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THE RAPE OF MARY RAYMOND: A RADICAL VIEW OF RAPE

IN MARY HAYS'S

THE MEMOIRS OF EMMA COURTNEY AND *THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE*

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THE RAPE OF MARY RAYMOND: A RADICAL VIEW OF RAPE IN MARY HAYS'S *THE MEMOIRS OF EMMA COURTNEY* AND *THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE*

By

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in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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THE RAPE OF MARY RAYMOND: A RADICAL VIEW OF RAPE

IN MARY HAYS'S

THE MEMOIRS OF EMMA COURTNEY AND *THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE*

Synopsis

The thesis is an examination of Mary Hays's first and second novels, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) in order to claim a re-working of political and gender constructions of women that underwrite rape narratives produced in the Long Eighteenth Century.

To discuss ways in which Hays's novels challenge the assumptions and constructions of femininity disseminated in earlier rape texts I have selected examples of polemic and narratives written between the 1670s and the 1790s together with some of the contemporary Radical texts which exhibit similar concerns and views expressed in the writer's feminist tracts and novels.

I argue that Hays's gender politics are closely related to the issues played out in both novels. That is, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* is a protest against contemporary views of 'femininity' and a sustained and rational argument for female sexual desire rather than feminine 'depravity' or 'madness'. *The Victim of Prejudice* asserts that although society's reaction to rape ensures dire consequences for the violated women her sexuality is not necessarily responsible for her rape. Hence, the view of women advanced in Hays's first novel is crucial to an understanding of issues raised in the re-fashioning of the rape episode in the second.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was presented; external institutions were visited for consultation purposes and papers prepared for publication.

The thesis is presented in 72,000 words.

Signature ....S.A.Olwer.....

Date ....September 2007...

THE RAPE OF MARY RAYMOND: A RADICAL VIEW OF RAPE IN MARY HAYS'S *THE MEMOIRS OF EMMA COURTNEY* AND *THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE*

Introduction

The thesis concerns sexual violence as an event in fiction produced between the late 1600s and 1790s. The focus is on Mary Hays's unusual treatment of rape in her first and second novels, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799). I argue that the former challenged entrenched ideas relating to the 'nature' of 'femininity' and female sexuality, and that the latter traced the impact of those notions on raped women, whatever the circumstances of the rape.

I claim that Hays's Radical feminism underpins the portrayal of her first heroine's bid for sexual independence, and that an appreciation of the writer's unconventional view of female sexuality is crucial to an understanding of her stubborn, raped second heroine. In support of this claim I compare Hays's treatment with examples of rape narratives produced earlier in the eighteenth century, as well as with some of the texts written by her Radical contemporaries.

The Introduction is divided into three separate but interconnecting parts. The first section concerns ways in which Hays's experience as a writer contributes to the focus of the thesis. It is not a biography as such, rather an exploration of ways in which Hays's personal experiences and gender politics inspired her fiction. The second section 'places' the thesis within research and writings on Hays's work. The third section clarifies definitions, the aim, scope and the limitations of the examination, and makes clear how the thesis is arranged.

1 Mary Hays the Writer

Mary Hays was born into a family of middle-class Rational Dissenters in Southwark near London on 4th May, 1759. She was an inveterate letter-writer, something which, together with a highly developed sense of dramatic expression borrowed from contemporary novels, was to play an important role in conveying the gender politics that underpin her work. As Marilyn Brooks has argued, whenever Hays wished to impress her fiancé and Fellow Dissenter John Eccles with her intelligent thoughts and views on any subject, she found inspiration for the vocabulary in fiction such as Frances Brook's *A History of Emily Montague* (1769).[1] Hays's engagement to John ended when he died of fever in 1780, just weeks before their marriage. Stricken by her loss, Hays found comfort in reading novels.

It was the letters written to her lover during their short relationship that not only helped to construct a narrative of Hays's life but to propel her into fiction writing. What is significant to this thesis is that, in spite of her Radical and feminist persuasion, from the time she wrote her first letters to Eccles to the time of her last publication she subscribed to many of the notions of emotion and feeling promoted in the literature of Sensibility. It is no accident that the contemporary view of woman's 'sensibility' is the focus of Hays's first novel *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*.

The terms 'Radical', 'femininity' and 'Sensibility' have a wide range of defining features. Before I move on I would like to stress that the thesis concerns

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[1] *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, ed. by Marilyn L. Brooks, (Lampeter, Ceredigion: Edwin Mellin Press, 2004) p 2

only those aspects of the terms that apply to Hays's brand of feminism and her re-fashioning of the rape narrative. A definition of the rape trope, the kind of 'femininity' to be examined, Radical women writers' understanding of the debilitating and liberating effects of Sensibility, and the focus of Hays's particular Radicalism is outlined in Part Three.

Throughout the examination I seek to avoid the usual scrutiny of Hays's personal experiences which labelled her 'notorious'. Instead, I wish to emphasise the importance of the link between Hays's insistence on the primary equality of women as outlined in her political tracts and expressed in her novels. That is, the thesis is an examination of the unconventional strategies she deploys in the depiction of her unusual fictional heroines in order to expose injustices to women. What emerges is a critique of the way that negative patriarchal constructions of women render women vulnerable to sexual violence. I claim that Hays's re-working of the rape narrative demonstrates that when these constructions are combined with the contemporary sexual double standard in fiction, they shape negative attitudes to seduced, raped and prostituted women and perpetuate the injustices women experience in life.

Hays's Radical writing career began in the 1780s when she took the leading Baptist progressive Robert Robinson as her spiritual mentor. Through Robinson Hays met some of the leading intellectuals and most influential rational dissenters of her time, including the Unitarian Theophilus Lindsay and his successor John Disney (for whom she wrote sermons). In 1788 Hays benefited from the opening of New College, Hackney, which attracted an impressive group of dissenters to its public meetings and lectures.

Hays's first independent publication (which appeared under a pseudonym,

'Eusebia'), was a pamphlet entitled, *Cursory Remarks on an Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship* (1791), a defence against Gilbert Wakefield's attack on Dissenting modes of worship.[2] The pamphlet was well received. Although he was not exactly persuaded by her argument, Wakefield praised Hays's reasoning and compositional style in the second edition of his Enquiry.

Following her initial literary success, Hays entered into more overtly politicised circles and became intimately acquainted with various members of the Johnson coterie.[3] One of the group, the mathematician William Frend, suggested that she read William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice and its influence on the General Virtue* (1793). When she wrote to Godwin requesting a copy, she began an enduring relationship and a lengthy tutelage.[4] Gina Luria has argued that the experience of a succession of male teachers was not an uncommon one. Private tutelage with learned men replaced formal education for young female writers such as Hays and her contemporaries, including Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), Amelia Anderson Opie (1769-1853), Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827), Mary Brunton (1778-1818) and Elizabeth Hamilton (1756-1816). As Luria puts it, Hays 'circumvented the social proscriptions against female

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[2] Gilbert Wakefield, *An Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship* (1791). For further discussion of 'Eusebia' and Mary Wollstonecraft's response to *Cursory Remarks*, see Gina Luria Walker, *Mary Hays (1759-1843): The Growth of a Woman's Mind,* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006) pp 46 - 53; 63 - 65

[3] The bookseller Joseph Johnson was associated with Radical and dissenting writers and political activists including, Mary Hays, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, William Blake, George Dyer, Thomas Paine, the painter Henry Fuseli, and Dr Richard Price.

[4] Mary Hays, *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous,* (first published in 1793), edited and introduced by Gina Luria, (New York: Garland, 1974) pp 5 - 15. See also Gina Luria, 'Mary Hays's Letters and Manuscripts', in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 3:2 (Winter, 1977) 524 - 302. On Hays's tutelage to Godwin, see Frida Knight, 'Literary Friendships: William Godwin and Mary Hays' in *University Rebel: The Life of William Frend,* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971).

education and filled the vacuum created by the absence of formal training and intellectual vigour for women by learning through personal instruction with generous men'.[5]

Yet, however generous her tutor might be, there was the risk of assimilation for a woman whose intellectual development was nurtured almost entirely in a male environment. Hays seemed to be aware of and comfortable with the risk, admitting in a letter to Godwin that she was 'more used to, and therefore more at ease in the company of men'.[6] Although the admission is an unnerving comment from a woman who spent the major part of her writing career producing feminist polemic, it figures a paradox that is central to a study of Hays's work.

In 1792 George Dyer gave Hays a copy of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a work that was to inspire the budding feminist. Although initially Wollstonecraft received Hays's admiring correspondence coolly, the two women eventually became close friends.

Hays's first approach to the topic of women's rights was her collection of pieces entitled *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (1793). In general, the text is the expression of the sort of philosophical Radicalism one would expect from a woman coming from Hays's intellectual background. For example, the essay entitled 'Thoughts on Civil Liberty' gives equal weight to the value of the emancipated mind and gender, and the chapter entitled, 'On the Influence of Authority and Custom on the Female Mind and Manners', opens with the rather

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[5] Gina Luria, 'Mary Hays's Letters and Manuscripts', *Signs*, 3.2 (Winter, 1977) 524 - 530 (526)

[6] *The Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, ed. by Annie F. Wedd. Letter to William Godwin dated 8 March. 1796 (London: Methuen, 1935) p 233

Godwinian claim that 'Of all bondage mental bondage is surely the most fatal'.[7]

What is interesting is the way Hays enlists male supporters in her arguments for women's rights:

> Lovers of truth! Be not partial in your researches. Men of sense and science! Remember, by degrading our understandings, you incapacitate us for knowing your value [....] how impolitic to throw a veil over our eyes, that we may not distinguish the radiance that surrounds you.[8]

Hays's tendency to approach men as the agents of change whilst discouraging women to rely on them threatened to compromise her work. However, she attempts to address the problem in her most radical feminist tract, *An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Woman.* The *Appeal* was written in the early 1790s before Hays had read Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman.* [9] It was unpublished until 1798, by which time the anti-Jacobin movement guaranteed that it fell on deaf ears.

Although the *Appeal* is an important document to students of Hays's work it is often regarded as a pale reflection of Mary Wollstonecraft's more famous, *A Vindication*. Yet, since it moves steadily through both religious and rationalist arguments for women's rights, Hays's *Appeal* is more inclusive than Wollstonecraft's text. It is also much more positive about men and less critical of women. In Hays's polemic and fiction the emphasis is on the restrictive practices that encourage women to be frivolous rather than on the 'weaknesses' of the female sex. As she puts it, women 'find themselves enclosed in a kind of magic circle, out

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[7] Hays, *Letters and Essays*, p 19
[8] Hays, *Letters and Essays*, p 26
[9] Hereafter, I shall refer to Wollstonecraft's, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as *A Vindication*.

of which they cannot move, but to contempt or destruction'.[10] Hays's view of femininity as a contradictory construction in the *Appeal* goes beyond Wollstonecraft's rather more pessimistic account of the frailties of woman in the *Vindication*.[11]

The tone of the *Appeal* suggests that it is meant to deliver a gradual emancipation. For example, in her introduction Hays attempts to distance herself from the charges levied against Radical women writers by critics such as the Reverend Richard Polwhele, in order to assure her male readers:

> Know, however, that I come not in the garb of an Amazon, to dispute the field of right or wrong; but rather as a humble petitioner [....] Not as a fury flinging the torch of discord and revenge amongst the daughters of Eve but as a friend and companion bearing a little taper to lead them to the paths of truth, of virtue, and of liberty.[12]

However, Hays is unable to maintain this stance for very long. A possible reason for

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[10] Mary Hays, *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain In Behalf of the Women,* (first published in 1798) ed. by Gina Luria, (New York: Garland, 1974) p 111.
Hereafter, I shall refer to Hays's *An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain In Behalf of the Women*, as, the *Appeal*.
Mary Wollstonecraft also uses the term 'magic circle', for example, to refer to romantic imagination in her *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, (1796) 'Phantoms of bliss! Ideal forms of excellence! Again inclose me in our magic circle, and wipe clear from my remembrance the disappointments which render the sympathy painful'. *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 6 vols. (London: Pickering, 1989) V1, p 294. Hays uses the term to refer to constraints which society imposes on women in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1996), p 32 and in Ch 26, but she uses the term to refer to an illusory romance, 'I felt guarded as by a talisman, encompassed in a magic circle, through which neither danger could assail nor sorrow pierce me' in *The Victim of Prejudice,* (Ontario: Broadview, 1996) p 122

[11] For a comparison of Hays's writing with that of Wollstonecraft's see Katherine M Rogers, 'The Contribution of Mary Hays'. *Prose Studies*, 10:2 (1987)131-142; and for a discussion of Hays's politics, see Burton R Pollin, 'Mary Hays on Women's Rights in the *Monthly Magazine'* in *Etudes Anglaises,* XXX1V No 3 (1971) 271 - 282.

[12] Hays, *Appeal*, v. In his poem 'Unsex'd Females: A Poem' (1798), reproduced in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity,* ed. by Vivien Jones, (London: Routledge, 1990) pp 186 - 189 Richard Polwhele clearly refers to Mary Wollstonecraft in his attack on a band of Amazons, 'And vindicate the *Rights of womankind'*, (line 84). He follows with comments on 'veteran' BARBAULD, (Anna Laetitia) then ROBINSON, (Mary), charming', SMITH, (Charlotte) (line 89); HELEN (Maria Williams) and YEARSLEY (Ann, 'the Bristol milkmaid a working-class poet). Finally, he attacks Mary Hays, 'And flippant HAYS assumed a cynic leer', (line 99) p188.

this is that she wishes to encourage an awareness of the prevailing aggressive patriarchal ideology in her liberal male mentors:

> THAT MEN ARE SUPERIOR BEINGS WHEN COMPARED WITH WOMEN AND THAT CONSEQUENTLY NATURE AND REASON INVEST THEM WITH AUTHORITY OVER THE WEAKER SEX [....] is the grand pivot upon which social and domestic politicks turn [....] it must be confessed, that even those who consider the human species, in a more liberal and extensive point of view [....] yet suppose the necessity of subordination on one side unavoidable.[13]

The most critical and scathing insights are reserved for the self-interest and indolence of those 'enlightened' men who should have been sympathetic to a woman's situation. She complains:

> The truth I believe is, that men in general, think nothing at all about the matter [of women's oppression] except when their pride and resentment are roused, by any little opposition on the part of women. Or when they do think, they consider the authority which has been assumed by their sex, not only as an inheritance against which no claim can be of any avail; but as a birthright given from above, which it is their duty as much as their inclination to maintain. In short they are fully convinced that they are much fitter to govern women, than women to govern subject they doze.[14]

Although practical, Hays's realism seems rather disruptive in a text advanced as an appeal to 'enlightened' men. Indeed it suggests that such a group probably did not exist in the 1790s. In spite of this, her strikingly acute and provocative observations launched Hays into the literary world:

> No! No! It is vain to think, that any man, or set of men, or men in short taken in the gross shall by frequent appeals to their best feelings seek out reasons to portion it [that is, authority] away. With a bad grace do men intrusted with power, derive it to each other, and still they keep it within as narrow a circle as possible, but when through necessity, and for the common purposes of life, they admit women to certain puny privileges, and delegate to them a scanty portion of power, with what a niggardly and griping hand do they dispense their favours! With so many useless and mortifying precautions do they trammel their gifts, that they

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[13] Hays, *Appeal*, pp 98 - 99
[14] Hays, *Appeal*, p 101 - 2

become by passing through such hands equivalent to prohibitions.[15]

Once she had explored Radical male disinterest she had to address herself to women, but since there was simply no female audience for the kind of activist message that her logic required, Hays faced yet another problem.[16] She resorted to the only available option, an appeal to men to be more 'fair', to behave more 'philosophically', and to rely on the power of the mind to distinguish 'error' and the omnipotence of 'truth'.[17] Although the inescapable truth Hays addresses in the *Appeal* is the problem of dealing with male arrogance and negligence, it is the unyielding nature of the historical moment in which she writes that is most powerfully expressed in the text.

Hays's predicament was the paradox of the 1790s. Only the awkward and ponderous contemporary culture of rational Dissent would enable her to enquire so comprehensively into the sexual, political and cultural injustices women endured. Yet the very same culture kept such enquiries in a firmly marginal position, and one which resisted the ideologically perceptive conclusions to which her logic led her. Nevertheless, Hays's first and second novels insist upon such enquiries.

In the mid-1790s a politicised Hays, with strong ideas on injustices to women, began to review books, first for the *Critical Review* and later for the *Analytical Review* under Wollstonecraft's direction. She also contributed essays and letters ranging from discussions on feminism and female education to the philosophy of Helvetius to the *Monthly Magazine*. For example, her letter, 'On Novel Writing'

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15 Hays, *Appeal*, pp 98 - 99

16 On the lack of a female audience, see Anna Wilson, 'Mary Wollstonecraft and the Search for the Radical Woman', in *Genders* 6, (November, 1989) 88 - 101

17 Hays, *Appeal*, p 102

argues for realism in terms of probability in plot, natural language, and vivid depiction of emotions, including sexual passion and rejection. Published in the *Monthly Magazine* in 1797, the letter was intended (at least in part) to defend *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney,* her novel of the previous year. The inspiration for the novel is widely believed to be Hays's unrequited passion for the charismatic and prominent Radical Unitarian William Frend.[18]

In her polemic, Hays argued that men who prefer 'folly, vice, impertinence of every kind', and who desire women to be solely 'their amusement, their dependent; and in plain and unvarnished terms their slaves' do so, because they are terrified that their unearned claims to sexual superiority could be overthrown by the 'frightful certainty of having women declared their equals, and as such their companions and friends'.[19] She believed that 'God created mankind male and female, different indeed in sex for the wisest and best purposes, but equal in rank, because of equal utility'.[20] Her charge is that men have defied God by refusing to educate women and by keeping them in 'subjection' and 'dependence', a state that she memorably defines as 'PERPETUAL BABYISM'.[21]

I claim that Hays sees a link between negative patriarchal constructions of femininity and an association between sexual inequality and women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation. The thesis examines the connection between Hays's personal gender politics described in the *Appeal* and the inequalities and injustices that women experience in her fiction. For example, in the *Appeal* she condemns 'the base arts used by profligate men, to seduce innocent and unsuspecting females' and

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[18] William Frend was banished from Cambridge after a trial for blasphemy and sedition.
[19] Hays, *Appeal*, p 116
[20] Hays, *Appeal*, p 21
[21] Hays, *Appeal*, pp 97

she suggests that 'fallen' women are to be regarded as 'more the object of pity than blame'. Both of these notions are examined in *The Victim of Prejudice*, but first raised in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*.[22] When Hays's fiction focuses on raped women it exposes the injustice of the loss of reputation and demonstrates ways in which a lack of education and employment can, and does, lead to prostitution.

Hays attended Wollstonecraft on her deathbed and wrote the obituary for the *Monthly Magazine* that led to her contribution to *The Annual Necrology for 1797-98*. After Wollstonecraft's death Hays continued her campaign for liberal feminism, although the public denunciation sparked by Godwin's ill-judged publication of the *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1798 forced her to speak more circumspectly. Established as a professional writer with numerous connections in the London publishing world, Hays began to receive commissions for various forms of literary work, most notably biography.

In 1803 Richard Phillips commissioned Hays to write an ambitious six volume collation of 305 mini-biographies of famous women, *Female Biography; or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of all Ages and Countries.* The work consisted of a compilation of interesting narrative material quarried from a variety of prior sources both ancient and relatively contemporary. The entries varied in length from a single sentence to several pages. Typically, the women featured in the collection merited attention less for their exemplification of traditional feminine 'virtues' than for their public or political influence, their intellectual achievements, or the persecution they suffered on account of their sex. Although she produced biographies of earlier feminists, including Mary Astell, Catherine Macaulay and

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[22] Hays, *Appeal*, p 145: 116

Madam Roland, Hays felt compelled by public opinion to omit a biography of Wollstonecraft. As Polwhele's poem illustrated, Wollstonecraft was widely demonised, especially after her death.[23] The omission reminds us just how awkward it had become in the early 1800s for a woman hoping to be published and taken seriously to identify openly with Wollstonecraft. Yet many women writers who did not wish to be associated with Wollstonecraft's dubious reputation still continued to espouse her ideas. As Kathryn Gleadle's research shows, as the nineteenth century wore on numerous women began to uphold her as their precursor, both privately in letters and publicly in print.[24]

Like Wollstonecraft, Hays experienced considerable prejudice because of her writing and relationships with men. As Gina Luria Walker has argued, the two women grew close when they shared their 'intimate histories' during Wollstonecraft's recovery from a second suicide attempt in 1795:

> Eager to advance her relationship with Frend, Hays sought to learn from Wollstonecraft's experiences with Imlay and Fuseli; she studied the realities of the "fallen" woman's experience. Hays was captivated by Wollstonecraft's firsthand accounts of sexual rapture, betrayal, and maternity. She may have read some of Wollstonecraft's feverish letters to Imlay.[25]

The deployment of 'real life' letters was the means by which Hays's heroine Emma corresponded with the rational Mr Francis, for whom Godwin provided the model. Yet I would argue that Hays's letters to Godwin and her novels concern deeper issues than her unsuccessful relationship with Frend. For example, they

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[23] See footnote 12

[24] Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001)

[25] Luria Walker, *Mary Hays, (1759-1843): The Growth of a Woman's Mind*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006) pp 123 - 124

examine the problems of a sexual economy that prepared women only for marriage, and the impact on young, single women of the contemporary lack of education and training for the professions.

The thesis claims that the novels are the work of an unusual woman who could not, or would not, enter the marriage circuit. Since she refuses to submit to the usual rape text ending of novels about women in the consummation of a love interest in marriage, ruin, or death, Hays is also a woman who refuses to conform to literary convention.

2 Research and Writings on Mary Hays's Work

This section aims to 'place' my analysis of Hays's treatment of rape in fiction within the body of biographic and critical texts. Relatively little research has been carried out on Hays's life and novels with the exception of that concerned with Radical figures such as Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Literary criticism of her fiction is almost entirely focused on the 'notorious' first novel.

In 1925 Annie Wedd the writer's great-great niece published a collection of Hays's love-letters.[26] In 1972 Gina Luria produced a ground-breaking dissertation, 'A Critical Biography'. The biography and subsequent writings provide much of what we know of Hays today.[27] Luria suggests that Hays was not only unsuccessful in her sexual relationships she was also prepared to carry out 'a scandalous

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[26] A.F. Wedd, 'The Story of Mary Hays', in *Love Letters of Mary Hays 1779-1781,* (London: Methuen, 1925)

[27] Gina Luria, 'Mary Hays: A Critical Biography'. Dissertation. New York University, 1972. See also Luria's Introduction to the reprint of Hays's *Appeal,* (New York: Garland, 1974); Gina Luria, 'Mary Hays's Letters and Manuscripts', in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3:2, (Winter, 1977) (524 - 530)

disrobing in public', mainly through the two novels that are the focus of this thesis.[28] Although Hays's relationships with men like the preacher Robert Robinson, Henry Crabb Robinson and William Godwin were intellectual, Hays became notorious as the woman who fell in love with men who did not return her feelings, for example, William Frend and the much younger poet Charles Lloyd, a friend of Coleridge. More recently, Marylin M Brooks published a book of Hays's letters to John Eccles, William Godwin, and others.[29]

Much of the research on Hays and her writings is to be found in journals. For example, Burton R Pollin published a paper on Hays's contribution to the *Monthly Magazine* on women's rights, education and Helvetius.[30] Pollin cites Charles Southey's account of Hays's journalism, which appears in a letter to Joseph Cottle, dated March 13, 1797 soon after he met Hays. Although 'She writes in the 'Monthly magazine' under the signature of M.H., and sometimes writes nonsense there about *Helvetius*', he finds her 'an agreeable woman, and a Godwinite', and the author of 'an uncommon book,' which has been 'much praised and much abused'.[31]

Katherine M Rogers compared Hays's *Appeal* with Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication,* arguing that although Wollstonecraft is 'stronger as a theorist', Hays's strategy 'is to confront conventional formulas with daily experience, so as to demonstrate by common sense their internal inconsistencies and their deviations from what actually happens and what is obviously desirable'.[32] Tilottama Rajan has

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[28] Gina Luria, 'Letters and Manuscripts', in *Signs* 524 - 230 (525)

[29] *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist,* ed. by Marylin M. Brooks, (Lampeter, Ceredigion: Edwin Mellin Press, 2004)

[30] Burton R Pollin, 'Mary Hays on Women's Rights in the *Monthly Magazine*', in *Etudes Anglaises,* XX1V No 3, (1971) 271 - 282 (271)

[31] Pollin, 'Mary Hays on Women's Rights', (272); Charles Cuthbert Southey, ed., *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey,* (New York, 1851) p 96

[32] Katherine M Rogers, 'The Contribution of Mary Hays', in *Prose Studies,*

discussed the transference of 'life' into 'text' in terms of Hays's novels, whilst Katherine Binhammer has published work on women's reading in Hays's fiction. T.A. Hoagwood, Mary Jacobus and Sandra Sherman have also published essays on Hays's novels in journals and reviews.[33]

Gina Luria Walker's paper, 'Sewing in the Next World: Mary Hays as Dissenting Autodidact in the 1780s' (2000) formed the basis of a chapter in her recently published book on Hays's polemic.[34] Luria Walker argues that after Wollstonecraft's untimely death Hays was transformed into the obvious candidate for public denunciation as chief living 'unsex'd female'. This was in spite of the rational culture of late-eighteenth-century radical Dissent which encouraged her to venture into the masculine strongholds of Enlightenment understanding.

10:2 (September, 1987) 131 - 142 (131;132)

[33] Tilottama Rajan, 'Auto narration and Genotext in Mary Hays' , in *Studies in Romanticism*, 32:2 (Summer, 1993) 149 - 176; Katherine Binhammer, 'The Persistence of Reading: Governing Female Novel Reading in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers'*, in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27.2 (2003), 1 - 22; T.A. Hoagwood, 'Social Thought, Hermeneutic Structures and Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice'* , in *Politics, Philosophy and the Production of Romantic Texts,* (Dekalb III: Northern Ill. University Press, 1996), Ch 6, pp 122 - 139; Mary Jacobus, 'Traces of an Accusing Spirit: Mary Hays and the Vehicular State', in *Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 202 - 234; Sandra Sherman, 'The Feminization of 'Reason' in Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice*', in *The Centennial Review*, XL1 no. 1 (Winter, 1997) 143 - 172.

[34] Gina Luria Walker, ROM on the NET, 25th February 2002. The paper was presented at 'Colloquium, Learned Ladies/Femmes Philosophes', *Feminism and the Enlightenment*, Royal Holloway College, University of London on 27th May 2000; Luria Walker, *Mary Hays (1759-1843): The Growth of a Woman's Mind,* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006).

However, work on Hays and her novels is most often found in chapters in books focusing on women's writing, on late eighteenth-century feminism, or on Romanticism.[35]

In contrast to much of this work my anatomy of Hays's rape narrative sees her first and second novels as an important challenge to a literary convention that perpetuated the sexual double standard and exploited a kind of 'femininity' that condemned raped and prostituted women. My claim is supported by a comparison between the portrayal of Mary Raymond's violation and its aftermath with texts that throughout the Long Eighteenth Century had routinely used rape as a theme, in

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[35] Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) pp 130 - 132; Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 246 - 269; Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica, Writing and Fiction 1660-1800*, (London: Virago, 1989) 214 - 237: 227-8: 228 - 252; *A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660 - 1800,* ed. by Janet Todd (Totowa, N.J: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987); *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present,* Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy and Patricia Clements, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Eleanor Ty, *Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 46 - 73; Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-51* (New York: St Martin's, 1995);Vivien Jones, 'The Tyranny of The Passions: Feminism And Heterosexuality in the Fiction of Wollstonecraft and Hays' in *Political Gender: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Sally Ledger, Josephine McDonagh and Jane Spencer (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994) 173 - 188; 'Theorists on Revolution: Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Marie Jeanne-Roland, Germaine de Stael, Sophie Grouchy de Condorcet', in *Women Theorists on Society and Politics*, ed by Lyn McDonald, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Larier University Press, 1998); Gary Kelly, *Mary Hays's Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Reform Writers, 1789-1832,* ed by Gary Kelly and Ed Applegate, (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1996) 124 - 130; Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing And Revolution 1790-1827,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) pp 119-125; Eleanor Ty, 'The Imprisoned Female Body in Mary Hays' *The Victim of Prejudice'*, *Women, Revolution and the Novels of The 1790s*, ed by Linda Lang-Peralta, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999) 133-153; Nicola J. Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel 1790 - 1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions,* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 49 - 51: 73: 84 - 86; Margaret Ann Doody, 'English Women Novelists and the French Revolution', La femme Angleterre et dans les colonies Americaines aux XV11c et XV111c siecles, Paris Actes du Colloque tenir a Paris, Universite de Lille 111, 1975. 176 - 198. Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* , (London: Longman Literature in English Series, 1989) 25 - 30: 73; Anne K Mellor, *Romanticism And Gender,* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 10; 40 - 49.

order to underwrite negative attitudes that disadvantaged women.

