. & fills one with horror and consternation" (47), as well as "a book about a man went into a house & he saw a sack & he went & look into it & he saw a dead body in it" (37).

Hannah More, in her *Strictures on the Modern System of Education* was not a proponent of girls reading gothic fiction, though she did argue that there was value to some of these works – particularly those of accomplished writers such as Radcliffe.

The arguments against a young woman reading sensational, romantic fiction were longstanding, and were based on the central concern that she might emulate unsavoury behaviours, or be dissatisfied with her own life, which was unlikely to be as exciting as that of the novels' heroines. In *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* Priscilla Wakefield famously commented, "nothing can be more distant from the plain, sober, useful qualities of a housewife, than the excellencies of the heroine of a novel" (148). And in *Practical Education* the Edgeworths lamented that young women who read too many novels, "have accustomed themselves to such violent stimulus that they cannot endure the languor to which they are subject in the intervals of delirium. Pink appears pale to the eye that is used to scarlet, and common food insipid to the taste which has been vitiated by the high seasons of art" (297). Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* famously satirizes these conservative concerns over the effects of an active imagination combined with avid reading of sensational gothic novels. Austen's complaint is that the danger truly resides not in the novels, but in a lack of proper education and the naïveté that results from a lifetime of seclusion. Of course she, and probably most of her contemporaries were aware, that young girls were particularly drawn to sensational romances. Marjory wrote in her journal in 1811: "In the love novels all the herions are very desperate Isabella will not alow me to speak about lovers & heroins & tiss too refined for my taste a lodestone is a curious thing indeed it is true Heroick love doth win disgrace is my maxim & I will follow it for ever" (Fleming 43-44). Furthermore, Gothic-influences, romantic satire and

irony from the pen of the adolescent Austen in her *Juvenilia* is evidence that teenaged girls were not only avid readers of romances, but were thinking critically about them.

In *School Occurrences* Fenn reflects the conventional concerns over what girls were reading at the time, but also uses the opportunity to consider matters of maternal obedience.

Miss Pry: You are so very strict! One would think that reading poetry was one of the deadly sins!

Miss Worthy: You recollect that *disobedience* was the first sin; and *curiosity* perhaps the inducement, at least it appears, that *Eve* was seduced by –

Miss Pry: Come come, no old stories, let us read something.

Miss Worthy: There are many passages from prose authors: Pray give me the book… This last extract is from an unfortunate mother's advice to her absent daughter.

Miss Pry: I have a volume in my pocket (*taking a book out)* It is prose, Miss Worthy, you may venture to listen: *Lady Julia Mandeville*.

Miss Worthy: You know, Miss Pry, that novels are forbidden here.

Miss Pry: Does your Mamma forbid novels too?

Miss Worthy: I read nothing but what my Mamma supplies me with herself; or those books that are in Mrs. Teachwell's closet, so there is no occasion to forbid them; but you know that Mrs. Teachwell does not allow them.

Miss Pry: I know Mrs. Teachwell is not here; and I suppose you will not go and tell her.

Miss Worthy: I shall not stay to hear you read the book; and *Sprightly*, I hope you will not.

Miss Sprightly: I will stay a little while; there are some novels that have very good lessons in them.

Miss Worthy: There are none proper for young people: at best, it is time lost to read them. I repeat my Mamma's words, and am not ashamed to own it. (*In a low voice*) *Sprightly*, do come with me, you can enjoy no real satisfaction when you are conscious that you are breaking a *law*, or even *seeing* others do it.

Miss Sprightly: I thank you: I *will* come. (Fenn *School Occurrences* 92-94)

However, while on the one hand Fenn's teacher-characters reject romantic and sensational fiction, the author was aware of their popularity with her adolescent readers, and drew on them for inspiration. In particular, while some more conservative pedagogues were concerned girls would emulate the poor behaviour they read about, Fenn found stories to be a safe place for young women to learn from the mistakes of others. She also believed it was ideal to address these issues in early youth, before bad habits developed. She writes:

> "I have often thought, that a history of the life of many of those who are cut off by the hand of justice might be very useful. We should frequently find, that the housebreaker who is condemned for alarming, or perhaps murdering a family for their money, began in his infancy to practice wickedness, in pilfering apples or cakes to gratify his appetite. He who is guilty of deceit and treachery in a small matter, vitiates his mind, and may for his punishment, be hurried into crimes that he would start to hear of. It is the same in every sort of crime: All things have small beginnings: The seed is minute; -- but the plant spreads far and wide. Parents are apt to wink at faults in their children, which indicate such dispositions as they ought to correct; they forget that such as the boy is, such will be the