Yet, although work on rape has been carried out on specific texts, for example Richardson's *Clarissa*, and on rape as a theme in chapters or parts of a longer work, no substantial research has yet been offered in terms of its significance as a recurring and evolving theme in novels of the period. Therefore, I believe that this project is a contribution to eighteenth-century studies.

3 Definitions, Scope, Limitations and arrangement of the thesis

Definitions

The 'conventional' rape 'trope'

This section aims to clarify terms used in the thesis. Firstly, I want to explain what I mean when I refer to the 'familiar' or 'conventional' rape narrative. To facilitate this I want to advance the proposition that conventionally, and within a variety of contexts, the stock rape narrative presented sexual violation in a way that heightened its figurative elements, and manipulated ordinary responses to the event by suspending or interrupting them. The effect was to displace the reader's focus onto other formal or thematic elements. These elements in turn expressed anxieties and patriarchal priorities including perceptions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity', governmental authority, aristocracy, the sexual double standard, and a host of related issues that impacted on women's lives.

Within this scheme, and since fictional representations of women in the Long Eighteenth Century frequently provided a vehicle for the debate concerning the

relationship of property (the ownership of material things), to propriety (the possession of one's own person), fictional rape episodes became a method of reminding women readers of the negative consequences of female sexual desire. The ultimate aim was to reinforce the view that it is not only 'improper', but also 'unnatural'.

More intricately, the dire warnings to women embedded in representations of rape in 'conventional' or 'familiar' rape stories demonstrated ways in which eighteenth-century novels textualised male anxiety. That is, the trope encapsulated economic, cultural and religious priorities that were intended to validate the importance of chastity and 'proper' female sexual behaviour in the exchange of property and the preservation of family honour. In short, the warnings underpinning the rape trope functioned as a tool to suppress female sexual desire. Since female desire was to be regarded as 'unnatural', the 'conventional' scheme characterised female sexuality in negative terms such as weakness, madness or hysteria. As Elizabeth Grosz has argued:

> Misogynist thought has commonly found a convenient self-justification for women's secondary social positions by containing them within bodies that are represented, even constructed, as frail, imperfect, unruly, and unreliable [....] and, at the same time, these very functions render women vulnerable, in need of protection or special treatment, as variously prescribed by patriarchy. [....] In other words, women's corporeal specificity is used to explain and justify the different (read: unequal) social positions and cognitive abilities of the two sexes. By implication, women's bodies are presumed to be incapable of men's achievements, being weaker, more prone to (hormonal) irregularities, intrusions, and unpredictabilities.[36]

The amatory novels described as containing the 'familiar' or 'conventional' rape narrative present a view of women as the persecuted innocent, that is, 'virtue in

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[36] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995) pp 13 - 14

distress', such as Penelope Aubin's Ardelisa, and Mary Delarivier Manley's Charlot, or as desiring, seduced and betrayed virgins, for example, Eliza Haywood's heroines, Cleomira and Belinda. On the other hand, the Sentimental novel presents the raped heroine and her family as ruined, most famously in Richardson's Clarissa, who sees herself to be so debased after rape that she yearns to die.[37] However, 'virtue' is rewarded, for example in the story of Samuel Richardson's servant girl, Pamela.

What concerned Radical women writers of the 1790s was the suspicion that the image of 'ideal' submissive passivity and the 'quivering' female depicted in the literature of Sensibility actually rendered women vulnerable to sexual violation. I argue that one of the effects of Sensibility was a distortion of the distinction between seduction and rape. Hays's radical notion of 'natural' female desire and sexual agency was fundamental to an attack on the constructions of women underwriting a trope that hinged on the weaknesses rather than the strengths of women, and exposed them to sexual violence.

Since the 'conventional' or 'familiar' trope tended to exploit the sexual double standard and to ignore its effects it regarded women, especially in the figure of the servant and the prostitute, as fair game. Yet a prostitute like Emily Atkins in Henry Mackenzie's The *Man of Feeling* (1771) may well have been seduced, ruined and abandoned before her 'fall'. Since every woman was the guardian of her 'chastity', according to the rape trope, she had 'allowed' the rape to happen. Interestingly, the assumption of guilt was maintained in the stock rape narrative in

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[37] Penelope Aubin, *The Strange Adventures of Count Vinevil and his Family,* (1721); Mary Delarivier Manley, *The New Atalantis,* (1709); Samuel Richardson's *Pamela,* (1740); Eliza Haywood, *The British Recluse,* (1722); Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa,* (1747-8).

spite of the fact that sexual encounters were routinely described in terms of masculine force.

The re-fashioning of a trope that not only misrepresented the nature of female sexuality but also worked to perpetuate negative attitudes towards women, involved the clarification of the patriarchal view of female sensibility and its connection with sexual coercion. The revision called for a distinction to be made between seduction leading to consensual sex and the seduction of a vulnerable dependant such as a servant, ward, or other naïve innocent that leads to sexual violence. Furthermore, a challenge to the trope would have to undermine the typical rape narrative stance toward women engaged in activities traditionally seen as a threat to men, namely women reading, women writing, women desiring.

In summary, a re-fashioning of the familiar narrative would entail the creation of a rape story that took the violation and its consequences to an individual woman seriously. Since one of the rape trope's most defining features is the assumption that the violated woman herself is to blame for the event, the greatest challenge would be to undermine the contemporary double standard in order to clarify the responsibility for the rape.

Feminisms, 'Proper' feminine behaviour and Conduct Literature

Although the thesis claims a challenge to the trope that persistently disseminated negative attitudes towards women, it is important to acknowledge that there were a variety of constructions of 'femininity' in the Long Eighteenth

Century, and that attitudes to women were not always as they seemed.[38] For example, feminist criticism has often suggested an unambiguous rejection of female pleasure ('pleasure' is usually interpreted as sexual pleasure), and a stress on 'unnatural' female sexual desire in the conduct literature of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. The usual assumption is that the rejection is based on a bourgeois programme of sexual policing in which 'pleasure' is associated with consumerist excess and sexual licence. Yet Vivien Jones has argued that such definitions could be too rigid and that the relationship between conduct literature and 'pleasure' is both more fluid, and more problematic than sometimes assumed. As Jones puts it, 'moral discourse on chaste conduct evokes precisely the desires and fantasies it claims to police'.[39] Others claim a particular agenda. In her ground-breaking analysis of conduct literature's effects, Nancy Armstrong has argued that the conduct book concerns the creation of coherent identity with the middle-class woman as its representative. She suggests that:

> In fact, it is accurate to say that such writing as the conduct books helped to generate the belief that there was such a thing as a middle class with clearly established affiliations before it actually existed. If there is any truth in this, then it is also reasonable to claim that the modern individual was first and foremost a female.[40]

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[38] See Kathryn Shevelow, 'Fair-sexing it: An Introduction to Periodical Literature and the Eighteenth century constructions of femininity', in *Women and Print Culture: The construction of femininity in the Early Periodical,* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp 1 - 21. Also, E.J Clery *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury,* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Ann Oakley, *Gender, Methodology and People's Ways of Knowing: Some Problems With feminism and the paradigm debate in Social Science,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[39] Vivien Jones, 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature', in *Pleasure in the eighteenth century,* ed by Roy Porter and Marie M Roberts, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) pp 108-132 (108)

[40] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel,* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) p 60; Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen,* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984)

Armstrong argues that in confounding the assumptions of 'natural' gender difference with definitions of 'proper' female 'manners', conduct literature sought to conceptualise and interpret sexual behaviour as the predictor of social behaviour in general. The construction of female identity in imagined contention with anti-social or deviant forms, (the irresponsible, the over-refined, the under-educated or indeed, the over-educated) and the genre's relation to the emerging novel of manners from Haywood to Austen, is well established.[41] Yet in 1753 the general shape and details of the conduct book convention were sufficiently fixed for Jane Collier to invoke them, in her two-part essay which advises a wife to:

> Carefully study your husband's temper; and find out what he likes, in order never to do any one thing that will please him. If he expresses his approbation of the domestic qualities of a wife; such as family economy, and that old-fashioned female employment, the needle; neglect your family as much as ever his temper with bear; and always have your white gloves on your hands. Tell him, that every woman of spirit ought to hate and despise a man who could insist on his wife's being a family drudge; and declare, that you will not submit to be a cook and a semstress to any man.[42]

This thesis takes these tensions into account. For example, the tensions are particularly acute in some early eighteenth-century women writers' 'titillating' attempts to overcome difficulties in portraying female sexual pleasure in reversals of the usual sexual roles. Ultimately, the thesis seeks to demonstrate that Hays's portrayal of 'virtuous' sexually desiring heroines is a recognition of the tensions between notions of 'natural' female sensibility, the 'proper' lady, and the eighteenth-century obsession with sex.

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41 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p 66

42 Jane Collier, *Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting; with Proper Rules for the Exercise of that Pleasant Art*, (London: A Millar, 1753) pp 123 - 4

Hays's 'Radicalism'

'A Radical View of Rape' suggested in the title of the thesis refers to Hays's gender politics which are in turn, underpinned by more general Radical concerns in her innovative use of the fictional rape event. Hays and some of her contemporary Radical writers were engaged in a variety of issues ranging from political reform, education and inconsistencies in the law, as well as definitions of the 'nature' of women.[43] Because Hays's gender politics informed her interpretation and representation of such questions, my analysis of the development of the rape theme will also explore these wider concerns. These include: an insistence on a combination of reason and passion in female sensibility, an indictment of the law as it applies to women in the rape scenario, and the ways in which a lack of education and employment opportunities has an impact on a raped woman's chance of economic, moral and even literal survival.

The development of a powerful Radical idea of a 'natural' intellectual and emotional female sensibility is in direct opposition to contemporary ideological and institutional concepts. In response, Hays advances a linguistic self-definition for women in the canonic world of signs. One of the results of this is a significant revision of the message attached not only to the representation of sexual violation perpetrated on her heroine, but to rape narratives in general.

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[43] See Edward Royle, *English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848,* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982); Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1822,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Gregory Claeys, *The Politics of English Jacobinism: writings of John Thelwall,* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995)

Rape, Culture and 'Virtue'

In the 1790s women were still defined from the standpoint of men and in terms that served male interests. In its extreme form this definition led to a conclusion that women and their bodies were used for ends which were contrary to their own. In contrast, Hays's fiction sees forced sex as an assault on the body and on the personal integrity of any female victim, be she the 'proper' lady or her maidservant. Furthermore, in spite of society's tendency to place responsibility on the woman for the protection of her 'virtue', the novels insist that there are both mental and physical effects when any kind of sexual violence is perpetrated on a woman. Since she writes within a culture whose economic priorities force a view of female desire as transgression, if not 'unnatural' depravity, Hays's insistence on her heroine's sexual desire complicates contemporary values. This was particularly provocative in a 1790s text that insists on the possibility that her raped heroine can be, and indeed is, a virtuous woman.

The scope and limitations of the thesis

Overall this thesis is concerned with representations of 'women' as a culturally defined category which eighteenth-century women themselves had to negotiate within the discourse of a dominant middle-class ideology of femininity. Working class women were more or less erased culturally and economically, by the assumption that leisured domesticity was universal. Defoe's Moll Flanders is an exception, as is Richardson's Pamela. However, the story of a servant girl who is rewarded for her 'virtue' can also be read within the overall terms of a construction

of 'femininity' that was intended to shape society at a particular point in literary history.

In order to make sense of the assumptions about women that underwrote patriarchal insistence on feminine virtue I shall examine the most relevant cultural factors. These are the legal, religious, dynastic and economic pressures that underpinned patriarchy's priorities and ambitions, and had a profound effect on women's behaviour. Throughout the thesis I argue that since patriarchal priorities found it necessary to control female sexual desire, patriarchy overruled the feminine ambition to express it. Since warnings to women were embedded in the 'conventional' or 'familiar' rape narrative it served the social function of suppressing such expression. Hence, familiar romantic and sentimental narratives required heroes to sexually coerce 'virtuous' women in seduction scenarios. As such, the thesis examines ways in which, until Hays wrote her novels in the 1790s, fiction writers found it almost impossible to portray a heroine's sexual desire without invoking negative constructions of women, and blurring the distinction between seduction and rape.

If we build on the idea of a connection between Hays's brand of feminism and its role in the re-fashioning of the rape 'trope' (rape as a reminder of 'virtue' and the perpetuation of the sexual double standard), we are able to construct a picture of the scope of my analysis. I argue that the way Hays redefines and renegotiates stock situations constitutes a challenge because it forms the basis of depictions of femininity, and of attitudes to the 'nature' of sexual relations and marriage negotiation, that casts a new angle on how rape is defined in fiction. To put it another way, Hays's representation of marginalized heroines challenges society's constructions of female subjectivity in a way that examines the crime of

rape as an important and compelling issue in its own right, rather than as a tool in the policing of 'proper' female behaviour, or as a device aimed at focusing readers onto other (albeit pressing and important) social concerns. Hays's project is to explore the link between constructions of female 'sensibility' and male force in the fictional portrayal of sexual relations. In so doing, she challenges and re-negotiates the definitions of notions central to the rape episode in conventional courtship and marriage narratives, such as constructions of 'femininity', 'masculinity', aristocracy and indeed, 'patriarchy' itself. Hays's independent and desiring first heroine is perceived to be marginalized not because, in the conventional rape 'trope' sense, she transgresses boundaries of acceptable and learned female behaviour, but because she offers an unconventional, alternative view of woman's Selfhood.

Since I argue that Hays appropriated and refashioned the conventional narrative in an attempt to effect a challenge to the assumptions about women held in the familiar 'trope', it is necessary to explore some of the more pertinent examples of familiar rape text patterns, and the ways in which they are used to carry messages and warnings to women. I also examine some of the ways in which these narratives gained their credentials, developed, and seeped into eighteenth-century fiction. Needless to say, a comprehensive survey of eighteenth-century rape texts is beyond the scope of the thesis. However, by looking at a representative sample we can become more fully aware of ways in which Hays's fiction advances a radical critique of the things that underlay rape texts. These include the assumption that a woman has an obligation to keep her father's or husband's or brother's property safe from invasion, and that patriarchy's control of women's sexual behaviour is 'just' or 'benevolent'.

So far in this section I have outlined how the thesis seeks to examine Hays's

challenge to the trope that represented women as 'weak' mentally, physically and morally. However, the thesis does not examine the reason for the abundance of representations of rape in the novels written in the Long Eighteenth Century and earlier. Rather, the thesis seeks to place Hays's work on rape within the contemporary tensions between the constructions of Womanhood, the possibilities and impossibilities of female desire that she had to negotiate, and the representation of sexual relations between men and women.

Furthermore, I do not wish to suggest that the examples of texts in the examination are offered as: 'literary history', or as a panoramic investigation of the theme of rape within the huge corpus of a well-researched period, or as a comprehensive example of cultural attitudes. Nor do I wish to suggest that they are selected on the basis of each one's influence, in the ordinary sense, on the next. Rather, the examples are offered as representative of the kind of rape narrative Hays challenges, and in order to illuminate the discussion in hand.

The examples of Radical writers' work are offered in order to suggest that some of Hays's contemporaries shared her concerns with the general apathy towards women's rights in the 1790s. On the other hand I would not wish to claim that *all* Radical writers mentioned in the thesis ventriloquize Hays's beliefs or vice versa. The examples offered merely provide a context within which Radical writers operated at the end of the eighteenth century.

Finally, although Tilottama Rajan suggests that 'the inscription of the author in the text' is a progression or development of a 'subject still in process', it is worth considering just how far we are able to go in finding the creator of unusual heroines

from a 'reading' of her texts.[44] Since Hays's letters to her friends reveal her belief in the power of a combination of passion and rationality in women, the part played by her personal experiences in the framing of the project in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* cannot be overlooked. Having said that, I would resist drawing inferences from Hays's life in *The Victim of Prejudice* apart from a simple example, that is, the significant similarity between Eccles's account of his first impression of Hays and Hays's description of Mary Raymond in the opening of the novel, which I discuss in Chapter Three.[45] In this passage, the writer's description of her heroine manipulates the reader in order to alter the convention of the male gaze, to suit her purposes. However, the effect of the similarity is to connect the heroine's experience with her creator's pain. That is to say, Hays's exposition of the consequences of rape in her second novel so soon after William Frend's rejection of her declaration of sexual desire and the public criticism of her first novel, seems to imply that Hays felt that there is more than one way that a woman is open to violation.

The arrangement of the Thesis

The anatomy of Hays's rape narrative is undertaken in three stages. The first and second chapters discuss Hays's novels, some of the earlier texts that reveal concerns and anxieties that conventionally underlay rape narratives, and some of the Radical writings of the 1790s written from the violated female victim's point of

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[44] Tilottama Rajan, 'Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney'* in *Studies in Romanticism*, 32:2 (Summer, 1993) 149 - 176 (159)

[45] John Eccles describes his first impression of Hays in a letter dated 28 October, 1779 reproduced in *The Correspondence (1779 - 1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, ed. by Marilyn L. Brooks, (Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales: Edwin Mellin Press, 2004) p 30.

view. The third chapter examines Hays's perpetrator in the context of late-seventeenth to late eighteenth-century views of masculinity, patriarchy and aristocracy and the portrayal of influential, rapist 'heroes'.

The first chapter discusses Hays's challenge to the trope of rape in terms of her efforts to establish the existence of 'natural' female sexual desire and agency. This involves promoting a new image of 'femininity' and female 'sensibility' as a crucial part of an attack on constructions that play on the weaknesses and vulnerability of women. The destruction of patriarchal assumptions about 'proper' feminine behaviour attempted in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and described in the first chapter of the thesis is crucial not only to an understanding of the heroine, and the distinctions between seduction and rape the novel explores, but also to the part played by Mary Raymond's sense of identity and sexuality in the decisions she makes after her rape in *The Victim of Prejudice*. An understanding of the rape texts and narratives that were familiar to Hays's readers is crucial too. This is because both Emma Courtney and Mary Raymond are to be understood in terms of some of the rape presentations in earlier texts. In contrast to seduced and betrayed innocents, the raped heroines of the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and the 'quivering' women in Sentimental novels, Hays's Emma Courtney and Mary Raymond aspire to independence, insist on self-definition, and seek justice.

In the first chapter I also explore the significance of Hays's re-definition of constructions of reading and writing women. Since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rape in fiction had provided allegorical warnings to any woman who was seduced by romance or yearned to access forbidden knowledge. Such warnings were a powerful reminder to a woman to preserve her 'virtue' and reputation, but more importantly, to do so by monitoring her reading and writing. The patriarchal

objection to these activities hinged on the link between women's learning and deception, madness and subversive sexuality, and on negative arguments based on women's 'natural' physical and intellectual weaknesses. I argue that *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *The Victim of Prejudice* protest against such symbolism by portraying independent, intelligent heroines who defy contemporary restrictions on female sexual behaviour in an attempt to recover the picture of Woman as an image of rationality and legitimate sexuality.

In the second chapter I argue that the attainment of rights for women hinged on overcoming societal prejudice. Since rape had been a crime against male property for centuries, rape law was harsh.[46] However, there were problems for a woman seeking justice after rape due to inconsistencies in the law, and the negative impact on her reputation if she appeared in court. I suggest that when her heroine threatens her rapist with legal action, Hays's narrative meets society, the law and rape text convention head on. She also exposes the contemporary lack of education and employment opportunity for women in general, which increased the probability of a raped woman's 'fall' into prostitution.

The third chapter examines Hays's portrayal of the Gentleman hero rapist in the context of eighteenth-century anxieties connected with 'masculinity', 'patriarchy' and 'aristocracy'. Today, the dominant view amongst feminists and

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[46] According to Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary the definition of rape, *raptus mulierum* is (n) rapine, plunder, seizure: unlawful sexual intercourse, usually by force with another person without that person's consent; but also: to ravish or transport, as with delight. In the eighteenth century convicted rapists were punished by death according to ancient laws which rested on property rights. See William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England the most influential exposition of English Law 1770 - 1780,* IV (London: John Murray, 1876). Gregory Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis', in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 28:2 (Autumn, 2005). 177. Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis' Part Two in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 29:1 (Spring, 2006) 15 - 31 (22)

sociologists studying rape starts from a social-constructionist position that sex and sexuality is as much culturally determined as is gender.[47] On this view, rape is not a psychologically aberrant act that can be explained only in terms of the pathology of an individual rapist. Cultural beliefs about gender play an important role. Since the rapist-hero's pain in *The Victim of Prejudice* evidently outweighs any 'pleasure' he derived from the rape, Hays's characterisation challenges the rape narrative image of the cynical, rakish, perpetrator. I would suggest that Hays's revision of the rapist not only examines the fictional presentation of rape, but also the eighteenth-century debate on 'masculinity'.

In order to examine Hays's revision of the rape scene convention I put two connected questions at the heart of the analysis. The first two chapters focus on why Hays's raped heroine defies her society and rejects the usual resolutions to her predicament by refusing to die, to 'fall' into prostitution, or to accept the offers of protection and 'respectability' in marriage. Attempts to find answers lead us to another, unexpected question considered in the third chapter. Why is Hays's rich and influential rapist so obsessed with the less than 'ideal', in fact, 'ordinary' woman, Mary Raymond? My examination of Hays's and earlier texts suggests that the answer resides partly in the female writer's predicament in attempts to portray a 'virtuous', yet desiring woman in the 1790s, and partly in the basic systems of belief that underscore Hays's project which we discussed in the first section of the Introduction.

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[47] For social constructions of sex and sexuality, gender and rape, see *Sex, Sensibility and the Gendered Body,* ed by Janet Holland and Lisa Adkins, (London and Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996) pp 184 - 189; S Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975); F. Olsen, 'Feminist Theory in Grand Style' in *Columbia Law Review,* 1989; 147 - 78; V. Waye, 'Rape and the Unconscionable Bargain'. in *Criminal Law Journal,* 16: 94 - 105

Given women's high profile in novel-writing and the private domestic aspects of female oppression, politicised fiction was an appropriate vehicle for the feminist Radical writer. Although Hays's first novel subscribed to a view of femininity that accommodated strong emotion, her portrayal of the impact of rape on a female sensibility combining intellect and passion became a practical vehicle for feminist protest. What better way for a Radical woman writer to oppose the hated image of 'trembling' Womanhood than to portray the counter image of a sexually aware, intelligent woman that was 'real' rather than 'ideal'? And, what better way for Mary Hays to promote a view of female 'sensibility' that combined both feeling and intelligence, than to portray its fatal attraction to a wealthy and influential man?

Chapter One

Anatomy of a Rape: 'Preparatives to Love' [1]

'[....] all that firmness of character, and greatness of mind commonly esteemed masculine' united with 'that universal weakness, which men first endeavour to affix upon women for their own convenience, and then for their own defence affect to admire, really [....] requires more than female imbecility and credulity'.[2]

In the Introduction I suggested that assumptions about women's 'nature' embedded in rape narratives and routinely exploited in the image of persecuted, raped, abandoned and 'ruined' virgins touched on the lives of every woman. I also suggested that the trope's tendency to cast doubt on the morality of desiring women was particularly damaging to the violated woman, whatever the circumstances of the rape.

Yet even a cursory examination of the rape text reveals tensions and conflicts between patriarchal efforts to monitor female sexuality and society's fascination with female sexual desire. Although they were designed to teach women to 'mind' their manners, the portrayals of innocent virgins under siege tended to eroticise the female passivity that 'proper' behaviour required. For example, the Reverend Wetenhall Wilkes's emphasis on propriety, modesty and reputation was far more likely to generate a curiosity about sex in innocent young minds than to warn them of its

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[1] Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess: Secret Histories Novels and Poems,* 2nd edn. 4 vols. (London, 1725). Haywood's heroine Melliora recognises the role played by reading in the seduction and rape process: 'Books were, as it were, Preparatives to Love, and by their softening Influence, melted the Soul, and made it fit for amorous Impressions'. Vol. I p 84. On seduction as fiction in early eighteenth-century novels see Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[2] Hays, *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain* (New York: Garland, 1974) p 74

dangers:

> Ladies have great reason to be cautious and watch over themselves; for even to listen to compliments, and gay addresses, may betray them into weakness and indiscretion. If it be agreeable to see craft repelled by cunning: it must be much more so, to behold the snares of a seducer defeated by the management of innocence.[3]

On the other hand, Hays's novels questioned and challenged these tensions by interrogating the dominant narrative and psychic structure of the familiar rape text. But, in order to achieve this, Hays had to re-evaluate contemporary attitudes to female sexual desire and patriarchal 'resistance' to it, and to re-negotiate the problems surrounding representations of desiring women met by earlier women writers.

In a culture obsessed with a division between women as angels or whores the rape text convention created a double bind for early eighteenth-century female novelists wishing to establish the existence of female sexual desire. Not only did they forfeit a respectable place in the world because of an association with writing, they were barred from representing consensual sex between their male and female protagonists. The result was that heroines were imbued with a set of signs that denoted them as object rather than subject, available for the libertine's consumption.

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[3] The Reverend Mr Wetenhall Wilkes. 'A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady. Advice in times of Courtship' (1740) (8th edn. 1766) in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity,* ed. by Vivien Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) p 31

Seduction or Rape?

In fiction, women were meant to be over-powered rather than empowered, and therefore female sexual desire was a banned topic. According to assumptions about a woman's 'nature' and her 'natural' disinterest in sex, 'virtuous' womanhood had to be seen to have been forced into sexual relations. The only way the seventeenth and eighteenth-century fictional 'hero' might overcome the heroine's 'natural' resistance was by coercion. In other words, the heroine was raped.

In their efforts to dismiss conventional restrictions placed on women writers, some late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century writers attempted to assert female sexual desire and activity in order to explore the unmentionable and unforgivable. Their readers were offered accounts of male sexual aggression couched in the language of seduction in which the heroine played an active part. The heroine was seen to have been easily coerced into sexual intercourse because she desired the sexual experience. Since seduction looked like rape and rape looked like seduction, representations became indistinguishable versions of one another. Eliza Haywood's rape narratives often explore female sexuality in stories involving aristocratic or powerful males and innocent young girls that stimulate erotic fantasy via the mythology of the persecuted female victim. At the same time Haywood's fiction examines the effects of society's sexual double standard within a system that insists on pre-determining and restricting women's life choices. Significantly, whilst her rape episodes were designed to direct the reader's focus to the impossibility of female agency in the unequal sexual terms of early eighteenth-century society, they did so in a way that posed questions about 'responsibility' in rape episodes.

For example, in *Love in Excess, or The Fatal Enquiry* (1719) one of the four best selling novels in the early eighteenth century, Haywood's character Count D'Elmont is a combination of the scintillating hero and the aggressive libertine-seducer. He is intent upon seduction, but he is not the vilified stereotype of rapacious aggressor. To effect the contradiction Haywood gives a reasonable explanation for the heroine victim's state of undress and the circumstances in which she is surprised by her seducer:

> What now could poor Amena do, surrounded with so many Powers, attack'd by such a charming force without, betray'd by tenderness within: Vertue and Pride, the Guardians of her Honour fled from her Breast, and left her to her Foe, only a modest bashfulness remain'd, which for a time made some defence, but with such weakness as a Lover less impatient than D'Elmont would have little regarded. The heat of the Weather, and her confinement having hindered her from Dressing that Day, she had only a thin silk Night Gown on, which flying open as he caught her in his Arms, he found her panting Heart beat measures of consent, her heaving Breast swell to be press'd by his, and every Pulse confess a wish to yield; her Spirits all dissolv'd sunk in a Lethargy of Love, her snowy Arms unknowing grasp'd his Neck, her Lips met his half way, and trembled at the touch; in fine, there was but a moment betwixt her and Ruine; when the tread of some body coming [....][4]

On the one hand Amena is surrounded, attacked, betrayed, and assaulted. On the other, the attack is 'a charming force' which betrays the 'tenderness within'. She is scantily dressed, she pants, she heaves, she swells, she dissolves, she grasps at him, she trembles, and encouragingly, he finds that the 'modest' and bashful maiden's heart beats 'measures of consent'. Inevitably, Amena is 'forced' into sex by the attack, yet, her own sexual passion, betrayed by a 'wish to yield' (which stands-in for, 'consent') played its part in this struggle.

In a similar way, two conflicting feminine emotions vie with one another in Melliora's story. She is the conventional paradigm of the innocent maiden in spite of

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[4] Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess: Secret Histories Novels and Poems,* 2nd edn. 4 vols. (London, 1725). Vol. I pp 28 - 29

her naivety. At the same time Haywood allows us into the heroine's sexual fantasy which makes her sexual desire explicit. She is powerfully attracted to D'Elmont and excited by his sexual advances, but she is also disturbed by her feelings. When D'Elmont compromises his ward, she:

> carry'd with her a World of troubled Meditations [....] but when she Reflected how dear that Person she had so much cause to fear, was to her, she thought her self, at once the most unfortunate and most Guilty of her Sex.[5]

Once she has established her heroine's psychological dilemma Haywood complicates the plot. Gazing longingly at the heroine's sleeping body D'Elmont changes his mind, and prepares to leave. Unfortunately Melliora herself unwittingly raises the stakes:

> The resistless posture he beheld her in, rouz'd all that was Honourable in him, he thought it a pity even to wake her, but more to wrong such Innocence, and he was sometimes Prompted to return and leave her as he found her [....] He, stooping to the Bed, and gently laying his Face close to her's, (Possibly Designing no more than to steal a Kiss from her, unperceiv'd) that Action, Concurring at that Instant, with her Dream, made her throw her Arm (still Slumbering) about his Neck, and in a Soft and Languishing Voice, Cry out, O! D'Elmont Cease, cease to Charm, to such a height-Life cannot bear these Raptures! – And then again, Embracing him yet closer-! Too, too Lovely Count-Extatick Ruiner![6]

Encouraged, D'Elmont physically overpowers his victim.

Haywood's scene attempted to overcome the problem of portraying feminine sexual desire and innocence. To do this she removed Melliora from the decision-making process necessary to a consensual sexual encounter. Since she is asleep, she is unable to consent. At the same time, Melliora's dream betrays her sexual longings. Yet, strictly speaking the Count raped Melliora since he forced himself on a sleeping

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5 Haywood, *Love in Excess*, Vol. I p 94
6 Haywood, *Love in Excess*, Vol. I p 94

woman who is unable to consent to his sexual advances. On the other hand, as Haywood's contemporary, Daniel Defoe put it 'To dream is nothing else but to think sleeping'.[7] In the early nineteenth century John Keats's Gothic poem 'The Eve of St Agnes' inspired by Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) offers a similar situation between Madeline and Porphyro:

> Into her dream he melted, as the rose,
> Blendeth its odour with the violet.[8]

Wetenhall Wilkes's advice on the subject betrays an uncomfortable and unequivocal awareness of the power of dreams:

> Chastity is a suppression of all irregular desires, voluntary pollutions, sinful concupiscence, and of an immoderate use of all sensual, or carnal pleasures [....] If wanton dreams be remembered with pleasure, that, which before was involuntary, and therefore innocent, becomes a voluntary and sinful transgression of this virtue.[9]

Since the heroine had to be seen to have been coerced, the rape was predictable. Yet, by suggesting that the Count was about to leave the sleeping heroine before she took a hand in her own fate, Haywood introduced an unusual touch of sensitivity in the portrayal of the rapist which in a sense acknowledged the complicated 'nature' of his as well as the heroine's sexuality. Nevertheless, Melliora's rape can be read as an example of the slippery distinction between seduction leading

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[7] Daniel Defoe, 1726 *Hist. Devil* II. iii pub. 1726, reprint. 1840 p 198

[8] John Keats, *Lamia: Isabella, the Eve of St Agnes, and other Poems; 1820*, (Menston, England: Scholar Press, 1970) Stanza xxxvi. See also Earl R Wasserman's arguments for the essential seriousness of 'The Eve of St Agnes', *The Finer Tone: Keats' Major Poems,* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1953) p 125, Jack Stillinger rejects Wasserman's metaphysical reading of the poem in 'The Hoodwinking of Madeline: Scepticism in *The Eve of St Agnes'*. in *Studies in Philology*, 58, (1961) 533-55, and Stuart M Sperry argues that the union of the lovers in no way resembles rape or seduction of any kind in *Keats the Poet*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973) pp 204-5. See also Jack Stillinger, *Reading* 'The Eve of St Agnes': *The Multiples of Complex Literary Transaction,* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp 39-78. For a discussion of the Wasserman/Stillinger/Sperry debate, see *The Poems of John Keats*, ed by John Strachan (London, New York: Routledge, 2003) p 120

[9] Wetenhall Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady*, p 30

to consensual sex and rape. The consequences of either are likely to ruin unsuspecting and innocent girls.

As usual, Haywood's narrative stresses that female sexual ecstasy has a price. According to the familiar rape text, ruin follows female sexual pleasure. There is irony in the omniscient narrator's comment that 'If he had now left her, some might have applauded an Honour so uncommon; but more woul'd have Condemn'd his Stupidity'.[10]

These early eighteenth-century depictions of somatic women succumbing to their sexuality in ways that blur distinctions between consensual sex and rape have been equated with twentieth-century mass market romantic fiction. In turn this had led to the suggestion that, as pornography for women, these are not texts amenable to significant literary exegesis. For example, Ann Barr Snitow defines the depiction as being driven by 'the universal infant desire for complete, immediate gratification, to rule the world out of the very core of passive helplessness'.[11] Patricia Meyer Spacks identifies an inability in Eliza Haywood's somatic heroines to arouse from a dream-like state and to take control of the seduction situation. She suggests that the portrayal of a lack of responsibility in these texts expresses 'female sexuality without being subject to judgment' and that 'Only under these special circumstances can sexuality be separated from the need to moralize'. [12] In other words, early eighteenth-century women writers dehistoricised and mythologised the public sphere in order to enable readers to assume a sense of agency and power which was not normally

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[10] Haywood, *Love in Excess*, Vol. 1 p 96

[11] Ann Barr Snitow, 'Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women Is Different', in *Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. by Ann Barr Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (London, 1984) 258 - 275 (265)

[12] Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'Ev'ry Woman is at Heart a Rake', *Eighteenth-century Studies*, 8 (1974) 27 - 74 (33)

available.[13]

Other literary critics recognise the rebellion in eighteenth-century fiction written by women and argue that since it is set against the background of the conduct book's construction of passive, submissive femininity it functions as an attempt to redefine women's 'natural' sexual tendencies. Ros Ballaster has suggested that although early eighteenth-century women's writing attempted to defy familiar patterns by exploiting the erotic-pathetic re-fashioning of stories depicting the image of seduced, violated and betrayed woman, it is also distinct from the instructional, anatomical and procreative male pornography of the late seventeenth century detailed by Roger Thompson and David Foxon.[14]

On the other hand, some female writers offered the image of the sexually aggressive female. In defiance of patriarchal constructions of femininity, Mary Delariver Manley used the technique of reversing gender stereotypes in order to empower the heroine in the love scene. Since Manley enables the Duchess to gaze at a male body in *The New Atalantis*, the heroine takes the role of subject, rather than the object of sexual desire:

> The Dutchess softly enter'd that little Chamber of Repose, the Weather violently hot the Umbrelloes were let down from behind the Windows, the Sashes open, and the Jessimine that cover'd 'em blew in with a gentle Fragrancy; [....] and to compleat the Scene, the young *Germanicus* in a dress and posture not very decent to describe [....] newly risen from the Bath, and in a loose Gown [...] he had thrown himself upon the Bed, pretending to Sleep, with nothing on but his Shirt and Night-Gown, which he had so indecently dispos'd, that slumbring as he appear'd, his whole Person stood

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13 Meyer Spacks, 'Ev'ry Woman is at Heart a Rake', 33

14 Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p 32. Ballaster cites: Roger Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century*, (London, 1979); David Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England* 1660-1745, (New York, 1965) *Sexuality in eighteenth-century Britain*, ed by Paul Gabriel Bouce, (Manchester, 1982); Peter Wagner, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America*, (London, 1988)

> confess'd to the Eyes of the Amorous Dutchess, his limbs were exactly form'd his Skin shiningly white, and the Pleasure the Ladies graceful entrance gave him, diffus'd Joy and Desire throughout all his Form; his lovely Eyes seem'd to be closed, his Face turn'd on one side [....] was obscur'd by the Lace depending from the Pillows on which he rested [....] with an amorous sign, she gently threw her self on the Bed close to the desiring Youth.[15]

Female desire mirroring the image of the male gaze functions here as an exact inversion of the Augustan male sexual appetite. The man has artfully arranged himself in order to be seduced. He has 'thrown himself upon the Bed', he pretends to sleep, and his 'posture not very decent to describe' suggests that 'the desiring youth' is ready for sexual activity. The seduction is effective since he responds to the fictional woman's desire and fulfils the reader's expectations. What is disturbing is that conventionally, fiction represents the woman as passive and powerless.

It transpires that the scene is artificial. Germanicus himself had staged the scene with the help of his friend Fortunatus, the Duchess's erstwhile lover who has tired of her. In accordance with patriarchal constructions of 'natural' female sexual behaviour Manley had to ensure that even in a scene like this the reader is aware that the Duchess is not in control of the seduction. The elaborate arrangement was that Fortunatus was to interrupt the love-making in order to accuse the Duchess of infidelity. The love scene is orchestrated so that she is unable to see Germanicus's face since her eyes are closed in ecstasy, and 'her own Desires help'd the Deceit'.[16] Superficially, the Duchess's desire is recognised but in the end, the scene served to illustrate the way in which female desire is easily manipulated by men. Manley's plot showed that since they are the primary agents dictating the action and controlling the situation, men retain the power in sexual matters. Women are just pawns in the game.

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[15] Mary Delariver Manley, *The Novels*, I. pp 33 - 34
[16] Mary Delariver Manley, *The Novels*, I. pp 33 - 34

As early as 1688 Aphra Behn had experimented with role reversal in an attempt to empower her heroine and expose patriarchal assumptions about women's sexual needs. In *The Fair Jilt* Behn presents Miranda as the aggressor and a handsome young priest the object of her lust. At the same time, Behn preserves the assumption that sexual desire is activated by the presence of the male figure. Miranda gazes boldly on the priest:

> while he bow'd before her, and waited for her Charity, till she perceiv'd the lovely Friar to blush, and cast his Eyes to the Ground...At last she...gave him a Pistole; but with so much Deliberation and Leisure, as easily betray'd the Satisfaction she took in looking on him.[17]

After staring the priest out, Miranda's actions typify those of a male determined to conquer a woman sexually. She fantasises about him lying naked in bed and then tricks him into a private meeting in the confessional. There, she replicates the language of the male seducer by addressing him as her 'cruel Charmer' whilst begging him for his 'Pity' and preventing him from escape by tearing at his clothes. When he resists she threatens that 'I will either force you to abandon that dull Dissimulation, or you shall die, to prove your Sanctity real [....] I will ruin thee, (and) take away your Life and Honour'. As the scene reaches its erotic climax Behn reverses every cliché of female and male sexual roles :

> The trembling young Man...demanded what she would have him do? When she reply'd - ....Come to my Arms, my trembling, longing Arms...At these Words she rose from his Feet, and snatching him in her Arms, he could not defend himself from receiving a thousand Kisses from the lovely Mouth of the charming Wanton.[18]

As the priest battles to resist his 'seducer' the irony in the situation is emphasised. He

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17 *The Works of Aphra Behn,* ed. by Montague Summers, (London, 1915) V p 26
18 *The Works of Aphra Behn,* V p 270

appears to submit to Miranda when he declares 'I own your Power', but by placing *her* at *his* feet Behn addresses the reality of the unequal power structure depicted in the scene.[19] Behn's readers are aware that in reality Miranda cannot actually rape him. Yet she depicts his torture as he struggles to keep his vow of celibacy and tries to resist his seducer. Eventually his fellow priests find him and his attacker locked in combat, which is misinterpreted as a sexual attack on Miranda. Since her desires have been thwarted, she accuses him of attempting to rape her and the priest pays for his 'crime' with a prison sentence. What is interesting is that Behn has the 'innocent' priest punished in much the same way that conventionally innocent young women are punished for 'allowing' themselves to be seduced in rape texts.

Nevertheless, Toni O'Shaunessy Bowers sees a flaw in Behn's strategy. She suggests that early eighteenth-century female writers's attempts to empower women with depictions of role reversal actually have the effect of disadvantaging women. Whilst a reversal of genders often adds to the comedy and exposes stereotypes it fails to:

> revise the system of sexual force that amatory fictions continue to uphold, a system that most often worked, in fiction as in practice, to enhance male prerogatives and reinforce women's comparative powerlessness.[20]

In other words, Behn's technique ridicules the sexually powerful woman because the 'rapist without a penis [....] must finally attribute to her intended victim the violent act she threatens, achieving victory only by reassuming the typical posture of cringing female'.[21] Having said that, Behn compensates by giving her heroine the last

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19 *The Works of Aphra Behn,* V p 270

20 Toni O'Shaunessy Bowers, 'Sex, Lies, and Invisibility: Amatory Fiction from the Restoration to Mid-Century', in *The Columbia History of the British Novel,* ed. by John J. Richetti, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p 57

21 O' Shaunessy Bowers, ' Sex, Lies, and Invisibility', p 57

word. Like Defoe's Moll Flanders, Miranda is rewarded for her many years of indulgence in criminal behaviour and aggressive sexual activity with a house in the country and an adoring husband.

Working within the prevailing patriarchal constraints and negative constructions of femininity early eighteenth-century novelists's attempts to advertise 'natural' female sexual agency only served to illustrate and emphasise the disadvantages and dangers of feminine passion. The problem for these writers was that although these texts sought to undermine the patriarchal objection to sexually desiring females, contemporary society insisted that a virtuous, angelic woman 'naturally' lacked passion. Therefore, the image of the heroine submitting to her own sexual desire as well as her lover's tended to confirm the patriarchal view that desiring heroines must be 'naturally' sexually depraved whores. In spite of attempts to subvert the image of 'virtuous' and 'natural' female purity through the portrayal of 'natural' female sexuality, power, and agency seduction in the rape narrative usually resulted in disaster for the woman involved.

Although in one sense they failed, what rape episodes written by early women writers frequently amplified was the power of the sexual double standard, and as such they often presented a critique of the society that supported it. For example, the opportunity to use the concept of masquerade as a means of empowerment for women was obvious to the female writer, combining as it did aspects of seventeenth-century carnival and masque. Yet, unlike the carnival it is located inside the house, and open to a select few.

Terry Castle has argued that although the masquerade in early eighteenth-century women's novels offers women opportunities for sexual pleasure, sexual abuse is often the reward of such 'freedom':

Though typically represented as a moral emblem, the image of a corrupt and pleasure-seeking populace, the masquerade was also an indispensable plot catalyst, the mysterious scene out of which the essential drama of the fiction emerged. All the ambivalence that the masquerade aroused in English public life-where it was at once the sign of depravity and freedom, corruption and delight-was thus replicated in its fictional representation.[22]

In *Fantomina: or Love in a Maze* (1725) the masquerade affords Eliza Haywood's 'Fantomina', (the pseudonym assumed by the unmarried heroine) a freedom and a 'kind of psychological latitude normally reserved for men'.[23] Although she exploits some of the masquerade's advantages for women the ever practical Haywood also identifies the pit-falls. Here and elsewhere she uses the metaphor in her attempts to offer readers a model that empowers women in spite of the pressure exerted by the libertine hero for closure in sexual conflicts.

Fantomina inverts gender and sexual activity under the guise of recognised, and therefore fairly legitimate, secrecy.[24] In spite of the heroine's declaration that she is not the loose woman she appears to be, her lover Beauplaisir assumes that she is since he expects her to degenerate into a hardened prostitute. Yet in Haywood's text the rape that follows is used to offer Fantomina the opportunity to exploit her situation. Although she is 'confused, altogether unprepared to resist in such Encounters' she stoically refuses to allow the episode to destroy the new excitement she has found and makes plans for a new life of pleasure.[25] Fantomina wishes to re-enact the scene of seduction and return to the fleeting sensation of power over a man that a woman experiences in courtship. She maintains her real and her assumed

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22 Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction,* (Stanford: California, 1986) p ix

23 Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization,* p 44

24 Eliza Haywood, 'Fantomina, or, Love in a Maze', in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660 - 1730,* ed. by Paula R Backscheider and John J. Richetti, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp 227 - 248

25 Haywood, *Fantomina,* p 230

identities to enable her to entertain her lover in hired lodgings during the day and appear in her actual persona at the balls and assemblies.

According to convention, Fantomina's bid for sexual agency is short-lived and thwarted in the end, by pregnancy. She goes into labour at the ball, and her 'fall' from female virtue is made horribly public:

> She could not conceal the sudden Rack which all at once invaded her; or had her Tongue been mute, her wildly rolling Eyes, the Distortion of her Features, and the Convulsions which shook her whole Frame, in spite of her, would have reveal'd she labour'd under some terrible Shock of Nature.[26]

The salutary warning to desiring women is delivered in the heroine's final speech to her rapist:

> I must confess it was with a Design to oblige you to repair the supposed injury you had done this unfortunate Girl by marrying her [....] The Blame is wholly her's [....] you will not divulge the distracted Folly she has been guilty of.[27]

In search of sexual pleasure Fantomina attempted to overcome the painful experience of rape and turn it to her advantage, but failed. Not only was she obliged to give way to Nature, she had to assume full blame for the rape, the 'supposed injury'. In effect, the confession served to relieve the rapist from any responsibility. Even worse, the heroine had to bear the final humiliation of having to rely on her rapist's good offices to maintain her reputation.

In *The Lucky Rape, or, Fate the best Disposer* (1727) Haywood uses rape in its legal sense as the theft of male property. She does this in such a way that readers identify the heroine's vulnerability to abuse as the result of masquerade anonymity. Calling herself 'Florella', Emilia falls in love with Berinthus whom she agrees to

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[26] Haywood, *Fantomina*, p 246
[27] Haywood, *Fantomina*, p 248

meet at the Carnival. His friend Alonzo abducts her under the pretence of rescuing her from unwanted male attention, takes her to an inn, and rapes her. Although Berinthus is Emilia's long lost brother, disaster is averted because Alonzo offers to marry her. In this story, Haywood seeks to compensate the raped woman by exploring the oppression exacted by cynical rakes. After all, sexual violation proves to be 'fortunate' as the heroine was not only 'deliver'd from that manifest Danger of Incest she was falling into, but also gain'd a Husband'.[28]

Twenty years later Haywood exploits the masquerade again, but this time there is a shift since the focus is on the ambiguities of its liberating potential. In the *Female Spectator* for April 1744 she stresses the dangers to women of anonymity:[29]

> The glitter with which it is adorned strikes the eye at a distance, and you perceive not the spirit within, till, by too near an approach, you are in danger of being infected with its venom.[30]

One of the narratives that appeared in the *Female Spectator* dramatises the story of a husband who persuaded a friend to wear an exact replica of his own costume at the masked ball in order to teach his wife a lesson and cure her of her addiction to the masquerade. Mistaking the friend for her husband, she leaves the ball with him, is transported to a lodging house and is threatened with rape only to be 'rescued' by the husband at the last minute.[31] A second story is that of Erminia an innocent country girl on her first experience of the masquerade. She leaves with a libertine dressed in a duplicate of her brother's costume and is raped by him. Too ashamed to accept the sweetheart who offers to marry her, she retires to the country

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28 Eliza Haywood, *The Lucky Rape*, appended to *Cleomelia, or, The Generous Mistress*, 2nd edn. (London, 1727) p 94

29 *The Female Spectator* was published monthly between 1774 - 76 in four volumes.

30 *The Female Spectator*, Vol. 1. 16

31 *The Female Spectator*, Vol. 1. 34-37

to live with a dull old aunt.[32]

On the other hand, late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century female writers' attempts to secure sexual freedom and agency for women by undermining stereotypes, criticising patriarchy and reversing sexual roles often produced rape texts that drew attention to the association between sexual freedom and the lure of seduction and violence. For example Florinda and Hellena the virgin heroines of Behn's *The Rover* (1677) meet rape threats rather than romance on their way to the Carnival. In line with the patriarchal notions of femininity that seep into the rape text and, with very few exceptions such as Aphra Behn's manipulative Miranda, the *Fair Jilt* (1688), and De Foe's heroines *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana,* (1724) the liberated heroine usually comes to grief. As Luce Irigaray has argued:

> To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself-inasmuch as she is on the side of the 'perceptible', of 'matter' - to 'ideas' in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible', by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible; the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language.[33]

Although a bourgeois sexual economy promises to open doors to female agency in the shape of moral reformation, it also closes doors on female independence and pleasure.

There are as many warnings of male exploitative sexual passion in Haywood's later fiction as in her earlier work, only without the compensation of the heroine's sexual pleasure. When her heroine the thoughtless Betsy flexes her moral muscles in order to show that she is able to protect her reputation she has much to learn. Her

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[32] *The Female Spectator,* Vol. 1. 45 - 46

[33] Luce Irigaray. 'The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine', in *This Sex Which is not One,* trans. by Catherine Porter (New York: Cornel University Press, 1985) p 76

'friends', especially her guardian Sir Ralph Trusty, Lady Trusty and Betsy's brothers insist on the appearance of virtue. During her *Bildungsroman* Betsy is pursued by a number of men but she learns most about female sexual freedom and reputation when her husband's patron, a tyrannical and powerful Lord, attacks her. She manages to save herself but after the event she reflects:

> "How strange a creature have I been!" Cried she "how inconsiderate with myself! I knew the character of a coquet both silly and insignificant; yet did every thing in my power to acquire it. I aimed to inspire awe and reverence in the men; yet, by my impudence, emboldened them to the most unbecoming freedoms with me".[34]

What Haywood's mid-century rape narratives focus on is the necessity for women to think. Her texts encourage readers to realise that independence and vanity are useless in a society that values beauty but associates women with 'property' and condemns women who have any kind of relation with the men they have been trained to attract. What Betsy learns is that sexual pleasure can so easily turn into sexual abuse and violence.

On the other hand, the efforts of Richardson's Pamela to avoid rape were rewarded with social success because her 'virtue' was meant to appeal to a society grown increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of female sexuality. Her success also provided the middle classes with, as Foucault puts it, a 'body and a sexuality' with which it 'converted the blue blood of the nobles into a sound body and a healthy sexuality'.[35] Since the novel offers the possibility of control over the social and economic power held in the image of the morally reprehensible young rake, Pamela is

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[34] Eliza Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 519

[35] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by R Hurley (Harmondsworth: Macmillan, 1981) vol. 1. pp 125 - 126

simultaneously vulnerable and powerful.

Although Richardson's *Pamela* is a comic treatment, his rape narrative engages his readers in some pressing, serious, and topical social concerns. These included the question of female 'virtue' and 'reputation', the issue of fortune hunting, and the risk to maid-servants from their masters. It is Pamela's father who voices concerns about Mr B's 'kindness' suggesting that 'it is enough to make one fearful for you. Arm yourself, my dear child, for the worst; and resolve to lose your life rather than your virtue'.[36] He recognises that Mr B has the advantage of 'a kind of *authority* to command as your master', but he expects his daughter to guard her virtue. As is usual in rape narratives the father is worried about his daughter's 'virtue' but his words of warning stress that the responsibility for the safe-keeping of her 'jewel' is hers, not his, nor Mr B's. [37]

Most important for our purposes is the link between the gentry's attitude to casual sex with servants and the consequences to dependent young women. Men of all classes were expected to take casual sexual pleasure. Although as 'property', middle and upper-class ladies had chastity thrust upon them, lower class girls were not meant to set such value on themselves. They were there for sexual convenience and treated as nothing less than prostitutes.[38] Since they were often young, far from home and family, and dependent on their masters, a high proportion of rape victims were servants. Gregory Durston has noted that some rape cases were notorious, especially when the employers were of high social status because prosperous rapists

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36 Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, (London: Penguin, 1980) p 52

37 Richardson. *Pamela*, p 52; p 46

38 See Margaret Ann Doody. *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1974) p 43

had the advantage when their testimonies were 'pitted against their inferiors'.[39] The reality is that the inequalities of class, position, age and gender meant that 'the dividing line between a master 'seducing' and 'raping' his female employee would often have been tenuous'.[40]

The death of Pamela's mistress and surrogate 'mother' leaves the impressionable fifteen-year old bereft and inclined to look on the son as a father figure, a role he is more than happy to adopt. It is a situation that would have signalled potential danger to Richardson's readers. From the beginning of the novel Pamela is at risk of rape. For example, when Mr B suggests 'you shall take care of my linen' contemporary readers would have been alerted since the role involved visits to his bedroom.[41] Judith Laurence-Anderson cites the case of a William Byrd, a Virginian on a visit to England who 'casually records in his diary payments of two guineas to his first mistress, a Mrs Alec, to make his shirts and ruffles and also to sleep with him.' [42] Even after he tired of her he writes occasionally of having intercourse with her when she brought his linen to his room. Without legal or economic power, female servants were 'the most readily available sexual object in English society'.[43]

Richardson's gentry accepted the notion that any lower-class girl who

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[39] Gregory Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis', in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 28: 2 (Autumn, 2005) 167 - 179 (173 - 174). For a discussion on the interpretation of rape using historical records see Roy Porter, 'Rape - Does it have a Historical Meaning?' in *Rape: An Historical and Cultural Enquiry,* ed by Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (Oxford, 1986) 216 - 36. See also Catherine Walker, 'Re-reading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England' in *Gender and History* 10 (April, 1998) 1-25; Gregory Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis', 174

[40] Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis', p 174

[41] Doody *A Natural Passion,* p 43

[42] Judith Laurence-Anderson, 'Changing Affective Life in Eighteenth-Century England and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela',* in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture 1981 - 10.* 445 - 456 (449)

[43] Laurence-Anderson, 'Changing Affective Life', 449

objected to yielding her virginity to her master was a hypocrite. As Sir Simon Darnford put it:

> Why, what is all this, my dear, but that our neighbour has a mind to his mother's waiting-maid! [....] I don't see any great injury will be done her. He hurts no family by this.[44]

Before his transformation Mr B uses and abuses his power as a man, as an employer, as a Justice of the Peace and as a member of the ruling class. When she is threatened by his rape attempts Pamela cannot seek justice from the law since Mr B represents it. Later, Pamela herself links Mr B's attentions with loss of reputation and 'ruin':

> He may, perhaps, think I may be good enough for his harlot; and those things don't disgrace men, that ruin poor women. [....] if, for the sake of riches or favour, I should forfeit my good name [....] and think it less disgrace to be obliged to live upon rye-bread and water, as I used to do, than to be a harlot to the greatest man in the world.[45]

Pamela's battle to defend her chastity is the potential reward in the sentimental ideal of companionate marriage. The problem was that such potential suggests the possibility of a 'virtuous' member of one class to move into another. Whilst *Pamela* can be read as a heroine's realisation that her body and her conscience are all that is valuable to a young girl:

> pity a poor creature, that knows nothing, but how to cherish her virtue and good name: I have nothing else to trust to; and though poor and friendless here, yet I have always been taught to value honesty above my life.[46]

Mr B's contempt for Pamela's efforts to preserve her virtue plunges the reader into the familiar rape narrative: 'But is it not one part of honesty to be dutiful and grateful to your master?'.[47] Readers familiar to the rape narrative were bound to hear alarm

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[44] Richardson, *Pamela*, p 172
[45] Richardson, *Pamela*, p 73
[46] Richardson, *Pamela*, p 73
[47] Richardson, *Pamela*, pp 62 - 63

bells when he equates 'honesty' with 'duty', and expects 'gratitude' from his maid.

The possibility of a servant being raped by her master, the subsequent loss of her livelihood, and the association with prostitution was important to Puritans and Evangelists, and acknowledged in conduct literature. For example, the anonymous *A Present for a Servant Maid: Or, the sure Means of gaining Love and Esteem* not only gives advice on going to market, washing powders, recipes, piety and industry but also, under various headings, including 'Temptations from your Master' and 'Behaviour to him, if a single Man', warns and advises on attempts on her Chastity.[48] Richardson's readers knew that Pamela's predicament was that should Mr B succeed in raping her she was in danger of losing her position, something which could, and often did, lead young, unprotected maidservants into prostitution.