> man. The child who devours his apple greedily by himself, is likely to be selfish, niggardly, nay, perhaps unjust. It would be easy to enumerate instances, but this is meant only to call attention to the beginnings of evil; to invite parents to crush the serpent in the shell, and to teach young people to judge favorably of those, who having been less happy than themselves in the dawn of life, have been exposed to the temptations of the world with inferior power of resistance" (Fenn *Juvenile Tatler* 40-42).

Fenn was aware that bad characters helped to make a good story, and she trusted that her young readers would not emulate misbehaviour, but would instead draw lessons from her fiction.

Fenn also took inspiration from some of the formal elements of the gothic romances of her day. For example, the lengthy landscape descriptions for which Radcliffe is so well-known, are reflected in some of Fenn's later texts, specifically *The Female Guardian*. In Chapter 4 "Scenes at the Grove" the narrator calls for the use of a "fairy wand" to help describe the scene as it is so enchanting, and embarks on a lengthy, romantic description of the landscape. She finishes with "I was ready to exclaim with as much rapture as Milton describes Adam doing, when he first awoke to life" (Fenn *Guardian*, 18). Just as she had done with fairy tales, Fenn had identified some key elements of Gothic romances that were particularly appealing to late eighteenth-century adolescent girls, and was incorporating them in her texts directed to this demographic.

Deidre Lynch has argued that, since its inception, Gothic fiction has always been appealing to educated girls, as the heroines of these novels are usually thinking and knowing young women who model both rational problem-solving and extreme sensitivity. The ultimate victory of sleuthing over tradition, young over old, sensibility over physical strength, and female over male has made the genre particularly appealing to adolescent girls since its inception – a fact that continues to be true today, if we are to accept the recent popularity of Stephanie Meyer's

Twilight series. Furthermore, popular gothic works, particularly those of Radcliffe, were packed with detailed descriptions of lush exotic landscapes, to the delight of many teenage armchair travellers, who were increasingly restricted to the home and garden. When it came to gothic fiction, eighteenth-century adolescents were eating it up – and Fenn took notice.

Mothers, Morality and Reputation

However, while Fenn drew inspiration from the formal elements of fairy tales and gothic romances, she was quick to assert that romantic storylines were not appropriate reading for adolescent girls. The last few chapters of *The Female Guardian* are devoted to a story about a young man named Henry who sets off on a quest to find a wife. He has other adventures along the way – and then the story ends with the following author's footnote:

> "A friend remarked, that the purpose for which the journey seemed to be undertaken was not fulfilled; namely, the meeting with a wife for the young man. The writer avows having had an intention of marrying Henry to a worthy young woman; but so little does she approve tales of love and courtship, that she cannot think an apology for the omission necessary." (Fenn *Guardian*, 122)

However, though that comment may be in keeping with the contemporary opinion of conservative pedagogues, it is inconsistent with at least one other story in the same text. Chapters 27 and 28 of *The Female Guardian*, entitled "Physiognomy" and "The Judicious Choice" respectively, tell the tale of two friends "Miss Pride" and "Miss Molly" who are both in love with an aristocratic painter: Sir Thomas Carmine. In true fairy-tale form, Pride becomes ugly from being such a proud and vengeful girl. Molly, who is initially plain to look at, is so sweet-natured that she grows into a lovely woman and wins the heart of Sir Thomas.