By making Pamela a domestic, Richardson is able to compare the more brutal aspects of the nation's attitudes which emerged in the mid century, towards servants, prostitutes, and women in general, with ambitions for a companionate marriage. On the other hand, readers were aware that had Pamela been sexually attracted to Mr B she could never admit it without seeming to invite his sexual attentions. As it was, Pamela had to be seen to have been astute enough to realise that seduction of any kind ultimately leads to sex, and whatever the circumstances of her 'ruin', a seduced and abandoned servant would be held responsible for her plight. As she puts it herself 'those things don't disgrace men, that ruin poor women'.[49]

When Hays wrote her first and second novels in the late 1790s there was still little possibility for women writers to present female desire without implicating the

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[48] Cited in Margaret Ann Doody *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974) p 43

[49] Richardson, *Pamela,* p 173

guilt inculcated by contemporary views of 'proper' female sexual behaviour. When she characterised a sexually assertive woman followed by a raped heroine she had to combat the oppressiveness of the contemporary belief that, as Mary Poovey puts it, women possessed a sense of physical shame so powerful that it set:

> [....] inner limits on their sexuality. Chastity as a prohibitive code could therefore give way to chastity as a subjective principle, a defining feature of the feminine personality, with unchaste women pushed beyond the pale of true womanhood.[50]

Hays and her contemporary Mary Wollstonecraft recognised the titillating effects of patriarchal ideas of 'proper' female sexual behaviour and the tendency to blur distinctions between consensual sex and rape in portrayals of relations between the sexes. Rachel's story, related at the end of *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney,* not only signals the possibility of a distinction but also subverts the familiar rape text image that, as Sir Simon Darnford put it, a master 'hurts no family by this', when he exploits and abuses a vulnerable servant girl.[51]

Rape or Seduction?: Rachel's Story in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*

Following the discovery of Augustus Harley's imprudent marriage Emma Courtney marries Mr Montague, whom she does not love. When Harley is wounded and dies in her arms she makes a home for the dead Harley's son and her own daughter Emma. Obsessed by his jealousy of Emma's unconcealed love for Harley, Montague contracts a liaison with Rachel, Emma's maid-servant. When she finds

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50 Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) p 4

51 Richardson, *Pamela*, p 172

Rachel in a compromising position with her husband Emma takes an unusually detached, rational and objective view of the situation:

> One morning, going suddenly into Mr Montague's dressing-room, I surprised Rachel sitting on a sopha with her master:- he held her hand in his, while his arm was thrown round her waist; and they appeared to be engaged in earnest conversation. They both started on my entrance.[52]

Rather than having her heroine confront and dismiss her maid with accusations of romantic illusions and sexual depravity Hays simply allows her to leave the scene. Even more unusually, Emma later turns on her husband and makes explicit that she regards the responsibility for the scene she had witnessed as his and not the unfortunate girl's. She warns *him* that *his* behaviour will do the *servant* untold harm:

> Should you corrupt the innocence of this girl, she is emphatically *ruined*. It is the strong mind only, that, firmly resting on its own powers, can sustain and recover itself amidst the world's scorn and injustice.[53]

The words in this passage foreshadow the appearance of another heroine who is destined to possess the 'strong mind [....] firmly resting on its own powers' that Emma describes. But here Hays's focus is on Rachel who, because she is a servant and a dependant has no power, however strong her mind might prove to be. Although at this stage Hays does not go so far as to suggest that rape is wrong *per se* her heroine's reaction to her husband's sexual behaviour with the maid destabilises the eighteenth-century view that a master's sexual abuse of a servant girl is acceptable. It also poses questions of the very notion of seduction in cases such as that of Rachel. Since she placed the blame for the incident on her husband and since she realised that her servant had little chance of avoiding a master's sexual attentions, Emma sees the

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52 Mary Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1996) p 182

53 Hays. *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 182

'seduction' as at best, sexual coercion and at worst, rape. When her heroine does this, Hays undermines some of the assumptions and devices on which the conventional rape narrative is based.

What is also unconventional is that the master-seducer is punished. The novel assumes Gothic undertones as Montague murders Rachel's child and, wracked with guilt for his part in the events that end in tragedy for his wife, his mistress and their baby, he commits suicide. After Montague's death, Emma takes responsibility for the seduced maid-servant's welfare. In a letter to her mentor Mr Francis, Emma explains her arrangements for Rachel's care:

> I procured for her an obscure retreat, to which I removed the unhappy girl (Oh, how degrading is vice!), under false pretences. I exhorted her to conceal her situation - to pretend, that her health was in a declining state [....] This poor young creature continued to bewail the disgrace she anticipated - her lamentations pierced my soul! I recalled to my remembrance your emphatic caution. I foresaw that, with the loss of her character, this simple girl's misfortune and degradation would be irretrievable; and I could, now, plainly distinguish the morality of *rule* from that of *principle*.[54]

Although Hays's priority is an argument for 'natural' female desire, there is no hint of the tension between a policing of female sexuality and a fascination with sex. What pierces the virtuous but desiring heroine's soul is that a morality that informs and supports what she sees as false values are fundamentally flawed when they shape attitudes to violated women. Emma regards the 'misfortune' as Rachel's and not the male members of her family. Her concern is for the girl herself.

In Rachel's story Hays accused the perpetrator of the girl's ruin, but she is also careful to make explicit that the ultimate author of the maid's inevitable downfall

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[54] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 191

is society's refusal to recognise that the sexual double standard and a 'femininity' that is based on women's weaknesses actually render women vulnerable to rape. Hays and Wollstonecraft believed that the sexual behaviours expected of women when they mind their 'manners' and protect their 'virtue' can, and do, 'oblige' men to force them into sex. Texts written by men often appear to *justify* rape.

In a discussion of Mary Wollstonecraft's work in terms of recent scholarship relating to the 'Equality or Difference' debate, Ashley Tauchert has argued that Wollstonecraft identified a link between patriarchal priorities and the exploitation of vulnerable women in the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, James Fordyce and John Gregory.[55] What is relevant to this thesis is Tauchert's suggestion that Wollstonecraft's well-documented 'apparent resistance to female sexuality' in *A Vindication*, derives 'largely from her rejection of the rape paradigm Rousseau introduces to justify 'moral' relations between the sexes, by rooting these in a biologism of penetration'.[56]

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[55] Ashley Tauchert, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine,* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002) pp 72 - 74. For discussion of 'Equality or Difference' see Luce Irigaray, *je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. by Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); Linda Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 13 (3) 1988 405 - 436; Rosi Braidotti, 'The Politics of Ontological Difference', in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis,* ed by T Brennan (London: Routledge, 1989) p 177 - 192; Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Adriano Cavero, 'Equality and Sexual Difference: Amnesia in Political Thought' in *Beyond Equality and Difference,* ed by G Bock and S James (1992) 32 - 45 (37); Moira Gatens, 'Power, Bodies and Difference', in *Destabilizing Theory*, ed by M Barrett, and A Phillips, (1992) 120 - 137; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Feminist Encounters', in *Destabilizing Theory,* ed by M Barrett and A Phillips, (1992); Carole Pateman, 'Equality, Difference, Subordination: The Politics of Motherhood and Women's Citizenship', in *Beyond Equality and Difference*, ed. by G Bock and S James, (1992) pp 17 - 31, (20); *The Essential Difference*, ed by Naomi Schor (Bloomington, Ill: Indiana University Press, 1994)

[56] Tauchert, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine,* p 72. For discussion of Wollstonecraft's resistance to female sexuality see, Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen,* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984) pp 78-80; Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism,* (London: Verso, 1986) p 157; Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women and Fiction,* 1688-1800, (London: Virago, 1989) p 247

'Let their Fears and Blushes Endear them' [57]
Rape: A Paradigm

In the chapter entitled 'Animadversions of Some of the Writers Who Have Rendered Women Objects of Pity, Bordering on Contempt' Wollstonecraft refers to Rousseau's description of a sexual encounter in which he distinguishes between male and female behaviour in moral relations. Rousseau asserts that since a woman 'is made to please and be in subjection to man' her resistance to his sexual advances heightens his pleasure.[58] Men and women each have a contribution to sexual union, but they approach it in different ways:

> From this diversity springs the first difference which may be observed between man and woman in their moral relations. The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive; the one must have both the power and the will; it is enough that the other should offer little resistance. When this principle is admitted, it follows that woman is specially made for man's delight.[59]

The system of female 'resistance' and male 'persuasion' not only fuels the male's fantasy it requires the female to be 'governed by fear'. It also implies that she should adopt behaviours that utilise her 'natural' cunning, lasciviousness and dissimulation in order to achieve the sexual union:

> Rousseau declares that a woman should never for a moment feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her *natural* cunning, and made a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a *sweeter* companion to man [....] [60]

Wollstonecraft argues that the construction of a woman's inferiority is associated with her dependence on male relatives:

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57 James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 5th edn. (London, 1770) vol.1 pp 99 - 100
58 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 175.
59 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, (1762) ed. by P.D. Jimack, trans. by Barbara Foxley, (London: Dent, 1992) p 322
60 Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 108

> Connected with man as daughters, wives, and mothers, their moral character may be estimated by their manner of fulfilling those simple duties.[61]

She objects to the fact that 'those simple duties' involve the adoption of 'manners' that demean and sexually exploit women.

In Wollstonecraft's view it is Rousseau's creation 'Sophy', the young girl bred to be an ideal wife for Emile, that is seen as the antithesis of the rational woman fit for the new order:

> They should learn many things, but only such things as are suitable [....] Men and women are made for each other, but their mutual dependence differs in degree; man is dependent on woman through his desires; woman is dependent on man through her desires and also through her needs; he could do without her better than she can do without him. She cannot fulfil her purpose in life without his aid, without his goodwill, without his respect; she is dependent on our feelings, on the price we put upon her virtue, and the opinion we have of her charms and her deserts.[62]

As far as Wollstonecraft is concerned, the mindless, submissive woman bred only to please men is in grave danger of male sexual aggression and violation. The notion of 'natural' female modesty and physical and mental 'weaknesses' is only ever an excuse for male sexual aggression and the starting point for arguments which relegate women to a life of either domestic drudgery or mindless frivolity.

Rousseau's influence on the construction of domestic woman in Britain was reinforced by Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766). His fusion of conduct book precepts and Rousseau's domestication of women took his *Sermons* to twenty editions by 1800. Fordyce's rape fantasy appears in a reminder to his readers that fathers are duty bound to protect their frail, weak and trusting charges. What is

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61 Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 109

62 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. by Barbara Foxley, Book IV (London: Everyman, 1984) pp 327 - 328

suggested is that it is hardly possible for fathers to resist their daughters:

> They are frail; O do not take advantage of their weakness! Let their fears and blushes endear them. Let their confidence in you never be abused. - But is it possible, that any of you can be such barbarians, so supremely wicked, as to abuse it? Can you find in your hearts to despoil the gentle, trusting creatures of their treasure, or do any thing to strip them of their native robe of Virtue? Curst be the impious hand that would dare to violate the unblemished form of Chastity![63]

The third contribution to the 'rape paradigm' is the 'paternal solicitude' of John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughter* (1774):

> In the preface he tells them a mournful truth, 'that they will hear, at least once in their lives, the genuine sentiments of a man who has no interest in deceiving them'. Hapless woman! What can be expected from thee when the beings on whom thou art said naturally to depend for reason and support, have all an interest in deceiving thee![64]

Gregory advises daughters to cultivate a 'natural' fondness for dress, which Wollstonecraft points out is 'not natural; but arises, like false ambition in men, from a love of power'.[65] Wollstonecraft argues that this kind of advice 'actually recommends dissimulation' since it 'advises an innocent girl to give the lie to her feelings'.[66] Tauchert points out that Wollstonecraft found Gregory's comments relating to 'duplicity, female softness, delicacy of constitution' if anything 'more decorous' than Rousseau's argument, since her response is:

> Besides, the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practising various virtues, become the friend, and not the humble dependent of the husband; and if she, by possessing such substantial qualities, merit his regard, she will not find it necessary to conceal her affection, nor to pretend to an unnatural coldness of constitution to excite her husband's passions.[67]

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[63] Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 5th edn. (London, 1770) vol.1 pp 99 - 100

[64] John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughter* (1774); Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 200

[65] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 112

[66] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 112

[67] Tauchert, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine*, pp 73; Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 113

Fordyce's argument was later echoed in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), which makes the appropriation of courtly woman central to the counter-Revolution.[68] Burke compares the women who marched on Versailles with Marie Antoinette who 'glittered like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy'.[69] The aggressive female marchers and the Queen epitomised the diametric extremes in the constructions of 'wicked' and 'pure' womanhood.

Behind Burke's illogical notion of Marie Antoinette's 'femininity' lies a host of sexist prejudices that betray strong links between his views and those of the revolutionaries he despises. His assertion that 'All the decent drapery of life' ought not to be 'rudely torn off', appears to suggest that the 'naked shivering nature' of reality is too painful to tolerate.[70] For Burke 'pleasing illusions' render 'power gentle', and the entire 'wardrobe of moral imagination' exists to make women palatable to men.[71] The sexualised view of Marie Antoinette also advanced a view of women as bestial. Egalitarian levelling might reveal the king's humanity, but, on the other hand 'a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal and an animal not of the highest order'.[72] Once Marie Antoinette is reduced to the level of 'woman' she becomes not only a beast, but also an object of titillation on account of the fact that the queen's sexual vulnerability is gleefully suggested by a description of blades, ready to leap from their scabbards in response to her predicament:

> I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to

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[68] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event. In a Letter to have been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris. By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke[*1790], ed by Conor Cruise O'Brien, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) pp 168 - 171

[69] Burke. *Reflections*, p 168

[70] Burke, *Reflections*, p 169

[71] Burke, *Reflections*, pp 169 - 170

[72] Burke, *Reflections*, p 170

> avenge even a look that threatened her [the queen] with insult. - But the age of chivalry is gone.-That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.[73]

Similarly, the account of the penetration of her bed as she flies 'almost naked' to seek out the king's protection is, in Wollstonecraft's view, pandering to a husband's and father's sexual response to frail and vulnerable womanhood.[74]

The association between a French mob transgressing the domestic sphere of a royal family created a link between political liberty and female sexuality. Furthermore, the threat of France's potential invasion of Britain was compared to the invasion of the minds and bodies of British women already begun in Rousseau's libertarian fiction. For example, William Barrow connected national and military history and a seduction plot:

> It was one of the boasts or the menaces of France in the earliest periods of her revolution that she would in every country of Europe prepare the minds of one sex [men] for a similar revolution by perverting the sentiments and corrupting the morals of the other [women]. That this fatal project has been attempted against our nation, I shall readily be excused the unnecessary task of proving to my fellow-subjects.[75]

Scenarios such as Barrow's and Burke's are framed in terms of the gender difference inscribed in the English cultural revolution. To Radical women writers such as Wollstonecraft and Hays, Burke's imagery described a sexually victimised woman rather than one made vulnerable to patronage and libertinage. The anxiety betrayed in Burke's logic is the eighteenth-century male writers' obsession with two diametrically opposite images of woman, the virtuous lady and the sexually aggressive, politically

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[73] Burke. *Reflections,* p 169

[74] Burke, *Reflections*, pp 169 - 170

[75] William Barrow, 'Essay on Education', (1802) in *Anti-Jacobin Review* (12) 128 - 129. See also, John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge,* (London: Macmillan, 1992). J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985)

subversive woman.

What Hays's novels highlight is that the 'natural' female 'weakness' advertised in patriarchal notions of female Sensibility forces men to be sexually aggressive. What *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* defends is a woman's choice in sexual relations. Hays explores this in her portrayal of Emma's relationship with Harley, in Emma's interpretation of Rachel's 'ruin' and later in Mary Raymond's decisions after her violation. I would suggest that Hays's account of Montague's use of Rachel revisits and addresses the problem of distinctions between seduction and rape. It also suggests that a woman's sexuality has nothing to do with the assumptions of women's nature that underpin the rape narrative and allow influential men to abuse their power and go unpunished. She makes explicit that the responsibility for rape *is* relevant, whether sexual coercion is used to seduce an inexperienced young girl like Haywood's Melliora, the pleasure-seeking Fantomina, Richardson's servant-girl Pamela, or the sexually aware Mary Raymond.

Hays's fiction attempts: to lift the heroine out of the limits drawn by the assumptions of women's weaknesses, madness, 'quivering' Sensibility and 'ideal' femininity, to dispel negative assumptions about female sexual desire and to challenge the exploitation of women generated by the slippery distinctions between seduction, rape deployed in the conventional rape narrative. In order to achieve this Hays deployed the Radical interest in the existence of a female 'mind'.[76]

In the next section I argue that Hays's attempt to portray a positive image of the desiring heroine challenges the convention designed to control women's sexual behaviour. Her 'new' image of 'femininity' overturns the traditional unequal struggle

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[76] Hays draws on the ideas outlined by the Hugenot Francois Poullain de la Barre in *The Equality of the Two Sexes* (1673)

between the sexes in familiar representations of 'preparations' for 'love'. By depicting a virtuous heroine whose sexual behaviour asserts her sexuality and agency Hays completely defies conventional notions of 'proper' feminine conduct.

Emma acts and speaks in a way that would invite rape in the conventional narrative. Yet when she breaks tradition by articulating her sexual desire and writing about it, she is not raped. One of the reasons is that unlike the cynical rake heroes portrayed in the typical rape text, Harley fails to act on her 'impropriety'.

'A Pervading and a Devouring Fire!'. Hays's Project in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* [77]

As a romantic girl Emma Courtney sighs for romance and as a grown woman she feels that she loves 'an ideal object'.[78] In her Preface Hays argued that fiction was capable of portraying the effect of strong emotions in an individual woman's life. She knew that readers might hear echoes of Wollstonecraft's early novel, *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) in this challenge. In her novel, Wollstonecraft had posited the view that her heroine had 'thinking powers', that is, autonomous competence, in contrast to Richardson's heroine, Clarissa. Hays asserted that her heroine had thinking powers too but cautioned that, given the realities of women's lives, those powers were not strong enough to protect her from the strength of her passions. Readers are invited to sympathise with Emma whilst acknowledging that her passion is tragically misdirected

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[77] Mary Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p 128 - 129.

[78] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 60.
The novel was inspired by Hays's one-sided sexual obsession with the Cambridge mathematician and reformer William Frend and Helvetian philosophy.
For a discussion of the nature of their relationship see Gina Luria Walker, *Mary Hays (1759 - 1843): The Growth of a Woman's Mind*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006) pp 115 - 116

and therefore its object, arbitrary.

Hays's device was to examine the damaging effects of the eighteenth-century constructions of femininity that render women vulnerable to sexual exploitation and, at the same time, to accommodate female sexual desire and the right to voice it. What Hays attempted to overturn were patriarchal codes of 'proper' female 'manners' in order to formulate a behaviour that was both 'natural' and 'proper' to her heroine. When she did this Hays demonstrated that Emma was not as much the 'victim' of her passion and 'Sensibility' as of the way society constructed and instructed women.

Since Plato, women have been contained, immobilised and denied subjectivity in speech. In the words of Michelle Boulous Walker, she 'remains silent, reduced to the mute passivity of her reproductive role'.[79] 'Woman' is not a subject who speaks. According to convention it is the hero who forces his sexual attention on the heroine. Influenced by her study of the new science of the mind, Hays explored the nature of her heroine's sexual demands and her intention to give her body to the man she loves in spite of his lack of interest.[80] What emerges from Hays's reversal of familiar patterns is a demonstration of the positive aspects of a re-construction of female sensibility driven by both emotion and reason.

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[79] Michelle Boulous Walker, *Philosophy and the Maternal Body: Reading Silence*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) p 12. Plato positions woman in opposition to voice, speech and conversation, in the figure of the flute girl, in *The Symposium*, (London: Penguin, 1951) trans. Walter Hamilton, (176e) In the *Cratylus,* Plato writes, '*Gyne* (woman) I suspect to be the same word as *gone* (birth), *thely* (female) appears to be partly derived from *thele* (teat) because the teat is like rain, and makes things flourish (*tethelanai*)' (414a).
For further discussion on the silencing of women, Michelle le Doeuff, 'Women and Philosophy', trans. D Pope, in *Radical Philosophy*, 17 (Summer, 1977) 5-12 (7); Luce Irigary, *Speculum of the Other Woman,* trans. Gillian C Gill, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) Deborah Cameron, *Feminism and Linguistic Theory,* 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992); Patrizia Violi, 'Gender, Subjectivity, Language' in *Beyond Equality and Difference,* (London: Routledge, 1992) ed by G Bock and S James, pp 164 - 76

[80] Hays was fascinated by the new science of the mind. She read Helvetius, Joseph Priestly, John Locke and Erasmus Darwin in an effort to place her fictional experiment based on her personal experiences into valid philosophical theory.

Hays's re-construction explores what she saw as a psychological truth. She exploited a confessional tradition derived from the works of Augustine and Rousseau and drew on the formal strategies of *Eloisa* (1760). She moved beyond notions of biography and autobiography, and instead located her project in the emerging science of the mind. Hartley, Priestley and Erasmus Darwin demanded that knowledge must be based on empirical observation and experience.

Hays also found support for her convictions in Helvetian materialism, since the French philosopher promoted Locke's view that all human beings begin life with equal mental competency. She made use of her understanding that the body was manifested in, and organically joined to, the mind. The combined ideas that knowledge derives from experience, that all human beings have the capacity for intellect, and that passion is the engine of the mind seemed to offer a new perspective on women's capacities and sexual nature.

Hays's first heroine is brought up by a cynical, Rationalist father and a sentimental aunt who is addicted to old romances and, finally, by vulgar relatives. She finds the burden of dependence irritating and seeks solace with a benevolent widow, Mrs Harley. The widow's son Augustus, provides Emma with an image that releases a sexual passion which is driven by her romance reading. Although Hays demonstrates the negative aspects of Emma's sensibility, she also seeks to introduce female rationality into the argument.

At the heart of Hays's proposal is the view held by Radical women writers that although Rationalist men regard the sentimental woman as a victim and the embodiment of repressive and nostalgic ideology, men take advantage of female passivity. The reasoning that both underpins Hays's project and explains her first heroine's actions is set out in personal letters to William Godwin, who mentored Hays

as she wrote the novel. The letters exchanged between Emma and Mr Francis are Hays's real life letters to Godwin. However her letter of 11 May 1796 suggests that Godwin had been disturbed by the connection between himself and the character Francis:

> As to my philosophical letters, it is a hobby-horsical subject with me, & I doubt I shall not be able to prevail upon myself to omit them, nor am I at all conscious of "misrepresenting" or "unfairly" attempting to "crush" my opponent, neither am I yet able to comprehend the difference between me & this respected opponent.[81]

Hays's letters attempted to overcome the problem that Rationalist men do not understand or take seriously the damage inflicted on women by a gendered education. In a letter written in January 1796 she complains 'How is it, my friend, that after so many conversations & so many letters, we do not seem thoroughly to comprehend each other?'[82]

Francis's analysis of Emma's passion underestimated the effect of ideology and ignored the gendered nature of rationalist ideals, 'the habits acquired by early precept and example'.[83] Emma is quick to draw attention to it:

> Why call woman, miserable, oppressed, and impotent, woman - crushed, and then insulted - why call her to *independence* - which not nature, but the barbarous and accursed laws of society, have denied her? *This is mockery.* [84]

What Mr Francis objects to is Emma's sensibility, which he describes as a 'fastidious delicacy' that consumes her. He regards her as a sentimental idiot and her problems as the inevitable result of 'indolence'. Hays's characterisation of her heroine

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[81] *The Correspondence (1779 - 1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist,* ed. by Marilyn L. Brooks, (Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales: Edwin Mellin Press, 2004) p 458

[82] *The Correspondence (1779 - 1843) of Mary Hays,* p 433. Pforzheimer Collection MH14.

[83] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 86

[84] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 146

demonstrates that Emma's obsession with Harley is not, as the Rationalist Mr Francis claims, an irresponsible abandonment of reason or 'the unnatural and odious invention of a distempered civilization'.[85] It is the consequence of a 'superior' female mind that lacks, and therefore must construct, an ideal object:

> Hence the eccentricities of conduct, with which women of superior minds have been accused - the struggles [....] of an ardent spirit, denied a scope for its exertions! The strong feelings, and strong energies, which property directed, in a field sufficiently wide, might - ah! What might they not have aided? [86]

Hays believed that what Francis describes as 'a fastidious delicacy' is what contemporary society expects of women and precisely the kind of frivolous sensibility that Radical women writers assert is dangerous to them.

Both Emma Courtney and her successor Mary Raymond display signs of 'sensibility' when they see their sexual desire in terms described in Jean Jacques Rousseau's infamous *La Nouvelle Heloise.*[87] Emma quotes from several Radical modern works including Wollstonecraft's, *A Vindication* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, as well as the great sentimental writers Richardson and Sterne. The greatest influence on Emma is Rousseau's brand of unbridled sexual love and unashamed female sexuality that takes into account a spiritual aspect of female sexual desire. Emma seeks the object of her desire in terms used by St Preux when he describes the:

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[85] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp 142 - 3

[86] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 86

[87] J. J. Rousseau, *Eloisa, or, A Series of Original Letters*, trans by William Kendrick, 4 vols. (London: T Beckett, 1776). The first two volumes were available to the British public on April 7th 1761 after three months of announcements by Beckett & De Hondt, Booksellers. See *London Chronicle*, IX (1761) 204, 331 - 333, 336, 379, 387, 397, 451, 531, 547 605. Advertisements began as early as December 8 1760 when the *Universal Evening Post* promised a translation (see citation by L.J. Courtois, op. cit., pp 114 - 115)

> perfect union of [our] souls which connects the most perfect, the most harmonious unity, with ties an hundred times more sacred.[88]

Julie endorses this when she asks her lover to 'consult your own breast' for true morality, since there he will find that 'sacred fire which hath so often inflamed us with love for the sublimest virtue', a 'sacred enthusiasm' that 'passions may defile but can never efface'. [89] Emma's memory of her encounter with the book is described in ecstatic and near sexual terms and both associates the subject of her desire, Harley, with Rousseau's hero and betrays her romantic sensibility, 'He was the St Preux, the Emilius, of my sleeping and waking reveries'.[90]

Since Rousseau's novel combines the sexual freedom and the sentiment Hays's heroine desires, the story of Julie's consummated love for Saint-Preux becomes Emma's source book and the terms in which she describes her engagement with Rousseau's novel express the kind of interest that Emma usually reserves for her own sensibility. This kind of passion is echoed in the language she chooses to portray her love for Harley:

> With what transport, with what enthusiasm, did I peruse this dangerous, enchanting, work! – the pleasure I experienced approached the limits of pain – it was tumult – and all the ardour of my character was excited.[91]

According to James H Warner, early reviewers of Rousseau's novel, including Clara Reeve and R B Fellowes, indicate a favourable public reaction.[92] For example,

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88 J. J. Rousseau. *Eloisa,* vol. 2 p 34

89 J. J. Rousseau. *Eloisa,* vol. 2 p 14

90 Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney,* p 59

91 Hays. *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney,* p 25

92 James H Warner, 'A Bibliography of Eighteenth-Century Editions of J.J. Rousseau. with Notes on the Early Diffusion of his Writings', PQ XIII (1934) 225-247 (225): Clara Reeve, *Progress of Romance,* (London, 1785) II 13 - 18 and R B Fellowes, 'Character of Rousseau', in *Monthly Mirror,* VIII (1799) 70 - 71. Warner collected ninety-four epithets of praise and sixty-one of disapproval. Most of the expressions of any length include both applause and censure.

the *Library* (1761) comments on 'strokes of genius, imagination, and passion' whilst the *Monthly Review* (1761) observes that the novel exhibited an 'air of truth and nature [....] which insensibly engages the attention and interests the heart'.[93] Although elements of the sensational character of the love story were noted, attention was drawn to the useful instruction in the novel. Others note the 'sensibility' or 'sentimentality' of the novel and although his sensibility was compared with Richardson's, to most early reviewers Rousseau was considered to be the greater genius while Richardson the more moral and more impressive.[94] By the time Hays wrote her novels in the 1790s, readers felt that Rousseau had confused moral issues. Although *The Critical Review* expressed satisfaction that Rousseau had demonstrated ways in which women could regain public countenance after the grossest misconduct, nevertheless the novel was judged to be dangerous, especially to young girls, and closely allied with this comment was a reaction to the sentimentality of the novel.[95]

Hays's novel suggests (as does Rousseau's) that, since it is combined with a thirst for knowledge, the heroine's sensibility prepares her for complete abandonment to an all-consuming passion for her hero. Harley is Emma's St Preux since she admires his intellect, which she associates with power. He uncovers a world of science and learning for the impressionable young girl:

> I loved you, first, for what, I conceived, high qualities of mind - from nature and association, my tenderness became personal - till at length, I loved you, not only rationally and tenderly - *but passionately* - it became a pervading and a devouring fire![96]

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93 *The Library* I (1761) 49, 335 *The Monthly Review* (1761) XXIV 259, 260

94 See *Critical Review*, XI (1761) 66, and XII (1761) 203 -211.

95 See for example, Clara Reeve, op. cit. II 13 - 18 'A Satire of M Voltaire ... against M Rousseau's New Eloisa, (1761) and Mrs Montagu, letter to Mrs Robinson' (1762) in *Mrs Montagu 'Queen of the Blues'*, ed by B Blunt, (Boston, 1762) I. P 15

96 Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 128 - 129

He is also the personification of Abelard, another figure who represents knowledge, but much more significantly, a figure also associated with forbidden sexual desire:

> The hours flew on down pinions: - my new *brother*, for so he would call himself, endeavoured to testify his gratitude, by encouraging and assisting me in the pursuit of learning and science: he gave us lectures on astronomy and philosophy - 'While truths divine came mended from his tongue'.[97]

Although Hays's first heroine never succeeds in her endeavour to consummate her sexual craving for Augustus Harley, there is always an energetic Rousseauistic physicality in the language she uses to express the all-consuming sexual passion:

> [....] my strong individual attachment has annihilated every man in the creation: - him I love appears, in my eyes, something more - every other, something less.[98]

Early in *The Victim of Prejudice* Hays establishes that her second heroine's physical desire for William Pelham is as strongly felt and expressed as was Emma's desire for Harley. Mary remembers:

> We loved each other; we beheld only our mutual perfections; in the midst of our transports, we mingled our tears [....] We were in that bewitching delirium which rendered even the constraint we imposed upon ourselves an honourable sacrifice that added a zest to our happiness.[99]

Both heroines describe their passion in language that is similar to Rousseau's description of the sublime love between Emilius and Sophia:

> The sacrifices they offer up at this altar render it dear to them. In the midst of some of their transports, which they are obliged to restrain, they

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97 Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 71. Pierre Abelard, *Letters of the celebrated Abelard and Heloise: with the history of their lives to which is added Eloisa to Abelard, a poem by Alexander Pope*, trans. by John Hughes (Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1751). Emma misquotes: 'And truths divine came mended from that tongue'. Alexander Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard'. (1:66)

98 Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 117

99 Mary Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996) pp 55 - 56

> mingle their tears: tears purer than the dew of heaven, tears so delicious, as to create the most exquisite rapture; in short, they are in the most bewitching delirium that the human mind is capable of enjoying. Even their denials are an honourable sacrifice, and make an addition to their happiness. [100]

Based on her interest in Lockean-Hartleyian mind-body interactions as well as her Radical Enlightenment impulses towards social and sexual fulfilment, Hays portrays female sexual desire generated by a sense of female agency rather than masculine coercion. Driven by romantic sensibility Emma believes that if passion is true the object of it must also be true. Hays manipulates her heroine's unique sense of a mind driven by her feelings and a sense of the ownership of her own body by creating a channel for her passion.[101] Influenced by Helvetius, Hays had argued that without socially acceptable release sexual energy could poison, rather than empower, women. She insists that, 'Strong feelings and strong energies which properly directed, in a field sufficiently wide, might - ah! What might they not have aided?', and she argues that if they are 'forced back, and pent up' they tend to 'ravage and destroy the mind that generated them!' [102]

On the other hand, Hays imagines a hero that an emotionally charged but intelligent heroine can admire. Yet, her more mature heroine does not expect Harley to be the romantic knight but something infinitely more desirable: a man who will return the rational and passionate feelings she has for him. Emma also demands equality in sexual relations. She wants a man who will desire her physically as well as recognise and respect her intellect. In other words, Hays aims to imbue Emma with more power than does Rousseau. Although the language she uses associates Emma

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100 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius; or, A Treatise of Education,* (Edinburgh: J Dickson and C Elliot. 1773) Vol. 3 Bk V pp 164 - 165

101 *The Correspondence*, Letter to Godwin, 28 July, 1795 pp 393 - 396

102 *The Correspondence*, Letter to Godwin. 28 July 1795 pp 393 - 396

with Rousseau's infamous Julie, Hays's heroine insists that her sexual desire is legitimate because it obeys the laws of Nature and Reason:

> Of what then, you may ask, do I complain? Not of the laws of nature! But when mind has given dignity to natural affections; when reason, culture, taste, and delicacy, have combined to chasten, to refine, to exalt (shall I say) to sanctify them - Is there, then, no cause to complain of rigor and severity, that such minds must either passively submit to a vile traffic, or be content to relinquish all the endearing sympathies of Nature has formed woman peculiarly susceptible of the tender affections.[103]

Furthermore, she suggests that chastity is simply a pernicious and hypocritical social demand which denies women agency in sexual love:

> Ah! Did he but know my tenderness – the desire of being beloved, of inspiring sympathy, is congenial to the human heart – why should I hesitate to inform him of my affection – why do I blush and tremble at the mere idea? It is a false shame! It is pernicious system of morals, which teaches us that hypocrisy can be virtue![104]

In this passage Hays tackles psychological dualism, that is, the contemporary debate centring on Reason and various aspects of Sensibility. The heroine both criticises and exemplifies aspects of sentiment. Although Hays herself might avoid the label 'essentialist' Emma's arguments for female passion come close to linking women biologically with Sensibility. However the dichotomy is seen as part of the heroine's intellectual development as Hays seeks to lift Emma out of a gendered paradigm into a new one. Furthermore because the female body must always be the object of the kind of male penetrative desire described in rape fantasy with late eighteenth-century society, the depiction of a desiring woman offers multiple challenges to the status quo, its constructions, the narratives that perpetuate the idea of woman as object, and ultimately patriarchy itself.

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[103] Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 89
[104] Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp 55 - 56

Yet the characterisation of the young Emma's sexual desire for Harley is simultaneously revolutionary and naïve. There is a head-strong independence from contemporary criticism and conduct book stricture, yet there is an appeal to a notion of 'love' that harks back to a rather chivalric picture of courtly Romance. As Hays's ironic Preface suggested, although a rational woman could be liberated by sexual desire, a woman who surrenders to romance is liable to fall into a pernicious trap:

> The errors of my heroine were the offspring of sensibility; and the result of her hazardous experiment is calculated to operate as a *warning*, rather than as an example.[105]

The key to Emma's passion for Harley resides in the notion that it is founded upon her 'natural' desire combined with Reason, since 'strong mental powers appear to be connected with acute and lively sensation, or the capacity of receiving forcible impressions'.[106] Given that her up-bringing renders her vulnerable to male dominance and coercion, Emma's self discovery has the effect of detaching her from the corruption of the 'mental bondage' of 'frivolous' sensibility. Hays's second heroine's more enlightened upbringing encourages a sexual independence that allows Mary Raymond to reject subjection in marriage as a 'remedy' to her situation after rape.

In 1793 Hays had pinned down her argument in a bid to disassociate herself with the kind of female 'Sensibility' that is linked with female 'weakness', and which renders women vulnerable to sexual exploitation:

> Of all bondage, mental bondage [is] the most fatal [....] the understanding of women have been chained down to frivolity and trifles, and have increased the general tide of effeminacy and corruption [107]

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105 Hays. *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. p 4

106 Mary Hays, 'Are Mental Talents Productive of Happiness?', in *The Monthly Magazine*, 3, (May. 1797) 358

107 Mary Hays, *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous*, (1793) p 19

Hays's alternative is a view of women as beings with agency and freedom from exploitation who possess intellect driven by their emotions.

Because Radical women writers suspected that men took advantage of the confusion and hypocrisy surrounding the insistence on chastity, women are raped when the 'ideal', or 'quivering' or 'frivolous' Sensibility that panders to masculine needs prevents them from making choices in sexual relations. Hays's novels suggest that a recognition of women's intellectual capabilities would tip the scales, release women from submissive passivity, and legitimise female desire.

Emma's story challenges rape text 'law' in yet another way. Hays silences the male protagonist in order that *he* is forced to listen to the sexually desiring heroine. According to convention Emma may not speak or write of her sexual desires, yet Hays has her heroine engage in both activities. But, it is Harley's silence that allows the heroine to declare her sexual desire. Precisely *because* Harley does not speak, Emma is able to claim a very specific female right, a sexual agency that is completely independent of the force of *his* physical demands or emotions. Since Hays's hero is silent her heroine is not coerced, physically or verbally, into sexual relations with him. As Emma becomes more and more confident in the validity of pursuing the object of her desire and the quieter Harley is, the more aggressive and assertive Emma becomes in order to force *him* into submission.

When Emma makes her extraordinary admission of physical feelings for her beloved, Hays not only establishes her heroine's right to the property in her own body but also the right to claim it as her own and to give it to whomsoever she chooses,

'My friend - I would give myself to you – the gift is not worthless'.[108] Hays's portrayal of Emma's dominance and persistent coercion in the love scene (a sexually aggressive role normally reserved for men) presents the image of a woman forcing a man into sex, which is a reversal of the familiar pattern of vulnerable, submissive, silent woman.

There is both failure and achievement in Emma's story. In the end, the heroine fails to achieve sexual agency. But, the novel challenges the status quo because the failure is seen as the result of a conception of female desire which is based on and driven by contemporary responses to romance, by patriarchal definitions of female Sensibility, and by misguided ideals. Therefore Emma's story achieves the breaking down of social and political barriers in its critique of constructions of femininity that stand between women and popular recognition of the positive aspects of female passion. Yet, in contrast to the heroines featured in early eighteenth-century attempts to expose women's weaknesses, Emma's coercive sexuality is not drawn as the behaviour of a female rake like Manley's Duchess in *The New Atalantis*, or Behn's manipulative, fair jilt, Miranda.

The portrayal of Harley's silent response to Emma, which resembles the passivity and submission normally seen in virtuous women in rape episodes, is a sustained intellectual argument for a woman's right to choose a lover unchallenged by either constructions of femininity or masculine coercion. The portrayal of natural female sexual desire portrayed through an image of female persistence and male silence offers an extraordinary twist to the premises behind eighteenth-century love and marriage plots that assume the 'natural' virtue of the heroine. It is also important

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[108] Hays. *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. p 124

that the portrayal of natural female desire does not end in ruin. Emma's love is vindicated when during his death scene Harley confesses that he had always loved her. Masculine passion had been constrained by the judgement of society and marriage ties:

> Your tenderness early penetrated my heart - aware of its weakness - I sought to shun you - I imposed on myself those severe laws of which you causelessly complained. - Had my conduct been less rigid, I had been lost - I had been unjust to the bonds which I had voluntarily contracted; and which, therefore, had on me indispensable claims.[109]

The heroine's insistence that the recipient of her love is admirable and deserving of 'the gift' is, for the purposes of this thesis, one of the important factors in Emma's desire for Harley and one that is key to an understanding of Mary Raymond's relationship with and rejection of, her rapist. In a letter to William Godwin, dated 6 February 1796, Hays argues:

> Do you wonder, at the interest I felt in the fate of the artless, affectionate, Emily Melville - That I lamented in Falkland, the mind of promise destroy'd by one strong prejudice - That I sympathised in the restless, ardent, curiosity of Caleb Williams? I look'd into my own heart, read its responsive emotions, & respected the writer who cou'd thus, analysing the consequences back to their sources, penetrate into the recesses of the mind. One more observation & I have done - That we can "admire, esteem, & love," an individual - (for love in the abstract conveys to me no idea) - which must be in fact, depending upon that individual for a large share of our felicity - & not lament their loss in proportion to our apprehension of their worth, appears to me a proposition, involving in itself an absurdity, demonstrably false. I wish you had ever loved [.....] I will say with my friend Mrs W, - "It is necessary for me to love & admire or I sink into sadness.".[110]

The Memoirs of Emma Courtney emphasises that female physical love is a 'gift' that should not, and cannot, be taken by force. One of the positive aspects of Hays's brand

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109 Hays. *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 178

110 *The Correspondence (1779 - 1843) of Mary Hays*, p 428. Emily Melville and Falkland are characters in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.

of female sensibility is that an intelligent and feeling heroine has the right to choose, and indeed not to choose, a sexual partner. In *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* the right is portrayed in an *absence* of male force, coercion and rape. The portrayal not only established a positive view of female selfhood, sexual desire and agency, but also emphasised a woman's right to voice sexual desire whether she is the fictional heroine or the writer of the novel.

The development of the kind of patriarchal female Sensibility which, as it stood, played a part in a definition of 'natural' femininity as 'weakness' is interesting. Far from imbuing a woman with composure, patriarchal female Sensibility's tendency to focus on excess, stimulation, excitement and arousal, and its seductive insistence on emotional engagement, became problematic because it disturbed a reader's quiescent state. Yet, Hays's letter to Godwin dated February 1796 describes a woman's sensibility, pursuit of happiness, desire for pleasure and abhorrence of pain in terms of a 'force of nature':

> The system which I adopt recommends itself to me by its simplicity, it is properly a science, because every proposition into which it branches may be resolved into one original principle - the desire of pleasure, or the abhorrence of pain [....] Men do right when pursuing interest & happiness, it argues no depravity (this is the fable of superstition) it is the force of nature.[111]

Hays's answer to patriarchal definitions of femininity was a brand of feminine happiness which linked 'sensibility', with 'mind' and 'virtue'. When Raymond raises doubts about wisdom of the unusual education he had provided for her Mary has no such misgivings. Her response is 'in cultivating my mind, in fostering a virtuous sensibility, in imbuing my heart with principles of justice and rectitude, he had not

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[111] *The Correspondence (1779 - 1843) of Mary Hays,* p 433

been betraying my happiness!'.[112]

Hays's characterisation of well read and cultivated heroines is yet another challenge to the rape trope. During the growth of her mind, Emma's perception of femininity and her personal progress is seen as a construction that is linked to her sensibility derived from a history of reading romance fiction. Like Charlotte Lennox's female 'quixote' Arabella, Hays's heroine is brought up on chivalric tales of courtly love. She is prey to the kind of Sensibility promoted by patriarchal priorities and completely under the influence of romance by the time she reaches adolescence. Emma's self education does not stop at Sentimental and reclusive poetry but progresses to romance and the sexual fantasy found in Rousseau. As she herself put it, 'Stories were still my passion, and I sighed for a romance that would never end'.[113] However, this dream world is interrupted by personal disappointment and later in life, disillusion. What challenged the conventional view of women was that, although Emma's romance reading appears to drive a solipsistic sensibility, the source and *development* of her sexual independence is an intellect driven by strong feelings.

Hays wrote her subversive and innovative novels in an era when there was anxiety about who was reading what, and where and when they read it. Fearing that women's fiction undermined patriarchal priorities women's reading and book ownership was regarded as, 'romance' and dismissed as trivia. Since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, erotic poetry, plays and romance fiction had been deemed unsuitable reading for women. But, all reading was suspect.

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[112] Hays, *Victim of Prejudice*, p 25
[113] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 15

'Preparatives to love': Women Reading

Since the sixteenth century the reading lady had been seen as the learned lady who threatened masculine mental prowess. Reading also denoted experience of potential, if not actual, sexual corruption. In the seventeenth century reading was routinely described as the cause of blindness, illness, madness or, rebelliousness amongst females. The 'learned lady' Dol Common's friends in *The Alchemist* (1612) think she has been driven mad since her reading led to religious discussion and debate. As Face puts it:

> [....] She is a most rare schollar:
> And is gone mad, with studying [....]
> If you but name a word, touching the *Hebrew*,
> She falls into her fit, and will discourse
> So learnedly of Genealogies,
> As you would runne mad, too, to heare her; Sir. (Act II Sc.3)[114]

The anxiety generated by women's reading is driven not only by the belief that reading figured power but also by an association between what Jacqueline Pearson calls 'textuality and sexuality'.[115] She suggests that in Jacobean comedy the reading woman's partiality to her books frequently alerts the audience to her sexuality. Thomas Middleton's Harebrain fears that his wife's love of reading will lead her to the desire for sexual pleasure in *A Mad World, My Masters* (1608). On account of this fear, he has 'conveyed away all her wanton pamphlets', particularly the most dangerous, *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* (I.2.46). The courtesan Frank Gullman, a 'sweet virgin' (I.ii.39) who gains the reputation for being 'religious'

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[114] Ben Jonson. *The Alchemist*. (Menston, Yorkshire: Scholar Press, 1970)

[115] Jacqueline Pearson, 'Women Reading, Reading Women' in *Women and Literature in Britain 500 - 1700*, ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp 88 - 89

because she is constantly 'at her books' (I.i.192-3), so impresses Harebrain that he encourages her to read devotional tracts with his wife. Predictably, Gullman succeeds in improving Mrs Harebrain's art of deception.

Although a woman's reading did not necessarily advertise her transgressive sexuality she could be rendered sexually vulnerable by the act of reading. She could also find herself in danger of her life. Shakespeare's Iachimo, smuggled into Imogen's bedroom, discovers that she 'hath been reading late/the tale of Tereus'.[116] Jacqueline Pearson assumes that the text is the story of Philomel's rape as read in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and that the reading of such texts might leave Imogen open to 'the psychic rape perpetrated by Iachimo as he violates first her personal space and then her reputation'.[117] Pearson argues that in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* the cultured Lavinia, who is 'deeper read and better skill'd than her male relatives' (IV. 1. 33) reads to a nephew 'Sweet poetry and Tully's Orator' (IV.I.13-14) and is punished for her knowledge and mental capacity. Like Philomel, Lavinia is raped and has her tongue cut out, and like the Roman statesman and Man of Letters, Marcus Tullius Cicero 106 - 43 BC (that is, Tully) she loses her hands.[118]

Both Imogen and Lavinia are seen to have become vulnerable because although they are innocent, their reading signals sexual knowledge.[119] But there is also a message in the kind of reading Lavinia chooses. Before she is raped the 'cultured' Lavinia read Cicero. Following her violation she reads Ovid's 'tragic tale of Philomel'. (IV. I. 47)[120] Since Lavinia's intellect threatens male dominance in the

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[116] William Shakespeare, Cymbeline II. 2. 43 - 4
[117] Pearson, 'Women Reading, Reading Women', p 89
[118] Pearson. 'Women Reading, Reading Women'. p 89
[119] Pearson. 'Women Reading, Reading Women', p 89
[120] Pearson, 'Women Reading, Reading Women', p 88

public, intellectual sphere, her rape and mutilation conveys a particular kind of lesson to reading women. Lavinia's 'punishment' functions as both leveller and warning. Pearson suggests that as Lavinia is unable to speak of her ordeal her choice of text, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, gives her a language with which to reveal the circumstances surrounding her violation, 'Imogen's reading metaphorically, and Lavinia's literally, traps them into an enactment of images from their texts'.[121]

Since Philomel is raped and ultimately transformed into a nightingale (which becomes a literary sign-post for rape) the choice of Ovidian story is interesting.[122] The opening lines of Ovid's 'Tereus, Procne and Philomela' describe Procne's loneliness after her marriage to Tereus.[123] Missing her sister, Procne begs her husband to visit Thrace to ask her father Pandion to allow Philomela to return with him. When he sees her, Tereus is inflamed by her beauty:

> Nothing not dare, as passion drove unreined,
> A furnace barely in his heart contained.[124]

Tereus's lust increases when Philomela kisses her father before boarding the ship:

> As she embraced her father, would he were

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[121] Pearson, 'Women Reading, Reading Women', p 89

[122] In subsequent texts the appearance of the bird often forewarns readers of a rape episode or at least the potential of rape. For example, awaiting news of a wedding date Lovelace pictures his flight to London to convey the tidings, and imagines that Clarissa has found a means of escape, 'there, like the sweet Philomela, a thorn in her breast, warbles forth her melancholy complains against her barbarous Tereus'. Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), L 325 p 1038. Similarly, Blake uses the nightingale motif to probe the state of the innocent Oothoon's mind after her rape. Unable to confront Bromion about his sexual assault Oothoon appears to reduce it to an event safely contained in the past, '[....] the nightingale has done lamenting/ The lark does rustle in the ripe corn, and the Eagle returns/From nightly prey, and lifts his golden beak to the pure east'. But once she has done this, for the rest of the poem Blake's heroine defies convention by arguing for the purity of her sexuality with Theotormon the lover who rejects her. William Blake, 'Visions of the Daughters of Albion' in *William Blake: Selected Poems*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson, (London: Penguin Books, 1988) Plate 2 Lines 24 - 26 p 83

[123] Ovid. 'Tereus, Procne and Philomela' in *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Book VI Lines 409 - 689 pp 134 - 142

[124] Lines 464 - 466 p 135

Himself her father! Nor would his sin be less![125]

He rapes his young sister-in-law during the long sea voyage. Goaded by her fury and threats to disclose his crime to the world he mutilates her, after which the gods transform the unfortunate girl into a nightingale.

In the eighteenth century, a young girl's romance reading signalled seduction. In Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* (1725) when the young heroine Melliora shares with her seducer, D'Elmont her realisation that she is being prepared for sex, she demonstrates an acute understanding of romance fiction's symbolism in the seduction process with 'Books were, as it were, Preparatives to Love, and by their softening Influence, melted the Soul, and made it fit for amorous Impressions'.[126] On the other hand, Mary Delariver Manley's account of Charlot's seduction in *The New Atalantis* combines tragedy and titillation in the familiar rape text theme of the older, selfish, corrupt man and the innocent, desiring female. However, Manley's manipulation of the rape theme constitutes strong gender political comment by including factors that cast doubt on the helplessness of the victim.

Following her parents' death Charlot is carefully brought up and educated in the Duke's household. Because he intends to marry her to his son, the Duke guards her virtue jealously. During the preparation for the marriage he prevents her from reading poetry and romance in order to suppress her passion. When he himself becomes physically inflamed by her beauty the Duke encourages her to read texts that are deliberately chosen to arouse her sexually:

> he took down an Ovid, and opening it just at the love of Myrra for her Father, conscious red overspread his Face, he gave it her to read, she obey'd him with

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[125] Lines 484 - 486 p 136

[126] Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess: Secret Histories Novels and Poems*, 2nd edn. 4 vols. (London, 1725) Vol. I p 84

a visible delight; nothing is more pleasing to young Girls, than in first being consider'd as Women [...]She took down the Book, and plac'd herself by the Duke, his Eyes Feasted themselves upon her Face, thence wander'd over her snowy Bosom, and saw the young swelling Breasts just beginning to distinguish themselves, and which were gently heav'd at the impression Myrra's sufferings made upon her Heart. [127]

The erotic text he chooses is one that suggests the possibility of sex between a father with his daughter, or more pertinently, a guardian with his ward which in turn suggests that the Duke intends to prepare, or 'groom' the innocent young girl for sexual relations. As Jane Spencer has argued, Manley's stories of seduction and betrayal based on real Court life had an extra layer of meaning for contemporary readers and the fictional betrayal of an individual woman was a comment on men's treachery in general.[128] By putting her trust in a male authority figure Charlot assumes a daughter's place. She is what Spencer terms the 'male-created' innocent.[129] Manley's exploration of the tension between 'seduction' and 'rape' in the preparation for sex between a young girl and her guardian not only criticises the rapist who ought to have protected her, but also by extension all men who stand as women's guardians and exploit rather than protect them:

> Many writers of seduction tales detailed the pernicious effects of public life and the literature of love on the innocent female; but few had Manley's insight into these diversions as strategies created by masculine society for manoeuvring women into seduceable positions. The stress on the Duke's control over Charlot is important. He is a substitute for her father [....] and her embraces, given with daughterly affection, arouse his quasi-incestuous desires.[130]

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[127] *The Novels of Mary Delariver Manley 1705 - 1714,* ed. by Patricia Koster 2 vols. (Gainesville, FLA: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1971) I p 344

[128] Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995) p 114

[129] Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist,* p 114

[130] Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, p 116

I would like to interrogate Manley's *choice* of text in this rape narrative in order to clarify the writer's focus. I would argue that she deliberately casts doubts about the nature of Charlot's 'passion' and the innocent girl's awareness of the Duke's actual intentions. I want to suggest that the girl's innocence and inexperience and the readings and miss-readings present in the action have special meaning. In short there is more than one message being delivered in this scene.

The narrator comments that at Charlot's age the very idea that her 'admirer' considers her to be mature enough to understand and enjoy the text can only add to a young and innocent girl's excitement. It also adds to the confusion. Manley sets the scene for misreading, misinterpretation and the potential of consensual sex by presenting us and the aroused and optimistic male guardian, with an excited young girl who is potentially sexually compliant and flattered by his attentions. That is, when she empathises with Myrrah's suffering Charlot's heaving 'snowy bosom' appears to promise sexual desire to her excited would-be seducer. But, Charlot's 'snowy bosom' conceals her compassion rather than her sexual passion. The Duke is sexually consumed by both the erotic text and his companion's reactions to it as they share the heated scene. Because the Duke desires her he interprets Charlot's heaving bosom as her desire for him and misguidedly calculates that she is ready for sex and ripe for the picking. Having introduced his ward to Court life, he establishes her in a country house and seizes the opportunity to rape her when he catches her stepping out of the bath:

> She was going to rise; but he prevented her, by flying to her Arms, where, as we may call it, he nail'd her down to the Bed with Kisses; [....] Whilst yet her Surprise made her doubtful of his Designs he took Advantage of her Confusion to accomplish 'em; neither her Prayers, Tears, nor Strugglings,

could prevent him.[131]

The question is why, if the Duke's reading of Charlot's sexual desire had been correct was such force necessary? If she had really wanted him, why did he have to take advantage of her confusion in order to 'nail' her to the bed with his kisses? And why did he not heed her prayers, her tears and her 'strugglings'?

Manley may have used the Duke's misreading of his victim and the rape episode to titillate her readers and, as Spencer suggests, she most certainly used it to indict the guardian's abuse of his ward. I would argue that Manley's use of Myrrah's story takes things even further than this by indicating a *specific* injustice to the innocent Charlot, since in the strictest sense, Myrrha is *not* betrayed by her trust in her father. Cinyras is unaware that his sexual partner is his own daughter. Furthermore, elsewhere, Ovid places the responsibility for the incestuous act on the daughter and not the father:

> The price of her incestuous passion paid;
> Myrrha, who loved, but in no filial wise,
> Her father, prisoned in a tree-trunk lies,
> That fragrant tree that from her tears of shame
> Distils the perfume that preserves her name.[132]

In his rape text Ovid makes explicit that Myrrha is fully conscious of her incestuous sexual craving for her father Cinyras and, although he is not entirely innocent, in a sense the daughter's scheme vindicates him of the crime of incest. Myrrah herself denies that her desire is transgression:

> The sacred rights of parents, stop this crime

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[131] Delariver Manley, *Novels*, vol I p 355

[132] Ovid, 'The Art of Love', Book One, in *The Love Poems*, trans. by A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) Lines p 94

If it is crime [....][133]

She asserts that creatures couple without shame and it is only 'human nicety' that:

Makes spiteful laws
What nature will allow
Their jealous code forbids.[134]

She recalls that there's a place where sons marry mothers and daughters their fathers:

and their doubled love
increases duty's bond. But I, poor me,
Was not so lucky - I was not born there.[135]

Discovering Myrrha's secret passion, her nurse assisted her to dupe her father. According to custom, during the festival of Ceres wives were forbidden to sleep with their husbands for nine nights. With the nurse's help Myrrha was introduced to Cinyras as a young admirer and when he was drunk she took the opportunity to enter her father's bed:

The father took his flesh and blood, and calmed
Her girlish fears and cheered her bashfulness.
Maybe, to suit her age, he called her "daughter"
And she him "father" - names to seal the crime.[136]

Both Myrrha and Charlot are punished for their sexual desire. Yet, the juxtaposition of Charlot's story and Myrrah's incestuous yearnings suggests a *difference* rather than a similarity in the culpability of the two women that pin-points and indicts the sexual double standard that judges women unjustly. Ovid's text makes explicit both Myrrah's desire for her father and her plan to trick him. On the other

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[133] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* trans. by A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* Lines 326-327 p 235
[134] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* Lines 333-336
[135] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* Lines 338-339
[136] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* Lines 464 - 470 pp 239 - 240

hand, the Duke used Ovid's story because he wanted to plant ideas in the innocent girl's head. Unlike Myrrah's father the Duke took steps to entice her, misinterpreted her signs to suit his purpose and then forced himself on her. Whilst Manley's narrator does not deny the existence of a young girl's budding sexuality she takes pains to show readers that the rapist cynically used it for his purposes. The juxtaposition of the two girls' stories serves to amplify the injustice whereby the stock rape narrative ends in ruin for a rape victim. Manley's commentator, Astrea delivers a warning to women at the end of Charlot's story:

> Men may regain their Reputations, tho' after a Complication of Vices, Cowardice, Robbery, Adultery, Bribery, and Murder, but a Woman once departed from the Road of Virtue, is made incapable of a return; Sorrow and Scorn overtake her, and [....] the World suffers her to perish loath'd and unlamented.[137]

Janet Todd has commented that, the 'repentance has few religious overtones, and the honour and virtue obtain no transcendental meaning'.[138] Vice is translated into cowardice, robbery, adultery, bribery and murder for the male, and sexual activity for the female. According to tradition Manley's narrator pauses to stress the consequences of the sexual violation for the unfortunate heroine. The raped heroine and not the rapist is held responsible for the crime:

> one continu'd Scene of Horror, Sorrow, and Repentance, [she finally died] a true Landmark: to warn all believing Virgins from shipwracking their Honour upon (that dangerous Coast of Rocks) the Vows and pretended Passion of Mankind.[139]

Manley's choice of this particular Ovidian text and Astrea's comments make a specific

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137 Delariver Manley, *Novels*, vol. I p 72

138 Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction 1660 - 1800*, (London: Virago Press, 1989) p 95

139 Delariver Manley, *Novels*, vol. I p 355

point. Charlot is bound to be loathed in Manley's society because 'ideal' femininity expected her to guard her virtue. A 'virtuous' woman was meant to recognise the cynical ploys of the older, more influential man and overcome them, even though in reality she would have had little hope of doing so. The juxtaposition of texts suggests that it is not logical to expect a woman to be 'virtuous' and yet recognise the signs and ploys used in the 'preparatives' for sex. Furthermore, whether she is innocent (like Charlot) or not (like Myrrah) the prevailing double standard is set to ensure that the girl and not the influential and wealthy man is punished for any transgression of the sexual code.