While Fenn uses the language and devices of fairy tales and romances, she is careful to keep her stories for girls free from "adventures" and all take place within the safety of the domestic space. She warns that girls must, to survive as wives in the future, learn to keep their natural adventurous spirits in check for "A boisterous boy may go to sea and toss upon the wild element which he resembles, but should his sister imitate his manners, how could we dispose of her?" (*Female Guardian* 60). As a girl's behaviour, education and conduct were considered to be especially critical to the success of a well-regulated society, there was a proliferation of conduct manuals and educational treatises written for and about girls in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. A young woman's reputation, in particular, was a point of focus in many of these texts, and is noted often in Fenn's work as well. In "The Innocent Romp", a story from *The Juvenile Tatler*, Fenn describes a "Miss Briskly" who has just returned home from the convent to live with her widowed father, and has turned out to be more trouble than he can handle. Briskly enjoys pranks and gets herself into the occasional quandary: she dresses the cat up as a baby and leaves it at the curate's door, she accidentally hits "Mr. Prim" in the face with a rotten apple, and she falls off a ladder while trying to climb the garden wall. Her father laments, "That girl, with the innocence of a vestal virgin, will become table talk in every servants' hall in the country" (45). Her lack of proper mothering has led to a spirit too adventurous for her own good. Fenn is working within the confines of late eighteenth-century middle-class expectations for women. But, she is still commenting on the natural desire of a child – boy or girl – to learn and see beyond the nursery. When Miss Briskly falls down the ladder after attempting to see lies beyond her garden wall, she likens the falling feeling to "flying". Fenn underscores the ridiculousness of this connection with a footnote explaining that Miss Briskly could not have known the difference, since "This was written before the invention of Air Balloons" (44).

However, her advocacy of reading and writing as a means for young women to experience the world from the safety of their domestic space is clear. Miss Briskly's fall from the garden ladder, petticoats flying, may be symbolic of Eve's fall in Eden, and the allusion is a reminder of the importance of a mother's influence on a young woman's propriety and reputation.

As Jill Cambell has suggested, as women writers began to experiment with the political uses of the novel, "mother-daughter plots become a means to extend the implications of novelistic narrative beyond the individual case, making it the bearer of rational, social, or political critique" (Campbell 164). The typical "two-generational story of women's ruination by social forces" (Campbell 169), became a popular trope in novels in the period, as writers began to use the novel as a forum for women's education and development, and sometimes control. There was a parallel trend in these novels and in children's literature of the period, and that is the concept of the text as a substitute for a missing or inadequate mother. In Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories for Real Life*, for example, Mrs. Mason, the former governess, leaves a book on her departure, and it is this text that we are supposed to be reading. The same notion is implied in the title of the Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant*. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* is written as the heroine's memoirs, addressed to her infant daughter "that they might instruct… and shield her from misery, the tyranny, her mother knew not how to avoid" (Wollstonecraft *Maria* 8). As Campbell notes, "The mediation through reading of mother-daughter bonds, in particular, takes a number of forms in the novels of the period, with a range of consoling, redemptive, instructive, diversionary, and dangerous effects" (Campbell 165). Novels in the period seemed to highlight the importance of transferring the mother's knowledge to the daughter – and if it could not be in person, the book performed the role of surrogate.

Lynne Vallone corroborates this theory in her study of the "courtesy novels" of the period, such as *Evelina* and *Belinda*. She argues that novels of this category further highlight the important of a mother, or a mother-like figure to perform a "generational transference of genderrational education" (Vallone 65). The absence of a mother, she suggests, during female adolescence, created a "crisis of education" with regard to female conduct, propriety and manners. According to Vallone, in these types of texts it is this missing gender-specific education that is the root of the plot's conflict, and which creates interest in the story. However, in these cases, the lack of a mother leads to the protagonist learning the required skills from an adult, male suitor. In the case of Fenn's works, the female protagonists learn not from their lovers but from their mothers, their peers, and the guidance of a strong female role model.

In *The Life of a Bee*, Fenn's young daughter bee learns from her mother's mistakes, and does not repeat them in her own life. In this way, the text actively interrogates the trope of maternal transmission. That is, are the sins of the mother really the sins of the daughter? Some women novelists were already criticizing this way of thinking, such as Mary Hays' in *A Father and Daughter*, Elizabeth Inchbald in *A Simple Story*, and even earlier, Haywood in *Betsy Thoughtless,* Burney in *Evelina* and Lennox in *The Female Quixote*. In all cases, they did so by providing their young, motherless, protagonists with strong paternal figures for guidance. However, as Greenfield has pointed out, most of these novels also stress the biological father's limitations, and therefore expose the instability of paternal authority, by placing a higher value on the mother's imprint on her daughter (Greenfield 37). While the young protagonists are not doomed to live the tragic lives of their mothers, they are forever shaped by the lessons they may draw from their mothers' mistakes. These lessons prove to be the most important factor in their successful upbringing. In the case of Fenn's bees, there are no fathers or husbands to lead the

adolescent on the right path. She must, and does, learn from her mother's story and from her own experience. In fact, living paternal figures are conspicuously absent from almost all of Fenn's texts, suggesting that she was confident in the capacity and necessity of young women to think for themselves, with guidance from strong female adults, and by learning from the mistakes of those around them. In this way, she questions the necessity of paternal authority to control women's behaviour, while still continuing to teach the conduct expected of young eighteenth-century women.