When Manley wrote Charlot's story various English translations of the *Metamorphoses* had been published including Golding (1567) and Sandys in 1626. In 1717 a translation including contributions by various eminent writers including Dryden, Pope and Addison was assembled by Sir Samuel Garth.[140] Ovid continued to provide a source of inspiration throughout the eighteenth century. Henry Fielding who translated the first book of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria,* (*The Art of Love*) in 1747 makes reference to Ovid on several occasions in *Tom Jones,* for example, 'Leve fit, quod bene fertur onus', (love is most burdensome to those who resist it.).[141]

Since many readers would have been aware of the outcome of Ovid's story they would have been aware of the message. Whereas Myrrah is the author of her fate Charlot is the victim of the Duke's cynicism, coercion and the use of a 'preparative' to the seduction and rape. On the other hand David Hume light-heartedly confesses to having contemplated the seduction of an attractive 'young beauty' with novels and

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[140] Translator's note, Ovid *Metamorphoses,* trans by A D Melville, p xxx

[141] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p 74; Ovid, *Amores,* 1.ii.10. Other references to Ovid in *Tom Jones*, pp 142; 216; 422

romances:

> Whether they be the false representations of mankind in those two particulars, which endear novels and romances so much to the fair sex, I know not; but must confess, that I am sorry to see them have such an aversion to matter of fact, and such an appetite for falsehood. I remember I was once desired by a young beauty, for whom I had some passion, to send her some novels and romances for her amusement to the country; but was not so ungenerous as to take the advantage, which such a course of reading might have given me, being resolved not make use of poisoned arms against her. I therefore sent her Plutarch's Lives, assuring her, at the same time, that there was not a word of truth in them from beginning to end. She perused them very attentively, till she came to the lives of Alexander and Caesar, whose names she had heard of by accident, and then returned me the book, with many reproaches for deceiving her.[142]

The confession provides us with an amusing and less sinister version of D'Elmont's ploy. Unlike D'Elmont, Hume quickly recovers from his momentary 'temptation', and encourages his beautiful young friend to absorb more lofty reading material:

> history is a most improving part of knowledge, as well as an agreeable amusement; [....] but I must think it an unpardonable ignorance in persons, of whatever sex or condition, not to be acquainted with the history of their own country [....] A woman may behave herself with good manners, and have even some vivacity in her turn of wit; but where her mind is so unfurnished, it is impossible her conversation can afford any entertainment to men of sense and reflection.[143]

Although he urges his female friends to furnish their minds with the study of history his motive is to make them more interesting and entertaining companions for *men.* As Suzanne Hull has argued, since women are to be seen as: 'chaste, silent and obedient', women's reading is meant to be an 'agent of control more than of enlightenment'.[144]

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[142] David Hume, 'Of the Study of History'. in his *Essays, Moral and Philosophical in 2 vols.* (1742), reprinted in *Of the Standard of taste and other Essays,* ed. by John W Lenz, (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965) p 97

[143] David Hume, 'Of the Study of History', p 95

[144] Suzanne Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475 - 1640* , (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1982); Valerie Wayne, 'Some Sad Sentence: Vives'

Reading might confine women to an acceptably private and domestic space. On the other hand, it might allow access to a dangerously public sphere of discourse.

Letters from lovers were also seen to be dangerous to fictional heroines. Ruth Perry has argued that in Britain the letter acted as a symbol of the female body since it provides the reader with access to the female consciousness, or 'inner life'.[145] As such the love letter functions as 'mind-rape' or 'sexual invasion':

> Because letters reveal the self, reading the letters written and intended for other eyes is the most reprehensible invasion of privacy and consciousness in epistolary fiction. These are overtones of sexual invasion - of mind-rape - in the intercepting or 'violating' of another's words. This equivalence is suggestive for the audience as well since they are reading letters not intended for public consumption. The most unholy thing in these books is uninvited access to another's inner life, and that is just what such novels offer, even in their very titles: *A Lady's Packet of Letters Broke Open; The Post-Boy Rob'd of His Mail; The Cabinet Opened.*[146]

Perry argues that the invasion of female minds involves an element of persuasion and that the act of entering another's consciousness in order to tamper with it is always present in the epistolary novel. The fictional seducer's act of persuading a woman into correspondence by invading her mind with thoughts and promises signals the seduction process and, when the young victim has been successfully lured into his power, romantic fiction is often introduced as a preparation for his sexual advances, as we saw in Charlot's story. For example, in *The Post-Boy Rob'd of his Mail,* the libertine seducer enlists the help of a maid in order to gauge

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Instruction of a Christian Woman', in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Texts*, ed. by Margaret P Hannay, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985) p 20

[145] Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters and the Novel,* (New York: AMS Press, 1980). An interest in the 'inner life' emerged from the fear of a soulless, mechanical human condition. In L'homme Machine, La Mettrie linked sexuality with sensibility regarding the mind and body as different forms of the same substance. Anxiety generated by the notion of a link between consciousness, soul and a mechanical condition prompted contemporary interest in the primacy of the soul.

[146] Perry, *Women, Letters and the Novel,* pp 130 - 131. Perry cites Mary Delariver Manley, *A Lady's Packet of Letters Broke Open,* (London, 1707). Anon, *The Cabinet Opened, or, The Secret History of the Rumours of Madame de Maintenon,* (London, 1690)

the opportune moment to effect the seduction scene:

> Watch her softest hours, when her Soul's in tune to join with the Harmony of Love: After her Mind has been employed in Romances, Plays, and Novels, then nought but sweet Ideas fill her Soul, and Love can't be denied admittance, those having so well prepared the way.[147]

The experienced seducer recognised, as did Haywood's Melliora, that 'sweet ideas' in writing not only function as the invasion of a woman's mind but might be specifically designed to prepare a young heroine for love.

Experienced older women are often all too aware of the dangers of correspondence to young girls. They know that the objective of the seducer's 'tender' letter is to gain access to the woman's thoughts and its contents designed to test his victim's vulnerability. Mary Davys' lady dismisses a gentleman whom she suspects is testing her susceptibility to him with 'Methinks, you write as if you had a mind to draw me in, as you pretend Love has done you, by Wheedle'.[148] Hence, the familiar warnings and reminders to women that punctuate the epistolary rape plot are directed at mothers as well as vulnerable young daughters. In Eliza Haywood's *The British Recluse* (1722) a friend of Cleomira's mother is quick to notice the young girl's unusual preoccupation:

> I am afraid (said Mrs. *Marvir* to my Mother) that your Daughter is in Love: I warrant if we should search her Chamber, we should find a Number of amorous Books and Epistles of the same Nature. I never had that Curiosity (replied my Mother) but I hope she would receive none of the latter without my Knowledge, and I have taken Care to instill such Principles in her Mind as will not let her be over fond of the other. Will you give me leave to hunt? (resumed she laughing.) yes, with all my heart (answered I glad to put an End to this Discourse.) [....] I told you (said she) that I should find something

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147 Charles Gildon, *The Post-Boy Rob'd of His Mail*, (London, 1692) p 237

148 Mary Davys, 'Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady', in *The Works of Mrs. Davys*, 2 vols. (London, 1725) II. 299

> here more tender than you would have the World be sensible of. I dare swear (continued she, taking a Letter from my Toilet and giving it to me) the Contents of this may justly be called Amorous. I had no sooner cast my Eyes on the Direction than I knew the Hand to be *Lysander's*.[149]

Mrs Marvir astutely links Cleomira's changes in mood with private pleasures derived from a romantic correspondence with a lover, and she interprets Cleomira's 'pleasure' as sexual.

The suspicion of women's reading centres not only on the written text's ability to influence the reader but also on the constructions of femininity that judge women to be lacking in Reason. The notion had been popular since the Spanish philosopher and humanist Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) had argued that a woman could not be allowed to 'follow her own judgement' in her choice of reading. Lacking the intellect to discriminate, women should be directed by 'wise and learned men'.[150]

In spite of the association between reading, knowledge, and female sexuality, most critics agree that there was a rise in both book production and female readership in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. However, some critics have argued that readers demanded instruction as well as entertainment and that they required more obvious, practical advice than that to be found in earlier spiritual handbooks and doctrinal allegories.[151] Such advice was sought in manuals of social

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149 Eliza Haywood, 'The British Recluse', in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660 - 1730,* ed. by Paula R Backscheider and John J Richetti, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p 172 - 173

150 *Vives and the Renascence Education of Women,* ed. by Foster Watson, (London: Edward Arnold. 1912) p 43 - 44

151 See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel,* (London: Hogarth Press, 1995) p 35 - 37. See also, Gary Kelly, 'The Limits of Genre and the Institution of Literature: Romanticism between fact And Fiction', in *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory*, ed by Kenneth R Johnston, Gilbert Chaitin, Karen Hanson, and Herbert Marks (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) pp 158 - 160; J. Paul Hunter. *Before Novels: the Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction,* (New York and London: W W Norton, 1990) p 174; Richard D Altick, *The English Common Reader: a Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800 - 1900* , (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) p 45; Margaret J Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England 1680 - 1780,* (Berkeley, Los

conduct and periodicals including Joseph Addison's and Richard Steele's *The Tatler, The Spectator* and Eliza Haywood's *The Female Spectator.* [152] Conduct literature contributed to the construction of a new woman with the sentimental virtues of benevolence and compassion, which overthrew courtly values of wit and sophistication.[153]

Early in the eighteenth century Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) had associated Belinda with consumption of all kinds including books. In his resolve to ravish Belinda, the 'Advent'rous Baron' builds an altar of 'Twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt' and, following the fateful severing of the lock, Belinda defends her honour for 'as long as Atalantis shall be read'.[154] Later in the century James Fordyce began a sermon by associating book reading with prostitution, something which, in a sense, supported Pope's earlier dictum that every woman would, if she could, be a rake:[155]

> Beside the beautiful productions of that incomparable pen (that of Richardson), there seem to me to be very few, in the style of Novel, that you can read with advantage. - What shall we say of certain books, which we are assured (for we have not read them) are in their nature so shameful, in their tendency so pestiferous, and contain such rank treason against the royalty of Virtue, such horrible violation of all decorum, that she who can bear to peruse them must in her soul be a prostitute, let her reputation in life be what it will.[156]

Although the popular conduct book sought to police and guide women's

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Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1996)

152 *Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. The Spectator*, ed. by Donald Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

153 See Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen,* (Chicago and London, 1984) pp 3 - 8. See also Susan Staves, 'British Seduced Maidens', *Eighteenth-century Studies* 14 (1980 - 81) 109 - 134

154 The 'Rape of the Lock', in *Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry*, (London: Penguin Books, 1985). Poems selected by Douglas Grant, pp 42 - 64 Canto II p 46: Canto III p 54; reference to Manley's *New Atalantis* (1709)

155 Alexander Pope, 'Epistle to a Lady', (1735) II. Line 216

156 James Fordyce, from *Sermons to Young Women*, 1766 Sermon IV 'On Female Virtue'.

reading, the more wealthy woman was able to buy and read more or less according to her taste.[157] Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle identified books with 'crown', 'sword' and 'sceptre' as instruments of power that men are unable or unwilling to share with women.[158]

Barbara M Benedict has argued that whilst Samuel Johnson had defined literature as 'learning, skill in letters', by the end of the eighteenth century it had come to mean a material product and a profession. The OED defines the term as 'literary work or production; the activity or profession of a man of letters' and, by 1813, as 'the body of writings produced in a particular country or period'.[159]

Women came to the forefront of literary culture as readers, writers and the topic and target of literature. Benedict suggests that as the century wore on literary ventures aimed at women burgeoned. Periodicals, including Henry Mackenzie's *Mirror* (1779-80), anatomized feminine manners, education and expectations while plays such as Richard Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) satirized the assumed penchant of adolescent maidens for hot novels. Adopting female pen-names, both women and men wrote fiction for the hungry new consumers.[160]

Literature aimed at mid-century women came in many forms: Sentimental novels, gift books, conduct books, poetic miscellanies and the serialised stories published in monthly periodicals. Furthermore, there was a new, powerful, method of

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[157] Ruth Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: an Early English Feminist,* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986) pp 339 - 354.

[158] *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, ed by Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox, (London: Routledge, 1989) p 88

[159] Barbara M Benedict, 'Readers, writers, reviewers, and the professionalization of Literature', in *Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830*, ed by Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp 3 - 24 (pp 4 - 5)

[160] Benedict, 'Readers, writers, reviewers', p 5

forging relationships: the circulating library.[161] These popular libraries had the effect of erasing hierarchies between genders. At the same time, they became the subject of anxiety in themselves because although they afforded young men and women unmonitored access to an enormous range of works, they also 'served as places for flirtation and class mixing'.[162]

The encouragement of women to read provided a liberating space for individual female readers. It also created a tension between the patriarchal need to preserve conservative ideologies of femininity through the limitation of women's reading and the need to encourage it in the interests of the growing market and the professionalisation of literature. Kate Flint has argued that because reading is a 'meeting place of discourses of subjectivity and socialization' it was an area of concern to commentators who found a woman's command of her subjectivity and her access to an extra-domestic world, threatening.[163]

Whilst contemporary critics used the 'sensibility' of the just-literate, naive servant girl as the reader most likely to be corrupted by romance, writers from Wollstonecraft to Austen were concerned about the reading habits of women of their own class. Feminists worried that the addiction to sentimental literature would blunt intellectual appetites and sap the psychic energy of readers of all classes. As Wollstonecraft complained:

> Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. These are the women who are amused by the reveries of the stupid novelists, who, knowing little of human nature, work up stale tales, and describe meretricious scenes, all retained in a sentimental

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[161] Benedict, 'Readers, writers, reviewers', p 5
[162] Benedict, 'Readers, writers, reviewers', p 18
[163] Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837 - 1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p 43

> jargon, which equally tend to corrupt the taste, and draw the heart aside from its daily duties.[164]

More recently Ann Snitow has argued that romance reading reproduces women's subordination and psychic abjection, whilst Tania Modleski argues that it provides a way for women to imagine revenge and autonomy. Janice Radway has argued that such reading cannot be the route to mobilisation for collective resistance to the public forms of patriarchal power.[165] Yet, whilst travel books and scientific publications were the acceptable choice of reading for women, novels replaced prose romances as the threat to women's virtue. For example, according to James Watt, 'Gothic fiction, en bloc, was often seen to be complicit with the growth of an undisciplined, and therefore dangerously susceptible, reading public'.[166]

In the same way that novels represented courtship as an exercise in 'reading' masculinity, conduct literature also operated within the seduction narrative of threat to the young marriageable woman. Yet since Judith Fetterley offered a concept of the 'resistant reader' more recent critics have become aware of the complexity of the reading process and view textual reception as a process of negotiation which refuses to categorise texts as either 'repressive' or 'liberating'.[167] As Vivien Jones puts it, revised theories point out that 'fantasy offers multiple, potentially contradictory

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164 Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication* p 313

165 See Cora Kaplan, 'Mary Wollstonecraft's reception and legacies', in *Cambridge Companion To Mary Wollstonecraft,* ed by Claudia L Johnson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p 260. Ann Barr Snitow, 'Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different', in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality,* ed by Ann Barr Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983); Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-produced Fantasies for Women,* (Hamden, York: Archon Books, 1984); Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature,* (London: Verso, 1987)

166 James Watt, 'Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830* ed. by Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p 125

167 Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction,* (Bloomington, IN and London: Indiana University Press, 1978) pp xxii - xxiii

positions of identification; and they stress the ways in which meanings and pleasures shift across different reading contexts'.[168]

In summary, women's reading was seen as a threat to masculinity because it suggested sexual experience. In turn the suspicion of reading became a problem for women writers. But because it places her body in danger of sexual invasion a woman's writing posed just as great a threat to patriarchal power. Since reading and writing letters involves women in the dangerous art of seduction, seventeenth and eighteenth-century women writers were put at a distinct 'disadvantage' especially in attempts to express female desire. Writing had the added disadvantage of catapulting a woman into the sphere traditionally associated with masculine pursuits and because men preferred to believe that women's capacity to reason is less than that of men, writing, a weapon that might have been used to gain rights, proved to be a handicap.

Hays appreciated society's entrenched attitudes to writing women. She knew that the exchange of letters between male and female had long been regarded as a sexual transgression, and she knew that, when used in rape narratives, letters were associated with seduction and ruin. Nevertheless, she delighted in an 'illicit' correspondence with Eccles:

> I fear I have too often swerved from the rules which [prudence] dictates. I should like to know your real sentiments on the subject. Why should we sacrifice sincerity for politeness?[169]

Hays's question is important because in the Long Eighteenth Century a woman was felt to be exposed in a very personal way through a fiction in which correspondents

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[168] Vivien Jones, 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvie Roberts, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) pp 114 - 115

[169] F. Wedd, 'The Story of Mary Hays' in *The Love-Letters of Mary Hays, 1779 - 1780,* (London, 1925) Letter IV 29th July, 1779. For a reading of Hays's earliest extant correspondence, See. Gina Luria Walker. 'Hays's Love Letters', in *Keats-Shelley Journal* LI (2002) 94 - 115

attempt to share their consciousness and experience with one another. In epistolary novels, the letters exchanged between the rake and the heroine are a specific threat to 'virtue' because it is seen as a 'preparative' to love. In the conventional rape narrative, a fictional angel is particularly susceptible to letters from fictional rakes.

Women Writing and the Rape Narrative

The epistolary form provided a way in which women might defy masculine authority. By acting as the subjective narrator and interpreter of her experience, a woman is able to place herself at the centre of the action and her oppressor or seducer at the margins of the plot. The conflict drawn in this combination becomes the foundation of the epistolary novel's structure in late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. However restricted by laws and conventions they might have been, women wished to record and analyse their emotions and to portray female consciousness in their heroine's letters.

A vivid illustration of an equivalence between a woman's writing and her person is drawn in the famous scene in which Mr B tries to undress Pamela, ostensibly in order to get at the personal correspondence that she had sewn into her clothes.[170] In this passage, the possession of her thoughts expressed in the words on the page is identified with the sexual possession of her body. The two goals are indistinguishable from one another and both signify dominion over her. That Pamela had to hide her

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[170] Ruth Perry. *Women, Letters and the Novel,* (New York: AMS Press, 1980) pp 131 - 132

letters on her body also dramatised the fact that she had no territory to call her own except her own person:

> I broke off abruptly my last letter; for I feared he was coming: and so it happened. I put the letter into my bosom, and took up my work, which lay by me; but I had so little of the *artful,* as he called it, that I looked as confused, as if I had been doing some great harm [....].[171]

Ruth Perry suggests that the rape plot's 'invasion' works through a rhythmic structure that builds towards the act of sexual release. Within this rhythm, letters to her lover reveal the woman writing herself deeper and deeper into seduction. Epistolary lovers seduce themselves and their readers by writing of their feelings, and tease themselves and the reader with their plans, longings and jealousies. The hindrances to the sexual union is a kind of 'titillating foreplay the author and reader engage in'.[172] An example is Aphra Behn's Sylvia and Philander, who anticipate the sexual encounter for 'many pages, written to tantalize and heighten the suspense'.[173]

Sylvia actually persuades herself into an illicit relationship as she writes:

> Twas not my Purpose, not my Business here, to give a Character of *Philander*, no nor to speak of Love; but oh! Like *Cowley's* Lute, my Soul will sound to nothing but to Love: Talk what you will, begin what Discourse you please, I end it all in Love.[174]

Since she places her body into a circulation which jeopardises patrilineal inheritance, in literature as in life a woman's entry into private correspondence with a man is a fatal act of indiscretion. In literature the act signals potential disaster in personal economic and legal terms for the girl and her family. On the other hand, by

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171 Richardson, *Pamela*, p 61

172 Perry, *Women, Letters and the Novel,* p 158

173 Natascha Wurzbach, *The Novel in Letters: Epistolary Fiction in the early English Novel, 1678 - 1740,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) p 220

174 *The Novel in Letters* p 220. Aphra Behn, *Love-Letters Between A Nobleman and His Sister,* (London, 1694) Part I.

putting her reputation at risk, the sexual 'transgression' signalled by the exchange of letters is a defiance of patriarchal control. Clarissa is aware that by entering into correspondence with the notorious Robert Lovelace she undermines her father's economic and dynastic aspirations and she is conscious of the source of her downfall, 'My crime was the corresponding with [Lovelace] at first, when prohibited so to do by those who had a right to my obedience'.[175]

But a woman's 'inner' life is also of absolute fascination and importance to the man who plans to possess her, body and soul. For example, Samuel Richardson's rake-seducers in the epistolary novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa* frantically search for, tear open, forge, and redirect letters written by the women whose body they crave. Lovelace associates Clarissa's sexual body with her letters:

> Had [the two letters] been in [my hand] the seal would have yielded to the touch of my warm finger (perhaps without the help of the post-office bullet); and the folds, as other placations have done, opened of themselves, to oblige my curiosity.[176]

Whether the love-letter's exploration of a woman's 'inner' life is titillation or the expression of guilt, anger, shame and the kind of defiance that Clarissa expresses after her rape, feminine anguish exploited in the epistolary novel provides yet another form of warning to romantic female readers.[177] Once a female letter-reader like Clarissa is, as Davys's lady put it, 'drawn in' by the seducer, more often than not she finds herself raped, abandoned and ruined, unless of course, like Behn's Miranda, and

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[175] Richardson, *Clarissa, or; The History of a Young Lady,* 8 vols. (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1930) vi. p 138

[176] Richardson, *Clarissa or; The History of a Young Lady,* 8 vols. (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1930) vol. iii p 113

[177] See Ann Barr Snitow, 'Mass Market Romance' in *Powers of Desire; the Politics of Sexuality,* ed. by Ann Barr Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983) pp 258 - 275 (265); see also Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'Ev'ry Woman is at Heart a Rake', *Eighteenth-century Studies,* 8 (1974) 27 - 74 (33).

Manley's Duchess, the heroine has plans to seduce and rape *him*. For heroines like Clarissa, the conflict and disorder created in a sexual 'transgression' marginalizes the heroine both privately and publicly. She finds herself in personal disarray and condemned by society. The distraught and chaotic letters written after Clarissa's rape provided her with the means to express the distress that physical violation had caused her.

It was the publication of the anonymous *Lettres Portugaises* (1669) by Barbin in Paris that reopened the convention of the letter of complaint from a female victim of seduction and rape introduced by Ovid in *The Heroides*.[178] Five letters from Mariane the Portuguese nun to a French army officer, the lover who has abandoned her, introduces the language associated with female desire in the epistolary novel. Since her solitary struggle to elicit a response from her absent lover is unheeded, Mariane's linguistic powers become more and more disordered in a battle with the physical and emotional paralysis generated by her loss:

> I do not know what I am, or what I do, or what I would be at. I am torn to pieces by a Thousand contrary Motions, and am in a Condition deplorable beyond Imagination.[179]

Mariane repeatedly draws attention to the poverty of language to convey her sexual feelings, 'There is so great a difference betwixt the Love I write and That which I feel, that if you measure the One by the Other, I have undone my self'.[180]

The kind of disorder we saw in Mariane's letters is exhibited in Aphra Behn's

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[178] *Letters Portugaises* first appeared in Britain in translation as *Five Love-Letters from a Nun to a Cavalier*, trans. Roger L'Estrange (London, 1670) reprinted in *The Novel in Letters: Epistolary Fiction in the Early English Novel* 1678 - 1740, ed. by Natascha Wurzbach, (London, 1969)

[179] *The Novel in Letters*, p 10

[180] *The Novel in Letters*, p 7

Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister (1685-87) and, in the eighteenth century, Clarissa's chaotic ramblings after her rape:

> When a Lover is insupportably afflicted, there is no ease like that of writing to the person loved; and that, all that comes uppermost in the soul: for true love is all unthinking artless speaking, incorrect disorder, and without method, as 'tis without bounds and rules.[181]

Delariver Manley's *Court Intrigues* (1711) also acknowledges the artlessness of her love letter:

> I write unartfully, without method, or perhaps Coherence; my Thoughts naturally (as they arise in my Mind) fall from my Pen, not polished by Art, nor better'd by Study. [182]

Whilst Behn's and Manley's female letter writers argue that artlessness proves the legitimacy of their feelings, Mariane's rhetoric distinguishes between her lover's 'artificial disguise' and her own 'integrity'. Furthermore, in the fifth and final letter she complains bitterly, that 'it is not Love alone that begets Love; there must be Skill, and Address; for it is Artifice, and not Passion, that creates Affection'.[183] The female lover is trapped in the male seducer's art, but the sincere passion it generates in her only serves to alienate him.

Linda Kauffman has argued that the love letter is a project of self-reinvention rather than despair and that the paradoxical pleasure of remembering her sorrows, of pursuit and consummation of the lover's posing and composing, is instrumental in the transformation from the archetypal 'Woman who Waits' into 'the Woman who Writes'.[184] Hence, a woman's letter constantly reiterates the equation of writing with

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[181] Aphra Behn, *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister*, ed. by Maureen Duffy. (London. 1987)

[182] Delarvier Manley, *Court Intrigues, in A Collection of Original Letters from the Island of The New Atalantis, & Co.*, (London, 1711) pp 136 - 7

[183] *The Novel in Letters*, p 10

[184] Linda S Kaufman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca , NY: Cornell University Press, 1986) p 25

sexual agency, sexual freedom, transgression and seduction.[185] Kauffman suggests that since female love has become associated with 'excess' the woman's letter in fiction is an attempt to figure the transgression:

> Love is the ultimate transgression, and therefore love is relegated to the realms of myth and utopia. Yet the aim of all amorous discourse is to inscribe what has been relegated to the margins in the conceptual universe, to explore a theory of knowledge based on the senses-loving as a form of knowing.[186]

Moreover Kauffmann argues that Ovid's link with Sappho suggests a tradition of female writing that represents defiance and revolution as well as an articulation of a woman's desire. Each letter is 'simultaneously a love letter and a legal challenge, a revolt staged in writing' and a space in which women engage in memories of the past, demand, plea and nurture illusion as they avoid closure.[187]

Kauffmann argues that Clarissa's letters symbolise her passion and echo the desperate legal and confrontational arguments in the Ovidian heroines's epistles in *Heroides.*[188] I would suggest that the eighteenth-century raped heroine writes from a different perspective than the heroines in *The Heroides.* The letters written after Clarissa's rape certainly demonstrate chaos and torment similar to Mariane's, and I agree that, like Mariane, Clarissa complains that she is no longer what she was. But on the other hand, the mid-eighteenth century raped heroine's letters also suggest that death is preferable to life after 'invasion'. Clarissa's frantic ramblings express a frustration with a law that fails to protect violated women. Her plans for death function as an alternative to contemporary justice rather than as an expression of

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185 Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire,* p 59
186 Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire,* p 60
187 Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire,* pp 17 - 18
188 Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire,* p 17

confrontation or personal re-invention.

When Kauffman's view is juxtaposed with Terry Eagleton's argument that letters in *Clarissa* are perilously physical, the link between a woman's body and the letter is chilling, and masculine desire is seen to be out of control:

> Letters, the most intimate sign of the subject, [may be] waylaid, forged, stolen, lost, copied, cited, censored, parodied, misread, rewritten, submitted to mocking commentary, woven into other texts which alter their meaning, exploited for ends unforeseen by their authors. [....] If letter-writing is in one sense free subjectivity, it is also the function of an ineluctable power system. Certainly no activity could be more minutely regulated. To 'correspond' is to implicate a set of political questions: Who may write to whom, under what conditions? Which parts may be cited to another, and which must be suppressed? Who has the authority to edit, censor, mediate, commentate?[189]

As Martha Burt has argued, when conventional sex-role assumptions in relationships are juxtaposed with the idea that sexual coercion is a legitimate way to achieve sexual compliance then the acceptance of rape and violence is inevitable.[190] As we have seen, in fiction learned women such as Shakespeare's Lavinia and Ben Jonson's Dol Common transgressed patriarchal literary territory, while women involved in the exchange of letters such as Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe and Haywood's Cleomira left themselves open to sexual exploitation and violence. Since women's reading and writing was linked with sexual desire and female sexual desire is regarded as 'unnatural', seventeenth and eighteenth-century women writers found it difficult to negotiate conventional taboos in order to enable their 'virtuous' heroines to utter sexual desire in spite of the fact that romantic love was the only subject available to them.

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[189] Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982) p 50

[190] M. R. Burt, 'Cultural myths and supports for rape', in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38. 2 (1980) 217 - 230

Hays's revision of the rape narrative

When Hays wrote her novels in the late 1790s there was a general fascination with sex mingled with conduct book teaching of the strictest female sexual behaviour. Yet, there was still little possibility of a 'respectable' fictional heroine speaking or writing of her sexual desire or pleasure. At the same time, within the moral scheme of conduct and advice literature, pleasure was most often understood as sexual pleasure conflated with either sexual activity or fantasy.[191] Early eighteenth-century women writers' attempts to negotiate the difficulties of writing of female sexual pleasure had failed because presentations of female desire blurred the slippery distinction between seduction and rape. Even as late as 1794 sexual pleasure is for Charlotte Smith's heroine Monimia 'a sensation of joy that was indescribable' and in 1790 Catherine Macaulay Graham asserted that 'the strength which Nature has given to the passion of love [....] has made it the most ungovernable propensity of any which attends us'.[192] This suggests that that although she was well versed in what was 'naturally' virtuous she found herself unable to acknowledge the location of this disturbing volatility in female sexuality.

In spite of a moral discourse that contributed to a fascination with sex, in various reductive and exploitative ways women were prohibited from writing or speaking explicitly of their sexual desire. As Gary Kelly puts it: 'female erotic desire' is a 'banned topic' and, as Lynne Hunt's collection demonstrates, although the 1790s

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191 For discussion. see V Jones, 'The seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvie Roberts, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) 108 - 132 (115 - 116); Lynne Segal, *Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure*, (London: Virago, 1994)

192 Catherine Macaulay Graham, *Letters on Education*, (London: C Dilly, 1790) pp 220 - 2; Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House*, (London: Pandora Press, 1987) p 29

were definitive in inaugurating modern trends in pornographic fiction women's involvement was negligible:

> Men wrote about sex for other male readers [....] The new fraternity created by these complex intersections of voyeurism and objectification may have been democratic in the sense of social levelling, but in the end it was almost always a levelling for men.[193]

Tim Hitchcock has argued that eighteenth-century public demand for sexual information:

> Was contained within a series of masking discourses - the jargon of law and medicine, or poetic metaphor forming an excuse for talking about and reading about sex.[194]

He suggests that erotic or pornographic material that is, masturbatory, voyeuristic, public entertainment had very limited effect in late century England, in contrast to France where it served the cause of political subversion and social criticism.

For example, when Hays's contemporary William Blake was writing *Europe - A Prophesy* in 1794, French women were regarded as corrupt, murderous, erotic Amazons set to overwhelm British manhood and to influence British women with a subversive understanding of female sexual agency. At the century's end, fear reached its peak in numerous warnings published in *The Anti-Jacobin Magazine*.[195] Helen Bruder has suggested that patriarchal values are inculcated in pornographic works and that these values are 'similar to those motivating the explicitly instructive conduct

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193 Gary Kelly, 'Revolutionary and Romantic Feminism: Women, Writing and Cultural Revolution', in *Revolution and English Romanticism,* ed by Keith Hanley and Raman Seldon (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990) pp 107 - 30 p 115;Lynne Hunt, 'Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800' in *The Invention of Pornography,* ed. by Lynne Hunt (New York: Zone Books, 1993) pp 9 - 45 (44)

194 Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities 1700-1800,* (New York, 1997) p 16

195 See Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins 1798-1800 - Early Contributors to the 'Anti-Jacobin Review'*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988). Richard Soloway, 'Reform or Ruin: English Moral Thought during the First French Republic', in *Review of Politics*, 25, 1 (1963) 110-28

literature [....] and like conduct literature this pornography centres upon controlling young women with an intimate oppressiveness quite beyond anything found in conduct writing'.[196] Cora Kaplan has argued that it was the blurring of sexual and political metaphors that informed much of the counter-revolutionary polemics of the late century that caused difficulties for women writers:

> female subjectivity, or its synecdoche reference, female sexuality, became the displaced and condensed site for the general anxiety about individual behaviour which republican behaviour and liberal political philosophy stirred up.[197]

I would argue that there are no blurred distinctions between the sexual behaviour expected of a virtuous woman and female sexual desire in Hays's fiction. Her heroines are meant to be understood as sexual beings who reserve the right not only to choose the men they desire but to talk and write about it.

The Radical woman writer was scorned and linked with the unsexed revolutionary Amazon and, as such, had a struggle to make her voice heard. Under these circumstances, Emma Courtney's assertion of her sexuality is an extraordinary fictional event and the unusual method Hays uses to defend and publicise female agency is equally unique. Since seduction, rape and ruin is often signalled by the exchange of 'inner' thoughts in writing, anxiety attached to the exchange of love letters provide rape narratives with fertile ground and it provided Hays with an innovative way of publicising her first heroine's sexual desire.

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196 Helen P Bruder, *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion,* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997) p 59

197 Cora Kaplan, 'Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Criticism', in *Making A Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism,* ed. by Gayle Green and Coppelia Kahn (London: Methuen, 1985) p 165

Hays's heroine claims the right to make her Selfhood and sexual agency public and she does it by publishing her sexual desire for her lover and asserting subjective female authorship. As subversion of convention it is entirely appropriate that Hays's heroine expresses her desire in letters or Memoirs: because in doing so she simultaneously announces her entry into a sexual selfhood and her entry into the masculine realm of literature, both of which had been open only to men.

However, Emma's letters are unanswered by the 'silent' Harley. The writer of the memoirs, the mature Emma, suspects that the voice in her letters has yet to be heard. Until and unless Emma's words are read, absorbed, and accepted their meaning is lost and their author remains powerless. Unread, her words are merely the private, insignificant, internal ramblings of a mad, female consciousness. Unabsorbed, and unaccepted a woman's first-person spoken declaration of her desire would be seen by the conventional eighteenth-century world as obsessive madness. Hays and her heroine realise it, 'Yes! It was madness - but it was the pleasurable madness which none but madmen know'.[198]

By transferring her own private letters to William Godwin to the pen of her heroine Emma, who in turn places them into the care of her 'more than son' the young Augustus Harley, Hays makes public her Radical view of female sexual agency.[199] Like Clarissa Harlowe who defied judgement by pressing her truths into

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[198] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 44. For feminist discussion of Woman and Madness, or Hysteria, derived from the Greek word for 'uterus', see Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, (Bloomington and Indianpolois: Indiana University Press, 1995) pp 13-14; Shoshana Felman, 'Women and Madness: the Critical Phallacy' in *The Feminist Reader: essays in Gender and Politics of Literary Criticism*, ed by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, (London: Macmillan, 1997) pp 133 - 139; Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness*, (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. By Gillian C Gill, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1985)

[199] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 7

the hands of a friend, Emma determines to reveal the true nature of her love:

> I recollect a sentiment of Richardson's Clarissa that always pleased me [....] "I should be glad that you, and all the world, knew my heart; let my enemies sit in judgment upon my actions; fairly scanned, I fear not the result. Let them ask me my most secret thoughts; and, whether they make for me, or against me, I will reveal them". [200]

The novel is not only the heroine's way of being heard but also her creator's method of publicising her assertion of natural female desire and agency. Hays achieved her objective by re-casting her own experiences as fiction.

On the other hand, and in the usual rape text manner, Osborne attempts to manipulate Mary Raymond into correspondence. When he returns to the country from London he tricks her into reading his letter:

> On the ensuing morning, I received from him a long and contrite letter, (of which I was betrayed into the perusal by a superscription in a feigned hand) alleging intoxication as an excuse for the abruptness of his behaviour the preceding evening.[201]

Although she corresponds with her lover William when he is in London, Mary never makes the conventional rape narrative 'mistake' of entering into correspondence with Osborne before or after the abduction and rape, except on the occasion when she responds to his request to visit her, with a brief, cold note of refusal.[202] After she had been delivered from prison by her friends she deliberately ignores Osborne's attempts to communicate:

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[200] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 102 Emma quotes from Clarissa's letter to Captain Tomlinson, Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady,* (London: Penguin, 1985) p 822

[201] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 107

[202] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 97; p 50

> For three succeeding days, I was assailed by letters and messages from our landlord: the former were returned unopened; to the latter no reply was vouchsafed.[203]

Whilst she is prepared to exchange letters with the man she loves, Mary's determination to ignore Osborne's letters has the effect of distancing her from the kind of sexual implications associated with and generated by women in fiction who enter into correspondence with a man. Hays's strategy works to clarify rather than blur her heroine's signals and to demonstrate Mary's lack of interest in, and encouragement of, her pursuer. It also works to confirm her heroine's 'proper', that is to say 'virtuous', sexual behaviour in the events leading to the rape.

In summary, Hays's adoption of the Radical construction of female sensibility (reason combined with feeling) offered women an identity that was more natural to them than the patriarchal view. Furthermore, since the alternative view insisted that women are rational creatures and not frivolous objects born only to please men, the new paradigm made room for choice. Underlying Hays's portrayal of her first heroine is the insistence that female virtue and sexual desire are not mutually exclusive. In turn, her second heroine's insistence on sexual agency played a significant part in the psychology behind her decision to reject the man who raped her and then attempted to silence her with his proposals of marriage.

Since Hays resists the usual images drawn in the rape narrative she offers readers an example of an ordinary woman embarking on an extraordinary struggle to assert her Selfhood, even after sexual violation. She does it by avoiding the rape narrative's somatic heroine who is transported and ravished by her own desire as well as her lover's (as are Amena and Melliora in Haywood's *Love in Excess*), the self

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[203] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, pp 161 - 162

indulgent schemer (such as Manley's Duchess in *The New Atalantis*, and the self-interestedly prudent (such as Defoe's Moll Flanders). Whilst she insists on her heroine's 'natural' female sexual desire Hays demonstrates that the sexual disadvantage, iniquity and scorn suffered by the desiring Emma Courtney and the raped Mary Raymond stem from a common source, the patriarchal urge to retain its power.

The establishment of an independent and intelligent 'self' played a crucial part in Hays's heroine's defiance of society's values, in spite of the fact that society's values are what her rapist uses to coerce Mary. Osborne is not averse to trickery or coercion. The sexual attack on Mary Raymond is achieved against her will through deception and abduction to London, (something that is one of the few similarities between *The Victim of Prejudice* and familiar rape texts such as *Clarissa* and Haywood's *The British Recluse*). In Haywood's story the rake's agents dupe the lovelorn Cleomira (the recluse) into leaving her mother and lure her to the seducer's London house where she meets her ruin:

> My Fame, my Virtue, and my Peace of Mind were lost, no more to be retrieved: Penetration was but the Mirror which showed me my Deformity but could direct me to no Means which could restore those Beauties, which Guilt and Shame had utterly defaced. [204]

The encounter leads to pregnancy and an attempted suicide. Her friend Belinda's account of her 'ruin' at Courtal's hands also suggests compliance:

> My Soul dissolv'd its Faculties o'overpower'd - and Reason, Pride, and Shame, and Fear, and every Foe to soft Desire, charm'd to Forgetfulness, my trembling Limbs refus'd to oppose the Lovely Tyrant's Will!

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204 Eliza Haywood, 'The British Recluse', in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660 - 1730: An Anthology*, ed. by Paula R Backscheider and John J Richetti (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p 179

Haywood's Cleomira is more easily seduced by Lysander/Courtal than Mary is by Osborne, because Cleomira is attracted to her seducer. Since both Belinda and Cleomira, were willing 'victims', the reader has difficulty in distinguishing whether this a story of rape or seduction. There is no suggestion that Mary's sexual behaviour involves her in the rape.

At the same time, Mary is not drawn as the innocent, seduced, and ruined heroine like Manley's Charlot and neither is she selfish like Behn's Fair Jilt. Hays also avoids the suggestion that her rape is a punishment. Clarissa Harlowe is abducted, drugged and raped following her unwise decision to leave her family home. Since she is drawn as an independent sexual agent like her predecessor Emma Courtney, Mary sees her struggle to survive after rape as a result of society's false values and no fault of her own. Since Hays's work vehemently challenges the idea that a rape victim should be held responsible for the violation and ought to die or marry her rapist, her heroine refuses to see rape as a 'downfall' which should ruin the rest of her life.

Hays's unusual treatment of the rape narrative stresses that when he raped Mary, Osborne stole the 'gift' that is as precious to Mary as it was to Emma by depriving her of her right to choose a sexual partner. In spite of his wealth and power the heroine does not love or desire her rapist and she never did. Since she loves another man, the rapist, even an influential and wealthy rapist, will not do. Hays's heroines insist on sexual choice. Therefore, pleas, promises and coercive demands cannot persuade Hays's female sexual agent to bend to a man's will in marriage.

Yet, Hays's fiction reveals a fascination with 'cause and effect'. From the moment Mary learns of her mother's fate her life is governed by a momentous 'chain of events'. The chain propels her into the traditional rape scenario which condemns

the heroine to death, marriage, the 'mistress system' or prostitution. But when the unusual heroine refuses to allow her violation to undermine her sense of 'Self' she embarks on a struggle for survival that not only describes reality for a raped woman in contemporary society but also the kind of causes and effects disseminated in the conventional rape narrative.

In the next chapter I examine Hays's novels in terms of the consequences of rape to women. The first novel made explicit that the heroine's reaction to her servant's inevitable loss of reputation in no way resembled the omniscient narrator's scorn and condemnation normally issued to fallen angels like Charlot. As Haywood's duped heroine Betsy and Hays's raped heroine Mary Raymond came to realise, a woman's appeal to contemporary legal systems would only add to her problems, not solve them.[205]

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[205] Reference to Eliza Haywood's Betsy in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless,* (1751)

Chapter Two

Anatomy of a Rape: Consequences

'If a woman is ugly, or old, or even too familiar to be interesting
because she is a man's own wife, she enjoys no dominion
through male chivalry; indeed, without law to support her,
she cannot even obtain common justice'.[1]

In Chapter One I discussed ways in which Hays's *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* challenged eighteenth-century notions of female 'chastity' and 'virtue' in order to offer a new, more natural view of female sensibility. I argued that the novel's exploration of female agency suggested that the promotion of 'unnatural' behaviours based on feminine 'weaknesses' encouraged male sexual aggression.

Having raised the possibility of a distinction between seduction and rape in Rachel's story in the first novel, in *The Victim of Prejudice* Hays advances the notion that the heroine might simultaneously be desiring, 'virtuous', and yet raped. Although Emma Courtney finds a way to 'voice' her bid for sexual independence, Mary Raymond's story illustrates the speed and efficiency with which the rape event and the prejudices of society work to silence a desiring woman.

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which Hay's second novel examines the part played by 'repetition' and 'reputation' in her raped heroine's problems, and concludes that society's 'false values' result in the victimisation of women. The unconventional treatment of the rape narrative demonstrates, in ways that the conventional rape trope does not, that female potential is lost on account of both the systems that support patriarchal ambitions and the prejudices that support those

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[1] Mary Hays, *Appeal*, pp 119 - 120

systems. One of the problems the novel addresses is that, according to the usual rape narrative, once a woman has been 'seduced', that is 'transported' by desire or forced into sex, society insists that she, and not her seducer, is responsible for her 'lapse'.

In order to shed light on attitudes to 'virtue' and the inconsistencies in an unjust legal system that allows perpetrators to go free, *The Victim of Prejudice* explores society's tendency to ignore the circumstances of a rape. What emerges is a critique of society's obsession with a woman's reputation. Since according to familiar rape texts a violated unmarried woman is a problem, she is regarded as the victim of 'madness' and sexual 'depravity' rather than sexual aggression and has to be punished. She has to 'disappear', either in marriage to the rapist, or in extreme cases such as Richardson's *Clarissa,* in death. More often than not, she descends into the 'mistress system' or prostitution.

The anatomy continues with an exploration of ways in which *The Victim of Prejudice* spells out the consequences of rape to an individual woman, an issue signalled in Rachel's story in Hays's first novel. In this chapter I examine ways in which after a rape prejudice intervenes, assumes control, places responsibility on the woman, and destroys her life. In order to do this I explore the role of repetition in a woman's loss of reputation, the issues raised when Hays's heroine threatens her rapist with legal action, and the difficulties for female victims when they appear in Court.

When Hays juxtaposes Mary's failed attempts to support herself after her violation with the story of her mother (which is framed in the language of the conventional narrative), she draws a pessimistic, yet realistic, picture of a raped woman's lack of opportunity and employment in any trade other than prostitution.

1. 'Repetition' and 'Reputation'

Mary Raymond is of exceptional intelligence and carefully raised, but nevertheless she cannot escape her past. Following the revelation of her mother's history, Mary's social status is fixed. As far as society and the law are concerned, she is a 'marked' woman. But Hays challenges these constructions by portraying the mother's fate in the familiar rape text style in order to highlight its role in the daughter's tragedy. Unconventionally, although she is tainted by the events revealed in her mother's narrative, the daughter refuses to be what her mother declared herself to be, 'branded with infamy, and a wretched outcast from social life'.[2]

The Victim of Prejudice not only examines a raped woman's wish to seek justice, it also explores the lack of possibilities and opportunities available to her. Mary's failed efforts to support herself after her rape deliver a particular message regarding the way society reserves very special treatment for women who are a victims of sexual violation.

Mary's story opens with positive memories of a happy childhood in the care of a benefactor and guardian who 'cherished notions somewhat singular respecting female accomplishments'.[3] The unusual Mr Raymond is determined to provide a good education for his female ward:

> I have laboured to awaken, excite, and strengthen, your mind. An enlightened intellect is the highest of human endowments; it affords us an inexhaustible source of power, dignity, and enjoyment. 'Of extraordinary talents, like diamonds of uncommon magnitude, it has been truly said, calculation cannot find the value'. Their favoured possessors are the genuine sovereigns of

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[2] Mary Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996) p 63

[3] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* p 5

mankind: they direct, they model, they govern, the world.[4]

Under the enlightened Mr Raymond's care, Mary develops into an extremely beautiful and intelligent young woman who is aware of her sexuality and, like her predecessor Emma Courtney, insists that she has the right to express her sexual feelings for her lover without shame.

Mary's lover is her guardian's student William Pelham, whom she hopes to marry. But their idyllic existence is destroyed when Mr Raymond decides to explain his part in Mary's story and to show them a letter written by her mother just before her execution. When he describes the events that led to Mary's birth he plunges the reader into the familiar tragedy of the rape text.

Mr Raymond is infatuated with a beautiful woman who is romantically involved with another man. Desolate, he joins a friend who is leaving for Europe. After a five year absence Raymond meets his beloved again when he walks past a tavern with friends. The sounds of shrieks, cries and the clashing of swords attract him to a shocking and unwelcome sight:

> A woman with a wan and haggard countenance, her clothes rent and her hair dishevelled, had fainted in the arms of a ruffian who supported her. "Secure them", exclaimed the master of the hotel to the constable who entered with the watch, "those are the murderers!".[5]

The mother's letter traces her journey from seduction to sexual coercion, temptation, abandonment, and the murder of her lover. She not only describes her downfall but also her regret that she had rejected Raymond, the man:

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[4] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* p 28. The quote is a variation of the passage "What is there precious but mind? And when mind, like a diamond of uncommon growth, exceeds a certain magnitude, calculation cannot find its value!" Thomas Holcroft, *Anna St Ives,* ed. by Peter Faulkner, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) p 481

[5] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* p 59

> Whose affection would have supported me; through whom I might have enjoyed the endearing relations, and fulfilled the respectable duties of mistress, wife, and mother; and listened to the insidious flatteries of a being, raised by fashion and fortune to a rank seducing to my vain imagination, in the splendour of which my weak judgement was dazzled and my virtue overpowered [....] I woke not from my delirium, till, on an unfounded, affected, pretence of jealousy, under which satiety veiled itself, I found myself suddenly deserted, driven with opprobrium from the house of my *destroyer*, thrown friendless and destitute upon the world, branded with infamy, and a wretched outcast from social life. To fill up the measure of my distress, a little time convinced me that I was about to become a mother.[6]

Alone and penniless, she finds a new lover who also abandons her. Starving, and friendless, she places Mary with a 'hireling' because in order to survive, she is forced to live on the streets. Her self-portrait, described with Miltonic overtones, expresses a sense of despair, shame and contamination:

> My mind became fiend-like, revelling in destruction glorying in its shame. Abandoned to excessive and brutal licentiousness, I drowned returning reflection in inebriating potions. The injuries and insults to which my odious profession exposed me eradicated from my hear every remaining human feeling. I became a monster, cruel, relentless, ferocious; and contaminated alike, with a deadly poison, the health and the principles of those unfortunate victims whom, with practiced allurements, I entangled in my snares.[7]

As is usual, the typical rape text account of the mother's fate suggests that she is punished for allowing herself to be lured into a life of excess and licentiousness. However, the letter also begins to reveal the role of an unforgiving society in the downward spiral of her fate. Unconventionally, the ruined woman asserts that she is not the author of her ruin, she is:

> a victim of the injustice, of the prejudice, of society, which, by opposing to my return to virtue almost insuperable barriers, had plunged me into irremediable ruin.[8]

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[6] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 63
[7] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, pp 66 - 67
[8] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 66

And she cites contemporary law as the ultimate cause of her destruction:

> *Law* completes the triumph of injustice. The despotism of man rendered me weak, his vices betrayed me into shame, a barbarous policy stifled returning dignity, prejudice robbed me of the means of independence.[9]

Before she is hanged for murder she begs the trustworthy Mr Raymond to take care of the baby.

One of the first effects of the revelation of her mother's story is that Mary's dreams of a future with her lover are shattered. On the other hand, William is also affected by the taint of shame. Since Mr Raymond's duty was to shield the boy against 'any improper acquaintance, or humiliating connections', when the truth about Mary's background comes to light, he sends William away. Soon, the 'Man of Feeling' that Mary knew when they were innocent and in love enters into 'the gaities and licentious pleasures of Paris' and becomes a '*man of the world!*'.[10] Whilst eventually William meets and marries another woman in Europe, rumours of prostitution, rape and murder in her mother's past and her own 'obscure birth', prevent Mary from marrying anybody of property and status.[11]

Mary's disappointment becomes more and more acute as she realises that the dignity, the self-confidence and the sense of morality derived from her education signify nothing in a culture that judges a woman's worth on a patriarchal interpretation of reputation, virtue, and chastity:

> While the practice of the world opposes the principles of the sage, education is

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[9] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 68
[10] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, pp 98 - 99
[11] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 32

a fallacious effort, morals an empty theory, and sentiment a delusive dream.[12]

As she does in her political tracts, Hays suggests that unless society is enlightened and the laws underpinning its prejudices are changed, Mary is destined to re-play the fate of the original 'victim', her mother. Hays's challenge to the familiar rape story takes the shape of an exploration of the complexity of her heroine's feelings.

Mary Raymond is fully aware of the consequences of the loss of her reputation, yet at the same time she feels empathy with her mother. She begins to understand the coercive power of the 'insidious flatteries' of a rake, and refuses to criticise her mother for the events that led to the murder of a false lover.[13] She is able to empathise with her mother, and to interpret her words in terms of an account of a persecution, because she acknowledges her own sexual desire for her lover William. In order to fully understand the consequences of a relationship with a mother she never knew, Mary begins to internalise her mother's story. The shocked girl is engulfed by the pressures that led her mother into prostitution. Gradually she begins to identify the prejudices generated against women who transgress society's rules by succumbing to a lover's sexual coercion. The novel assumes a Gothic quality as Mary devours her mother's memoirs and becomes entangled in the words, until she herself is the reader within the narrative whose reactions become her own.[14]

The way her mother describes her sense of shame generates sensations of helplessness and injustice in Mary. Moreover, the mother's assertion that a

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[12] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* p 33

[13] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* p 8

[14] The mother's confessional narrative or criminal autobiography follows a tradition of Puritan Spiritual autobiographies except that moral conscience has taken the place of the spiritual in this instance. An example of this genre would be Daniel Defoe's *Roxana,* (1724). See G.A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965)

'barbarous policy stifled returning dignity' fills her with a sense of isolation. Eventually, the heroine's dreams become so vivid and disturbing that in her anguish Mary feels such a 'sense of oppression, almost to suffocation' that she is forced to run out of the house and into the 'dark and stormy night'. Yet even then, she fails to escape the narrative:

> I recalled to my remembrance the image of my wretched mother: I beheld her, in idea, abandoned to infamy, cast out of society, stained with blood, expiring on a scaffold, unpitied and unwept. I clasped my hands in agony; terrors assailed me till then unknown: the blood froze in my veins; a shuddering horror crept through my heart.[15]

Mary's empathy with her mother is so all-encompassing that the horror she feels is as much for herself as for her parent. Since the images of her mother are imagined rather than remembered they expose Mary's deepest anxiety, the fear that she herself will become 'abandoned to infamy, cast out of society, stained with blood'. After her own violation, she sees her mother again in 'visionary form':

> One moment, methought I beheld her in the arms of her seducer, revelling in licentious pleasure; the next, I saw her haggard, intoxicated, self-abandoned, joining in the midnight riot; and, in an instant, as the fantastic scene shifted, covered with blood, accused of murder, shrieking in horrible despair, dragged to the scaffold, sinking beneath the hand of the executioner! Then, all pallid and ghastly, with clasped hands, streaming eyes, and agonizing earnestness, she seemed to urge me to take example from her fate! [....] when methought I rushed forward to clasp my hapless parent in a last embrace.[16]

As we discussed in Chapter One, eighteenth-century women's experience of the world conforms to a pattern of stricture, judgement, and prejudice that is designed to hamper personal ambition and sexual fulfilment. The anguish Mary feels as she searches the meaning of her mother's letter is based on the fear that she is in danger of

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[15] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 71 - 72
[16] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 123

replicating her mother's downfall. Her imagined relationship with her mother is therefore played out repeatedly in Mary's nightmares until violation, exclusion from society and despair become her own reality.

Since the mother's story is set in the familiar rape narrative pattern, the portrayal of the daughter's unconventional attempt to change the outcome of her own works to highlight the injustices commonly faced by raped women. Hays set out her concerns in the Advertisement for the novel:

> The mischiefs which have ensued the too-great stress laid on the reputation for chastity in woman. No disrespect is intended to this most important branch of temperance, the cement, the support, and the bond, of social-virtue: it is the means only, which are used to ensure it, that I presume to call in question. Man has hitherto been solicitous at once to indulge his own voluptuousness and to counteract its baneful tendencies: not less tragically than absurd have been the consequences! [....] Can the streams run pure while the fountain is polluted?[17]

And in order to explore ways in which a 'too-great stress' is 'laid on the reputation for chastity in woman', Hays draws her reader's attention to the promotion of 'ideal' femininity and its consequences on the title page, with a passage from a typical rape text, Edward Moore's 'The Female Seducers'.[18]

> Her trumpet slander rais'd on high
> And told the Tidings of the sky;
> Contempt discharg'd a living Dart,
> Side-long Viper, to her Heart;
> Reproach breath'd Poisons o'er her Face,
> And soil'd and blasted ev'ry Grace;
>
> Officious Shame, her Handmaid new,
> Still turn'd the Mirror to her View;
> While those, in Crimes the deepest dy'd,

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[17] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* pp 1 - 2

[18] Edward Moore, 'The Female Seducers' in *Fables for the Female Sex,* 3rd edn. (London: T Davies and J Dodsley, 1766). Moore (1712 - 1757) published *Fables for the Female Sex,* with the assistance of Henry Brooke (1703 - 1783). The collection was so popular that it was reprinted frequently in the eighteenth century and well into the first decade of the nineteenth century. The epigraph is taken from a passage near the end of Fable Fifteen, and comes after the chaste maiden's rape.

Approach'd to whiten at her Side.[19]

The image reinforced the message delivered earlier in the poem:

But woman, no redemption knows,
The wounds of honour never close.[20]

The conventional message delivered is that because she didn't, or couldn't, prevent the rape the maiden must meet with nothing but contempt and reproach. The familiar warning is that the victim must suffer 'the wounds of honour' because she *allowed* the rape to happen. But the fable fails to mention the perpetrator in the Handmaid's 'officious shame'. On the other hand, Mary Raymond's story attempts to reverse the premises that underpin not only the assumptions, but also the sexual double standard, embedded in the fable. The irony is that Mary's 'honour' had been destroyed by her mother's reputation before she was raped. But as her heroine develops an understanding of how societal prejudice works, Hays begins to challenge the notion explicit in texts such as Richardson's *Clarissa* and Moore's fable that a raped woman should 'disappear'.