If, therefore, part of Fenn's agenda was to instill these values of proper conduct, it was also to teach a form of self-control. To do so she continues to draw on the weight of the mother's (not the father's) approval – placing the mother's authority second only to that of God in her introduction to *The Fairy Spectator*:

> "Were I a Fairy I should devote much of my attention to you… I should, probably, sometimes conceal myself from your sight, for the friendly purpose of remarking your conduct when you suppose yourself to be unobserved: and I hope that I should have the pleasure to see you act always, as if you were in the presence of your dear Mamma; or, to speak in higher terms, as if you remembered that *there is an Eye which sees us wherever we are.*" (*The Fairy Spectator* iii-iv)

Fenn's panoptic use of the Mother is meant to encourage her readers to internalize the external surveillance of their community. In the case of these texts, these are Astell-inspired all-female communities in isolated, almost idyllic, garden-like settings – much like that of Sarah Fielding's *The Governess*.

Eighteenth-Century Teenage Sarcasm and Displays of Wit

As Fenn's texts are set in a similar school community, most episodes aim to teach cooperative behaviour as well as obedience. A girl was raised to be not just a good, obedient wife, but also to be a woman who would make her future domestic sphere a happy place. Therefore Fenn discourages sarcasm, and criticism of others disguised as "wit". Mrs. Foresight, for example, condemns the gossiping correspondence of Miss Pert, saying "This whole letter is fraught with ill-nature. I see the writer flirt her ink about with a satirical grin." Miss Pert is a prime example of Fenn's typical teenage "bad girl", and her sharp tongue is revealed early in the text, when her friend attempts to convince her to obey her mother. She mocks the good daughter, laughing: "O! pray, spare your breath, and harangue to some girl who will listen with patience, and lift up her hands at every pause, crying out 'Prodigious! Wonderful! Who could have thought it!' Ha ha ha" (*School Occurrences* 52).

Mrs. Teachwell's boarding school is the setting for several of Fenn's texts, with many of the ill-behaved girls making multiple appearances. For example, the character of Miss Pert, as the sharp-tongued gossip, is also featured in *The Female Guardian,* where she is reprimanded again for being too critical of her fellow schoolmates:

> "her tongue was the scourge of the neighbourhood; people were afraid to speak before her, lest they should draw upon themselves any ill-natured remarks; they were fearful of writing a note (which had not been corrected by a society of grammarians) to invite the ladies to tea at their house; as they could not be secure but that it might be exposed in the next company who visited there, and every inaccuracy enlarged upon… She was not only satirical and censorious, but so insolent as to delight in putting Mrs. Pert's visitors out of

> countenance by blunt speeches; which she called 'telling them the truth to their faces' and boasted of her honesty, which she said was meritorious." (Fenn *Female Guardian* 74)

The prevailing critical opinion of the late eighteenth century was that women and girls in the period were increasingly enclosed in a domestic space and were discouraged from engaging in male, public, displays of wit. Sarcasm, from the mouth or pen of a woman, was frowned upon. While Fenn's texts for adolescent girls seem to support this ideology on the surface – that is, the sarcastic female characters, such as Miss Pert, are disliked – Mrs. Lovechild, Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Teachum all prove themselves mistresses of wit in their dialogue, especially alongside male characters. For example, Mrs. Foresight engages in a great display of wit with the coxcomb, Mr. Vainglove, when she attempts to deter him from speaking to the young women in her school. Vainglove scoffs, "Madam, would you have me make love in pantomime?" To which, Mrs. Foresight responds: "Should you ever address a rational woman, it would be your only method; for speech would interrupt your success" (*Juvenile Tatler* 75-6). Fenn's comedic dismissal of Vainglove is Fenn's way of interrogating the trope that a reformed rake makes a good husband – a concept initiated by the male-authored and endorsed *Pamela*, and perpetuated by the extremely popular romance novels of the period.

Furthermore, Fenn clearly enjoys writing the witty dialogue of her texts, and also seems even to revel in the sarcastic passages of her "mean girls", suggesting she is de-stablizing, rather than upholding, the ideology that women should remain quiet and respectful of male authority. Her work highlights characters who align well with those such as Burney's Mrs. Selwyn of *Evelina.* These bright, witty females are at once the voice of reason while also walking the line of masculinity – a subversive position for any eighteenth-century woman, but an empowering one for a female author.

But Fenn's use of teenage "snark" also suggests simply that she had extensive experience with adolescent girls and that she was attempting to experiment with the popular conversational form to appeal specifically to her young adult audience. Fenn always aspired to create dialogue that believably mimicked the voices of her readers, saying in her preface to *School Occurrences*:

> …children (would it be otherwise!) are apt to place more confidence in the opinions of younger persons, than in those of people whom age and experience enable to judge with propriety. These things should not be – but since they are – let us strive to make the best of them. Let us write sprightly chat to amuse our young people, and win them insensibly to goodness… I venture to set the example, and write to children in the character of a child (*School Occurences* X).

Fenn uses her conversational format therefore, to attempt to teach through the example and pressure of her readers' perceived peers. Readers were expected to laugh at, think about, and then eschew the behaviours of her mean girls, while emulating her examples of obedient young women and rational-thinking matrons.

For example, in her companion text *The Juvenile Tatler*, Fenn introduces another bad girl, Miss Sneer, who attempts to convince young Miss Warner to go for a walk against her mother's advice: "Pretty creature!" she sneers, "Why do you not get leading-strings? – visible ones, I mean; for you do wear them upon your mind" and "Upon my word, I believe you would have returned in perfect safety – there were no attempts to carry us off by force to Scotland; but perhaps your superior charms might have tempted some naughty man, ha! ha! ha! … I shall whisper the men to be very cautious how they speak to you, lest you should think yourself affronted" (*Juvenile Tatler* 27-8). There is an intertextual reference here to Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* that would have made Fenn's contemporaries giggle. However, those

young eighteenth-century readers could see that Miss Warner is not the uneducated and overly sentimental Arabella. Miss Warner is instead a properly obedient young women who knows that MOTHER (once again, not father here) knows best. Miss Warner is also a budding rational thinker who understands the reasons behind her mother's decision: that public perception is powerful, and that her reputation is at stake.

Fenn's good girls, like Miss Warner, support a warm community among females and uphold each other, much like Jenny Peace in Fielding's *The Governess.* Their binary opposites are the "mean girls" – Miss Pert, Miss Sneer -- who slander and gossip about their peers. In a short ballroom drama entitled "The Wife", two friends, "Miss Flippant" and "Miss Spiteful" make fun of a "Miss Homely", who is not present. When Sir Charles says "I have heard that Miss Homely is engaged", Miss Spiteful replies "To some hospital, as a matron?" (*Juvenile Tatler* 64). The interaction and setting are familiar – they are the predecessors to Austen's Bingley sisters sneering at the Miss Bennetts. This time, however, Fenn has the young women put in their place by the men, who say to her "He who should undertake a voyage round the world in a gay painted barge without mast, rudder or pilot, would be just as wise, as the man who should be induced to offer his hand to the fluttering gaudy creature, who might attract his notice to trifle an idle hour with" (*Juvenile Tatler* 65). Fenn further aims to point out how Miss Sneer's rudeness and criticism of other young women is not congenial and is detrimental, ultimately, to herself, as men of worth see through it. "…your conduct towards your relations, friends, and dependants, is what will recommend you to such men as are likely to prove good husbands" (*Tatler* 69).

Fenn's use of binary opposites here is a literary device that was increasingly common in literature for young women, particularly following Fielding's *The Governess*. The goal was to

shine light on bad behaviour to underline the importance of good behaviour in comparison. For example, Mrs. Teachwell says of the gossip-loving Miss Pert: "Her foible is so unamiable, that I trust she will not engage any of you to imitate her. It really is herself that she exposes to contempt, when she displays such delight in painting the weakness of another" (Fenn *School Occurrences* 35). However, Fenn's characters are not so two-dimensional as her later male-critics would claim. Her Mrs. Teachwells and Mrs. Foresights are actually fairly complex studies of feminine rationalism, the navigation of external pressures of propriety and the educating power of humour. For example, it is ironic that after all her admonishment of her young charges for speaking ill of others, Mrs. Foresight describes Miss Sneer in her own sarcastic voice: "I have a pupil whom I call the Executioner: she cuts up every folly: I cannot cure her of it" (*School Occurrences* 105). In comparison to the staunch moralizing of the period's many conduct manuals, Fenn's adult female role-models are delightfully imperfect. This takes a different path from Fielding's perfect Jenny Peace or The Governess herself, and corresponds with the more flawed and "human" protagonists of the latter-eighteenth century novels, with whom readers could more readily align themselves.

In this way Fenn reveals the depth and complexity of the female character to her adolescent readers. For example, while on the one hand she condemns Miss Pert for her gossip and sharp tongue, on the other hand she is able to use the girl's letters to provide a lesson on the results of poor parenting and a lack of education for women. In effect, the sharp-tongued Miss Pert proves to be both an example of bad behaviour AND the voice of reason. In an excerpt of Miss Pert's letter recounting the upbringing of a Mrs. Simpleton, the reader is introduced to an example of the infantilized woman that would have made Wollstonecraft herself cringe:

"My life has been but a dull round of domestic occurrences, with a few country visits, such as you can imagine, without my taking pains to describe them, that I began to despair of having any subject for a letter to you; but yesterday I went to spend the day at Simpleton-hall and Mrs. Simpleton has supplied me with 'laughter for a month'. You know odd characters are my game… Mrs. Simpleton was the only daughter of Sir Robert Simpleton; she was heiress to a noble estate and the fine seat in which she now resides; she was attended by masters to teach her singing, dancing and a little music, and had the rest of her education from a *French* governess, who enabled her to jabber a little unintelligible jargon, which the family (perceiving it was not *English*) agreed to call *French*. These were the whole of her accomplishments, and indeed, I believe all she was capable of. Family pride induced her father to marry her to her cousin of the same name, who was great a simpleton as herself; he just lived to see an heir born, and then left her sole mistress of *Simpleton-hall*. But I am writing a history instead of a letter. To the point. Father a fool, Mother a fool, what must you expect Master to be?" (Fenn *School Occurrences* 18).

Miss Pert's letter describes detailed anecdotes of the family's struggle to raise well-behaved children as a result of the mother's lack of education:

> "Mrs. Simpleton you will believe would not hear of her darling enduring the hardships of a school; a tutor must be provided, for Master would not learn a single letter by her desire. Master, whilst the tutor was quite new to him, did attend a little, and really had acquired several letters, but whilst he was proceeding with tolerable alacrity, he took a sudden disgust to three of them, and upon Mr. Teachum remonstrating, snatched up a kettle of boiling water to throw at him. It was time to refer the matter to mamma, to know whether a little correction was not to be permitted upon such an occasion? And

> what do you think was the result? I will give you a hundred guesses. She desired those three letters might be left out; there were a great many more she said in the alphabet." (Fenn *School Occurrences* 20).

Despite Miss Pert being identified as impertinent for gossiping and pointing out the faults of others, her letter manages to also instruct readers on the negative results of a lack of useful education for women. Through Miss Pert's letters, Fenn is able to use teenage sarcasm and gossip to draw attention to misbehaviours she feels her readers should avoid (no one wants to end up like Mrs. Simpleton!). Yet, she gets away with it by later having Mrs. Teachwell condemn Miss Pert's delight in the gossip. "remember never to do what you would blush to be seen doing; never to delight in exposing the faults or follies of another" (Fenn, *School Occurrences* 36).

Few scholars have considered how authors such as Ellenor Fenn experimented with literary techniques for the explicit purpose of engaging the teenage girl reader. These texts are important because they offer insight into the way in which adults thought about girl's literacy and pleasure in the late eighteenth century, and about how they considered and negotiated the relationship between children, specifically girls, and the novel. I argue that these texts continue to struggle for status in children's literature scholarship because, as they were designed primarily for a young female audience, they have resisted analysis that is based on the paternalistic and adultist approaches of the nineteenth century. Since they are specifically geared to a teenaged audience, many of Fenn's texts stand outside their previous categorization of didactic literature for children, and their characters – enlightened, thinking and knowing young women – do not fit the expectations of the Romantic critics, who favoured depictions of the innocent, Romantic child.

Conclusion

…a mother ought to be answerable to her daughter's husband for the books her daughter has read…

-- Richard and Maria Edgeworth, *Practical Education*

'Enlightenment' in the eighteenth century was not limited to adults. The desire to grow the mind and soul extended to children as well, and was the primary concentration of the authors and educators who wrote for them, especially in the last half of the century. Education and development during adolescence was of particular concern, especially for young women. In popular culture, such as in the novels of Jane Austen, Enlightenment concepts of self-reflection, development and education are referred to generally as "improvement of the mind" and are attributed to extensive reading. For example, while describing Edmund's support of Fanny's education in *Mansfield Park*, Austen writes: "his attentions were otherwise of the highest importance in assisting the improvement of her mind, and extending its pleasures. He knew her to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense, and a fondness for reading, which, properly directed, must be an education in itself" (*Mansfield Park* 22). Edmund encourages Fanny's development while she is at home with her cousins, and he is away at Oxford. Eighteenth-century learning for young women, in other words, was often self-directed, perhaps with the guidance of a father-figure or governess, and acquired almost entirely from books. Adolescent girls, therefore, were enormous consumers of books in the late eighteenth century, and so it was commercially lucrative for authors and publishers to attract and sustain the attention of these teenaged readers.

Perry Nodelman argues that children's literature exists mainly for two reasons: one is to educate, and the other is to prevent children from being exposed to other literature that adults

consider to be too 'grown up'. He remarks that while performing these two functions, "children's literature characteristically attempts both to make children better than they are and to keep them the same as they are already" (Nodelman, *Hidden Adult* 158). This paradox poses a particular problem for literature created for young women who are neither children, nor adults. Pedagogues of the late eighteenth century such as Sarah Trimmer or the Edgeworths spoke out about the importance of enlightened female education as well as a need for protection from literature they deemed 'inappropriate' for young eyes. However, the representations of young people in texts of the period do not fit later nineteenth-century ideologies of the carefree, innocent, and some would say, male, child. Misunderstood as tireless and didactic, works designed for young female audiences were belittled by nineteenth-century critics such as Charles Lamb, and have mostly been ignored since. The works that I have presented here were aimed at young female readers in that precarious, liminal space between childhood and adulthood – they were learning to develop a voice and to navigate the adult world. Sarah Fielding, Mary Ann Kilner, Dorothy Kilner and Ellenor Fenn used their experience as educators and their familiarity with young readers and students to create texts that would engage this young female audience. They leveraged elements of fairy tales, romances and gothic fiction, and developed dialogue and humour in their texts, reflecting the interests and literary awareness of their target audience of adolescent girls.

My study began with an investigation of the legacy of early French fairy tales in these texts, particularly in the work of Sarah Fielding, who was inspired by the potential of the fairy tale form and its cast of female protagonists. Fairy tales began as a genre written by women, for women, but were adapted to younger children by the time they were translated to English in the early years of the century. Fielding, I suggest, reclaimed several of the uniquely 'feminine'

storytelling techniques used by *salonnières* such as Marie-Catherine D'Aulnoy fifty years before, and leveraged them to launch a genre that would appeal to preteen and adolescent girls.

I then examined the work of Mary Ann Kilner, whose talking objects and toys underline gender roles, behavior expectations, and domestic limitations, and Dorothy Kilner, whose talking animals highlight class distinctions and social hierarchies in the period. Both of the Kilners used picaresque elements to demonstrate the adolescent's increasing awareness of power imbalances in the larger, adult world, and to give voice to the underdog in class and gender hierarchies for generations to come.

Finally, I considered the voice of female characters in the texts of Ellenor Fenn, who was subversive in her use of fairy tale and gothic features in her texts for adolescent girls, recognizing that both genres were popular in the period with that demographic. Fenn's talking girls and women often reveal ambiguities and character flaws, which indicates that her texts were aimed at a more mature audience, than some of her more famous schoolbooks, such as *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*. In her work, Fenn was especially unique for her conscious appropriation of teenage colloquial speech. Her use of humour, irony and intertextuality indicates an expectation of reader intelligence and breadth of knowledge.

Drawing on the work of Mitzi Myers, I have worked to bring into the spotlight texts that were written by late eighteenth-century female pedagogues. I have investigated a set of texts for young people which have been largely overlooked by critics since they went out of print at the turn of the century. As Myers lamented, contemporary views of the eighteenth-century literature for young people continue to be shaped by the analyses brought forward by the male Romantic critics of the nineteenth century, who complained incessantly about the didacticism of the period.

Although do I follow Myers' lead, and have worked to shed light on some long-buried texts written by eighteenth-century female authors, the goals of my research have been quite different. Myers' agenda is clear – to elevate the female authors of children's books of the eighteenth-century, and to underline their social importance:

> For, however tirelessly didactic and ostensibly down-to-earth, women writers' moral and domestic tales smuggle in their own symptomatic fantasies, dramatizing female authority figures, covertly thematizing female power. The educating heroine (and her educable pupils) signals a shifting female cultural ideal, a bourgeois reinvention of womanhood in the stylish new mode of enlightened domesticity. Advocating new pedagogical techniques and goals, women's tracts and tales show how girls should be educated in a new mode of female heroism – in rationality, self-command, and moral autonomy. And the absolute assurance and moral self-confidence which never fail their authors bespeak the female writer's freshly authoritative public voice…Indeed, for the writing woman, instructive genres like the storybook are not peripheral to the Georgian literary canon, but central; teaching shapes her persona and her stance, grants her a mode in which to have her social say. (Myers *Impeccable*, 35)

Myers' work does not focus on the readers of these texts, but on the adult women writing the works and the social impact of their doing so. Actually, her heralding of these women authors for modeling female domestic heroism sounds quite like a backhanded compliment, considering even she refers to their work 'tirelessly didactic'. But I suggest that, as critics, it is important to determine what has coloured our expectations of children's literature, and in what ways we can separate our analysis of a children's text from the expectations of others in the past. As Perry Nodelman jokes:

> It has been fashionable for the last hundred or more years for commentators to express dislike of "didactic" children's books. But the often proclaimed distaste for the didactic is usually actually just dismay about the *obviously* didactic, on the assumption that, ideally, children's literature ought to teach without seeming to do so. (Nodelman, *Hidden Adult* 158)

As Nodelman suggests, and as Myers' commentary reveals, contemporary adults would still rather maintain the Romantic notion that children's books should be free of any obvious educational purpose. However, if Enlightenment thinking was about self-reflection, education and improvement, then what may seem 'tirelessly didactic' to contemporary readers could have been exciting to an eighteenth-century teen.

In my research therefore, rather than accepting these texts as tireless, I consider the works of these authors in a different light. I ask: What literary techniques were these authors using to engage their young readers? How were these texts received by adolescent girls? I have investigated the authors' use of literary devices, dialogue and intertextuality, and have drawn on young readers' responses in journals, and in their own writings to discuss young readers' reactions to and reflections in, or 'voices' in the texts. To do this, I have taken what is sometimes referred to as a 'childist' approach of studying the work of Sarah Fielding, Mary Ann and Dorothy Kilner, and Ellenor Fenn. "Childist" or "child-oriented" approaches see children as critics, and attempts to determine how they used and responded to texts in the past. According to Grenby and Reynolds, Childist criticism:

> …can best be compared with the branch of feminist criticism known as 'ecriture feminine" – which held that language was 'man-made' in the sense that it had largely been moulded by men who created dictionaries, compiled grammars, set down the rules of rhetoric,

dominated all public forms of writing and expression and so created and controlled the structures and capabilities of language in accordance with male brains and bodies. (Grenby and Reynolds *Children's Literature Studies* 128)

It is important, therefore, to approach historical children's texts not just from the perspective of the adults who have written about them – especially since many of those adults were male critics interested mainly in the literary developments of the nineteenth-century. We cannot simply accept that children of the generations before Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* received no enjoyment from fiction. On considering readers in children's literature criticism, Peter Hunt has remarked, "…those of us who are concerned with children's literature need to beware of the trap laid for us by the very concept of 'literature,' and [adult] literary standards that claim to be (or aspire to be) authoritative… if we value [children as readers who make meaning] at all… we have to see them making it within their own culture" (Hunt 239). This dissertation has aimed to consider the young female audiences of the works of Fielding, the Kilners and Fenn and to determine how their voices and interested are reflected in fiction of the late eighteenth-century.

Sarah Fielding, Mary Ann and Dorothy Kilner, and Ellenor Fenn recognized the potential of a new genre of text – the real precursor, it could be argued, to the contemporary YA novel – in which narrative form was expressly tailored to appeal to and to address the adolescent girls themselves. As experienced pedagogues, their intimacy with the young people in their care provided insight into the experience of eighteenth-century youth. This understanding especially shines in their work for adolescent girls, in which dialogue is rich, and characters seem to speak for the first time in their own voices.

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