Following the loss of her lover and her guardian's death Mary plans a new start in life. Since she hopes to avoid the attentions of her neighbour, Sir Peter Osborne, Mary Raymond leaves her home for the metropolis. Hearing of her departure, Osborne manages to locate her, and like Haywood's Cleomira in *The British Recluse* (1722), and Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe, Mary is tricked into his London house.[21] After a few days, Mary attempts to escape by creeping past the dining room where Osborne is entertaining his friends. Unfortunately, her flight is

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[19] Moore, 'The Female Seducers' lines 381 - 390 p 145
[20] Moore, Lines 13-14 p 128
[21] Eliza Haywood, *The British Recluse,* (1722); Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1747-8); Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of the World,* (1777)

interrupted by the sound of voices:

> As I drew near the scene of festivity, the Bacchanalian shouts, the roar of dissolute mirth, bursts of laughter, and boisterous exclamations, suspended my steps, and congealed my blood with terror.[22]

She realises that her retreat has been thwarted by the revellers moving out of the dining room:

> Distracted and perplexed, I rushed into an open chamber, to conceal myself while they passed, listening in breathless apprehension. Some persons appeared to be talking in the passage: I retreated farther into the room, and gained a small dressing-closet, when, after a few minutes, the sounds that had alarmed me having suddenly ceased, I was about to quit the closet and regain my apartment.[23]

The frightened heroine's desperate efforts to evade her abductor have led her into his bedroom, and into his arms:

> My appearance in his chamber, alike unexpected and extraordinary – the hour, the solitude, - my defenceless situation - my confusion, my terror, - my previous exhaustion, - the anxiety and fatigue. I had sustained during the past week, - his native impetuosity, heightened by recent scenes of riot and festivity, by surprise, by pride, by resistance, - combined to effect my ruin. Deaf to my remonstrances, to my supplications, - regardless of my tears, my rage, my despair, - his callous heart, his furious and uncontrollable vehemence, - Oh! That I could for ever blot from my remembrance, - oh! That I could conceal from myself, - what, rendered desperate, I no longer care to hide from the world! – I suffered a brutal violation.[24]

Mary sees herself as a hunted victim, unlike Haywood's Fantomina who assumed responsibility for the 'design' that 'obliged' her lover to rape her, and 'to repair the supposed injury you had done this unfortunate Girl by marrying her [....] The Blame

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[22] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 115
[23] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 116
[24] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, pp 116 - 117

is wholly her's [....]'.[25] By posing the question: 'For what crime was I driven from society? I seemed to myself like an animal entangled in the toils of the hunter' she denies that the sexual assault is *her* crime.[26] Furthermore, in a reversal of the stereotypical rape narrative, Mary takes the unusual step of challenging her aristocratic rapist by threatening him with legal action:

> I demand my liberty this moment; I insist upon being suffered to depart. No one has a right to control me. I will appeal to the tribunal of my county; I will boldly claim the protection of its laws, to which thou art already amenable. - Think not, by feeble restraints, to fetter the body when the mind is determined and free. I ask no mercy; for, bowels of compassion, I know, to my cost, thou has none; but liberty, the common *right* of a human being to whose charge no offence can be alleged, [27] (yet what rights, cruel violator! Hast thou respected?) I once more demand, which to refuse me be at thy peril. I will go. Who dares oppose me?[28]

Unlike Haywood's somatic heroines Amena and Melliora in *Love in Excess,* and the 'willing' victims Cleomira and Belinda in *The British Recluse*, Mary's tragedy is not that she succumbed to her sexual desires, but that her future is dictated by her mother's fate. In sharp relief to the familiar images of innocence betrayed in early eighteenth century rape narratives, Hays depicts a raped heroine who is determined to change the shape of her own story in spite of the fact that she is haunted by the spectre of her mother's.

Although her heroine's best efforts fail, Hays emphasises that the failure is

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[25] Eliza Haywood, 'Fantomina, or, Love in a Maze', in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660 - 1730,* ed. by Paula R Backscheider and John J. Richetti, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp 227 - 248 (248)

[26] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* p 141

[27] See William Godwin *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. by K Codell Carter, (London: Clarendon 1793) VIII:viii (299). Godwin distinguishes between independence and liberty, 'Natural independence, a freedom from all constraint, except that of reasons and inducements presented to the understanding, is of the utmost importance to the welfare and improvement of the mind. Moral independence, on the contrary, is always injurious [....] because it is exercised clandestinely, and because we submit to its operation with impatience and aversion'.

[28] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* pp 117 -118

because the raped Mary cannot erase or overcome the systems of prejudice that govern society's attitudes. Nevertheless the heroine's unconventional decision to risk society's condemnation, and to challenge the law by opposing her wealthy rapist, represents an unusual attempt to break the conspiracy of silence that surrounds the issue of responsibility for rape.

Appearance in Court - 'Private Pleasure, Public Plague' [29]

The momentous letter from Mary's mother described a range of social conditions and injustices that she encounters, and which Mary herself is destined to meet, to suffer, and to oppose. Although their experiences were very different, Mary and her mother have one thing in common: their fates are decided by a legal system that prefers to ignore the specific circumstances surrounding an individual rape victim's plight. This is because a raped woman's appearance in the Courtroom pits her against the sexual double standard that aids the rapist before and after the crime, and works to deafen society.

Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* describes, through her heroine's experiences, the difficulties facing a woman when she appears in court. William seduces and deserts Hannah when he hears that she is pregnant. He is successful and becomes a judge, but to avoid starvation, she resorts to crime. When Hannah appears in his court he fails to recognise her, but when he passes sentence the unwitting author of her ruin desperately tries to help her:

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[29] William Shakespeare, 'The Rape of Lucrece' in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed by David Bevington, 3rd edn (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foreman, 1980) ll. Lucrece asks, why 'should the private pleasure of some one/become the public plague of so many?'. pp 1478 - 1479

> "Recollect yourself - have you no witnesses? No proof in your behalf?"
> A deathly silence follows these questions.[30]

Hays's narrative examines what lies behind this kind of the 'silence', and concludes that a woman's 'ruin' hinges on the way the law is manipulated by the power, influence and wealth of the cynical man who seduces her. The 'insidious flatteries' of the mother's first seducer took advantage of her romantic nature and her naivety. Since she was bored by a domestic existence it was easy to dazzle the beautiful young woman's 'weak judgement', to capture her 'vain imagination', and to overpower her virtue.[31] On the other hand, in spite of her education, upbringing, and love for her prospective husband William, the daughter is not prepared for a powerful aristocrat with an obsession.

On his part, Mary's rapist sees her outrage after the rape as the 'natural' expression of feminine passion, weakness and revenge. Osborne is aware that his wealth, influence and power will protect him from society and the law, and, like Richardson's Mr B and Robert Lovelace, he knows that his sexual crimes will be overlooked in accordance with the double standard exploited by his class. Threatened with Court, he cynically responds to his victim's demand for justice by using her 'disgrace' to silence and humiliate her:

> To whom and where would you go, foolish and unhappy girl? - Let not passion and woman's vengeance blind you to the perils of your situation! - I dare not deceive you; the measures I have been partly driven and partly betrayed into, from which, upon my soul, had I not hoped better issue, should never have been put in practice, have, I fear, already irretrievably injured your reputation. My servants, I find, have been indiscreet; your romantic lamentations for the consequences of an accident, which a prudent

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[30] Elizabeth Inchbald, *Nature and Art,* 2 vols. (London, 1799) vol. I p 141. Hays met Inchbald In 1795 through her friendship with William Godwin.

[31] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 63

> silence might have suppressed, have excited the attention of the house, and the prattling rascals with the gossips of your own sex, have put their own construction on the chance that threw you into my arms, and have already made us the theme of the neighbourhood.[32]

Frustrated by her refusal to submit under pressure, Osborne attempts to weaken her resolve by reminding her that, since her reputation has already been lost, no-one would listen to her complaints. The more humiliated she is, the more sport he has, and when he points out that his influence in society is bound to work against her, he is in effect enjoying the power his position in society offers him:

> To what purpose, then, these pathetic appeal and unavailing recriminations? What will you do with the freedom for which you so vehemently contend? - Your beauty and unprotected situation may, perhaps, but still farther provoke the lawless attempts of our sex and oppose the sympathy of your own. No one, I doubt, will now receive you in the capacity in which you had proposed to offer yourself even were it more worthy of you; such are the stupid prejudices of the world. What is called, in your sex, honour and character, can, I fear, never be restored to you; nor will any asseverations or future watchfulness (to adopt the cant of policy and superstition) obliterate the stain. Who will credit the tale you mean to tell? What testimony or witnesses can you produce that will not make against you? Where are your resources to sustain the vexations and delay of a suit of law, which you wildly threaten? Who would support you against my wealth and influence?[33]

Failing to frighten her into submission, Osborne evicts her on to the London streets.

In this passage the baron's threats, supported by a range of arguments constructed to stress his power and his victim's weaknesses, expose a corrupt legal system that is nurtured by the prejudices of the society that underwrites it. Yet Hays presents the reader with an unfamiliar situation in which her heroine refuses to be bullied and resists her rapist's insinuations. Unlike Hannah, Hays's heroine insists on being heard and reserves the right to voice her objection to the prejudices all raped

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[32] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 118
[33] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, pp 118 - 119

women experience in Court. Following a court appearance in a rape case, an unmarried woman has less chance of securing a good match, and a married woman is scorned by society. One of the reasons for an unmarried woman's reluctance to seek justice was the eighteenth-century obsession with 'virtue' and 'chastity' before marriage.

An early literary example of society's stress on the centrality of a woman's role in domesticity, the importance of strict propriety, and the maintenance of reputation before marriage is that of George Savile, Marquis of Halifax in his *The Lady's New Year Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter*, first published in 1688.[34] Halifax was a Whig, an aristocrat and one of the architects of the Protestant Settlement of 1688. In preparation for her marriage, he teaches his daughter that a woman's virtue 'naturally' inclines her to submit to a man's 'natural' authority, and that her submission imbues her with a special feminine power:

> You have it in your power not only to free your selves, but to subdue your Masters, and without violence throw both their *Natural* and *Legal Authority* at your Feet.[35]

He recommends religion to suppress the dangerous passions (both personal and social) to which women are felt to be subject. Yet as soon as feminine power is acknowledged it is problematised:

> You must lay it down for a Foundation in general, That there is *Inequality* in *the Sexes*, and that for the better Oeconomy of the World, the Men, who were to be the Lawgivers, had the larger share of Reason bestow'd upon them; by which means your Sex is the better prepar'd for the *Compliance* that is necessary for the better performance of those *Duties* which seem to be most properly assigned to it.[36]

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[34] *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. by Vivien Jones, (London: Routledge, 1997) p 17

[35] *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, p 18

[36] *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, p 18

Although Halifax admits that there are disadvantages as well as advantages in being a woman he sees a flaw in the notion of 'contract' in marriage, and seeks to persuade his daughter that her sex is better prepared for compliance. This is because his predominant concern is the preservation of the age-old patriarchal interest in the transmission of property, and the identification of heirs.

In fiction as in life, constructions of 'virtue' and 'chastity' linked an unmarried woman's reputation with her 'market' value. As Mary Poovey has argued, the overriding problem for women was that the preservation of the all-important 'reputation' hinges on a woman's ability to maintain a semblance of 'chastity' and 'virtue'. The ability is crucial in a society obsessed with sexual invasion, and it is 'reputation' that becomes the psychological imperative which prevents a raped woman from going to Court:

> the cultural importance granted to reputation is reflected in the consistency with which eighteenth-century novelists dwell on this subject. Anna Howe's advice to Clarissa to marry Lovelace even after the rape is one of the most memorable of these references, if only because here reputation seems so thoroughly beside the point.[37]

Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* examines, in a way that for example Richardson's *Clarissa* does not, the damaging consequence of a raped woman's exposure to a legal process that effectively puts violated females on trial. Since there is never any real possibility that the Harlowes would take Lovelace to Court, Clarissa Harlowe's reaction to the loss of her reputation is to die. Written shortly before the Marriage Act of 1753, Haywood's novel makes the point that in

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[37] Mary Poovey, *Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) p 24

the mid-eighteenth-century girls such as Betsy need to learn some painful lessons. Her *Bildungsroman* warns every young female reader, as does Moore's Fable, that guarding her 'honour' is a woman's responsibility. And since Betsy *is* 'thoughtless', she does not fully understand. Her brother Francis enlightens her:

> "What avails your being virtuous?" said Mr. Francis: "I hope, - and I believe you are so; - but your reputation is of more consequence to your family; the loss of the one might be concealed, but a blemish on the other brings certain infamy and disgrace on yourself, and all belonging to you".[38]

When the rape episode draws Betsy and her readers' attention to the consequences of the heroine's lack of propriety, the brother's warning is made explicit. She is pursued by the supposed baronet, Sir Frederick Fineer, who fails to persuade her to agree to a clandestine marriage. Fineer lures Betsy to his lodgings on the pretext that he is dying. As soon as she enters his bed-room she is tricked into a marriage ceremony. When the ceremony is over, the baronet leaps from his sick bed and forces himself on her, 'Your resistance is vain [....] you are my wife, and as such I shall enjoy you'.[39]

Whilst Betsy is rescued by Mr Trueworth the result of her naivety, Fineer's trickery and the impact of the loss of chastity on her future become fully apparent when her brothers and rescuer meet:

> to consider what was to be done for the chastisement of the villain, as the prosecuting him by law would expose their sister's folly, and prove the most mortal stab that could be given to her reputation.[40]

Betsy's brothers realise that legal proceedings will damage her reputation as a sexually chaste woman; and that a woman's reputation must be preserved at all costs,

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[38] Eliza Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 355

[39] Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless,* p 382

[40] Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless,* p 382

even if it means that the culprit escapes punishment. The entire scene illustrates that the added risk to a sexually assaulted victim's reputation prevents a 'prudent' woman from appearing in court.

Apart from the embarrassment of publicity, the victim has to convince a court on a number of counts. Firstly, that the attack had actually taken place; secondly that it was 'rape' according to law; and thirdly that the accused had had carnal knowledge of her against her will, and by force. Furthermore, the eighteenth-century victim would be aware of rape law. According to William Blackstone (1723-1780) the judge in the court of pleas between 1770-1780, the prevailing punishment for, '*rape, raptus mulierum*' or the 'carnal knowledge of a woman forcibly and against her will', was death.[41] Since a defendant's life was at stake, and perjury regarded as a serious problem, there was a high level of concern. The result was that female victims were reluctant to give evidence in court. The concern also opened up investigation into the woman's reputation. The defence was inclined to find a weakness in the case if it could be proved that the woman's character was unsound, if she had not reported the case immediately, or if she had not cried out for help.

Betsy Thoughtless demonstrates that a rape victim is ill-advised to seek justice, since to do so, is to invite a repetition of the trauma. Furthermore, financial constraints barred many women from seeking protection from the law. Most people were discouraged by the time and expense involved in complaining to a Magistrate and the journey with witnesses to the Assizes. Gregory Durston's study of Westminster and the adjacent partly urbanised county of Middlesex, suggests that:

> court fees alone might cost well over a guinea. Calling a doctor to provide

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[41] Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* (Philadelphia, 1879) 1:442.

> medical evidence would be significantly more. Nevertheless most complainants were poor.[42]

Durston also identifies a loop-hole for rapists who, like one John Sheridan, offered marriage to their victims in lieu of prosecution in the 1700s. Robert Lovelace's determination to marry Clarissa after her rape could be read in terms of this strategy.[43] Consequently, a woman often preferred to press for attempted rape (which was regarded as a misdemeanour and not a capital offence), in order to avoid the consequences to her reputation. This had the added advantage of a trial at the less expensive Quarter Sessions.

On the other hand, Durston has argued that offering compensation to avoid a prosecution was illegal since it compounded the felony.[44] Although an assault with intent to rape was considered to be a misdemeanour, it was legitimate to come to a monetary settlement for the lesser offence. Nevertheless, in fiction as in life the practice of paying off complainants was widespread. For example, Henry Fielding's Squeezum assumes that a payment will settle a rape allegation.[45] Another complication was that should the accused man be prosperous and acquitted, he might find the resources to bring an action against the complainant for malicious prosecution. The already embarrassed woman would find herself in court yet again.

Ignorance was another barrier to a woman's appearance in court. As Sarah Chapone complained:

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[42] Gregory Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis', in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 28:2 (Autumn, 2005), (177) See also, Anna Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770 - 1845,* (London, 1987) p 21 - 45

[43] Durston cites Old Bailey Sessions Papers on the trial of John Sheridan on 13 April 1768. See also, Glanville Williams, *Textbook of Criminal Law*, (London: Stevens, 1983) p 169.

[44] Durston, 'Rape in the Eighteenth-Century Metropolis: Part 2' in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 29:1 (Spring, 2006) 15 - 31 (22) Henry Fielding, *Rape upon Rape, or the Justice Caught in his own Trap,* (London, 1730) p 55

[45] Durston, 'Rape in the Eighteenth-Century Metropolis: Part 2'. 22

> If we reflect how extremely ignorant all young Women are as to points in Law, and how their Education and Way of Life, shuts them out from the Knowledge of their true Interest in almost all things, we shall find that their Trust and Confidence in the Man they love, and Inability to make use of the Proper Means to guard against his Falsehood, leave few in a Condition to make use of that Precaution.[46]

A baffling legal language also prevented a raped woman from seeking redress in court. Speaking of the difficulties in deciphering the law, Laetitia Pilkington argues that:

> There are so many loop-holes [in the law] that even persons conversant with it may be deceived: how then should a female be on her guard, against the professors of a certain kind of unintelligible jargon, whose skill is to puzzle the cause, or a science where
>
> Endless tautologies and doubts perplex
> Too harsh a study for our softer sex![47]

Richardson's *Clarissa* emphasises the personal effects on an unmarried raped woman, but it also highlights the law. Patriarchal maxims designed to control feminine behaviour are deeply scored, especially in the practical female's mind. Although Anna Howe is depicted as a rebellious character, she is also portrayed as a pragmatic woman. Anna assumes that by ignoring parental advice Clarissa has forfeited both her honour and her angelic status. Furthermore, she realises that since prejudice in society disadvantages a raped woman, the 'fallen' angel is better off under her rapist's roof than dependent on the law. Yet, in different ways, both Richardson's and Hays's heroines want to resist Anna's 'truths'.

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[46] Sarah Chapone, *The Hardships of the English Laws in relation to Wives,* (London: W Bowyer for J Roberts, 1735)

[47] Cited in Clare Brant, 'Speaking of Women: Scandal and the Law in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', in *Women, Texts and Histories 1575 - 1760* , ed. by Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 258 -259

Richardson exposes the eighteenth-century law's position in the passage in which Lovelace confines Clarissa in a brothel. As far as the occupants of the house are concerned, when she threatens to harm herself with a knife and declares 'the Law shall be all my resource: The LAW', there is genuine concern: not because she is a woman, but because she is 'property':[48]

> I have no patience, said she, to find myself a slave, a prisoner, in a vile house - Tell me, Sire, in so many words tell me, Whether it be, or be not, your intention to permit me to quit it? To permit me the freedom which is my birthright as an English subject?[49]

Of course Lovelace is not interested in Clarissa's freedom, but the juxtaposition of a wounded rape victim with her invocation of the legal system and the financial interests of Mrs Sinclair and the inmates of her disreputable house reveals the law's relation to property. According to Sir William Hawkins 'all who are present and actually assist a man to commit a rape, may be indicted as principal offenders, whether they be men or women'.[50] Clarissa's threats immobilise both the rapist and his accomplices by endangering their livelihood rather than their lives. Clarissa has no-one to protect her natural rights, but Laetitia Pilkington's undecipherable law would deliberate over the property in her dead body. As William Blackstone remarked in his *Commentaries:*

> [....]the legislature of England has universally promoted the grand ends of civil society, the peace and security of individuals by [....] assigning to every thing capable of ownership a legal and determinate owner.[51]

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48 Richardson, *Clarissa,* (New York: Everymans, 1962) 6:36

49 Richardson, *Clarissa,* 6:36

50 William Hawkins *A Treatise of the Pleas of the Crown,* 2 vols. (1716) rpt. (London, 1824) Vol. 2. Ch 16. Sect. 10. p 123.

51 Blackstone, *Commentaries,* 2:15

Crucially, since she is no longer unsullied property, she is ruined. Yet, although her invocation of the law is practical, Clarissa understands the symbolism of her violation. Whilst Lovelace compares his victim to the suicidal Lucretia when he insinuates that a single episode is not a matter of life and death, the heroine herself associates penetration with death and loss of identity.[52] She believes that her rapist's obsession has robbed her of her 'self', because to a woman in a patriarchal society 'selfhood' is linked with 'virtue'. In spiritual terms, Clarissa feels that since she *is* no longer what she *was,* she wants to die.[53]

The suggestion that after rape the victim is so defiled that the only possible outcome could be her death appeared in late seventeenth-century plays. Restoration drama routinely used rape to focus on masculine anxieties generated by both political crises and the sexual behaviour of kings. Monstrous acts of sexual assault that demarcate the borders of what, in Jeffrey Cohen's words 'must not be committed', paradoxically increased in frequency on the Restoration stage and rapidly became 'a standard part of the dramatic formula, most often used for a titillating combination of violence and eroticism'.[54] The notion gathered momentum during the eighteenth century under the pressure of the middle class values that Richardson explored in *Clarissa.*

Derek Hughes has argued that in the 1680s and 1690s there was a subtle change in direction in rape themes.[55] For example, in Sir Charles Sedley's *Bellamira* (1687) Isabella's rape leads to her marriage, but the assumption was that the

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52 Richardson, *Clarissa,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985) Lovelace asks, 'Is death the natural consequence of a Rape?' L. 263 p 900

53 Richardson, *Clarissa,* L. 507 p 1411

54 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', in *Monster Theory,* ed by Jeffrey J Cohen, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 3 - 25 (13 - 14)

55 Derek Hughes, *English Drama 1660 - 1700,* (New York; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p 324

bridegroom makes amends for having raped her with 'a married life/Bating the odious Names of Man and Wife'.[56] Nicholas Brady's *The Rape* (1692) described the deployment of 'a test used to establish the innocence of the suspect [which is] an offer of marriage to the victim; if he is willing, he must be guilty, for no man would wish to marry a woman defiled by someone else'.[57] It was in Brady's play that the traumatised victim Eurione posed questions about the consequences of rape when she felt that familiar boundaries began to disappear. Violated, and full of self-loathing, the Gothic Princess describes her body in terms of a vessel filled with disease when she claims that 'I am contagious sure/And all chaste hands will blister that but touch me'.[58] As Cynthia Marshall has argued, Eurione's traumatised interior 'self' is embodied and her expressions of pain serve as 'evident and unassailable facts of personhood'.[59]

The Victim of Prejudice's portrayal of a raped heroine's defiance of corrupt patriarchal systems vehemently undermines assumptions about a raped woman's irreparable 'contamination' by describing a disparity between the public's understanding of rape, and the fictional heroine's. The novel's principles also recognise the difference between Clarissa's experience of abduction and rape, and the interpretation put on it, by her society and the law. The problem is that in practical terms, Mary Raymond and Clarissa must fend for themselves after rape. Although Clarissa is advised to prosecute her rapist, she and eighteenth-century readers know that the law is likely to work against, rather than for, her. Lovelace has witnesses and

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56 Charles Sedley, *Bellamira*, (1687) Vii. 618 - 619.

57 Derek Hughes, *English Drama 1660 - 1700*, p 373

58 Nicholas Brady, *The Rape.; or, the Innocent Impostors: A Tragedy*, (London, 1692) cited in Lowenthal, 'Monstrous Identities', pp 165 - 6

59 Cynthia Marshall, 'Wound-man: Coriolanus, Gender, and the Theatrical Construction of Interiority', in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture*, ed by Valerie Traub, M Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp 93 - 118, (100)

he ensures that there is a delay in the reporting of the crime. Therefore, Clarissa is left to tackle Lovelace's actions herself through the exercise of her own forensic skills. As such her letters after the rape form an alternative body of law, and one which condemns both her male violator and the patriarchal system that supports him:

> What a sex is yours! Have you all one dialect? Good and sacred! If, so, you can find an oath, or a vow, that my ears have not been twenty times a day wounded with, then speak it, that I may again believe a MAN.[60]

Whereas Clarissa complains that patriarchy's 'one dialect' and the power of the state is ranged against raped women, *The Victim of Prejudice* seeks to expose and address the problems they face. According to Richardson's conventional rape narrative the victim is silenced by the legal system. Hays's novel insists that, in spite of her society's false values, the raped heroine not only demands to be heard but insists on survival.

Furthermore, Hays's readers would recognise that apart from the difficulties of appearing in Court, a young woman's beauty is bound to generate the assumptions and prejudices that ensure she is blamed for her rape. Hays signals this problem at the beginning of the novel when Mary Raymond's memoirs recollect that 'the graces, with which nature had so liberally endowed me, proved a material link in the chain of events'. After the rape Osborne confirms the problem when he predicts that her beauty would 'provoke the lawless attempts of our sex'.[61] The baron is right in suggesting that the public's attitudes will guarantee a reluctance to listen to Mary's plea of innocence in the Courtroom. As Mary Wortley Montague put it in the early 1700s, since no genuinely chaste woman would risk taking her violator to Court, to

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[60] Richardson, *Clarissa* (London: Penguin, 1985) pp 1066 - 1070
[61] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 6

do so is tantamount to loss of chastity:

> Virtue must only shine to her own recollection, and loses that name when it is ostentatiously expos'd to the World.[62]

Because the familiar rape narrative's stress is on the victim's reputation and not the rapist's crime, justice does not figure in the trope. Hays's readers know that Mary's appearance in Court is bound to damage an already tarnished reputation because according to rape narrative convention, her relationship with the baron would be seen as a transgression against social boundaries and propriety. Furthermore, Mary's word against that of her wealthy and influential rapist is unlikely to be taken seriously in Court. Even Osborne sees the injustice of this in his awareness of the 'perils' involved in a woman's appeal to justice in an eighteenth-century rape trial.

> Although they would recognise that Mary Raymond is an innocent victim, Hays's readers would know that she is bound to be held responsible for the rape. According to the familiar narrative, she has been 'contaminated' by rape, and will be judged, as her mother was judged, as a whore. Furthermore, according to convention, the sexual double standard active in her mother's story is set to disqualify the daughter from accusing her rapist.

Hays's novel is unusual in that her heroine not only threatens her rapist with legal action, she also attempts to survive without resorting to prostitution. More unusual is the way that the aristocratic rapist points out the inconsistencies and injustices in the law that, as the local squire, he himself represents. Readers recognise

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62 'The Nonsense of Common Sense, Tuesday, 24 January 1738', in *Lady Mary Worley Montague, Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, ed. by Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977; rpt 1993) p 133

that Osborne's access to the law is likely to prevent Mary from gaining legal redress. But because Hays's rapist explains the ways in which the law offers an influential rapist immunity, he is revealed as prepared to manipulate society's prejudices and the law's injustices to his own advantage. Unusually, Osborne's attempts to silence his victim only work to reinforce Mary's sense of injustice, because she knows, and more importantly the reader knows, that should she appear in Court *her* sexuality and not *his* crime is put on trial.

Hays was not alone in her concern with the justice systems. In his political works and fiction Hays's friend and mentor William Godwin described the law, the prison system and property ownership as modes of despotism by which man destroys his own kind. Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* (1794) presents an England in which virtually all man's institutions, the monarchy, the entire legal system and all forms of Government are corrupt and corrupting. Indeed because the law is portrayed as offering Caleb no protection it becomes an instrument of persecution.[63] Much of the anguish in Godwin's novel stems from the fact that Caleb, and those closest to him are unable to resist the influence of society's values and prejudices. What appears to concern Godwin is the effects of injustice on his male victim's mind. As Katherine Rogers has argued, the major Radical theorist of the 1790s merely tinkered with the complex issue of the 'the rights of women':

> He dealt with women and marriage as an aspect of property, attacking contemporary marriage not because it oppressed women but because it restricted proprietorship in her to one man.[64]

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[63] Originally entitled *Things as They Are, or The Adventures of Caleb Williams.*

[64] Katherine M Rogers, *Feminism in Eighteenth Century England*, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982) p 182. See also Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) pp 243 - 245

Godwin's most theoretical discussion of gender issues is a sub-clause which deals with the 'evils' of co-operation, in an Appendix to *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) entitled, 'Of Cooperation, Cohabitation and Marriage':

> From these principles it appears that everything that is usually understood by the term co-operation is, in some degree, an evil.[65]

The problem is that Godwin's *Enquiry* does not appear to consider women as a distinct group with oppressions specific to the female sex. He assumes that women's liberation would be a consequence of the enlightening liberation of the human mind. Nonetheless, it is tempting to argue that some of Godwin's ideas on justice could be read as having a 'feminist' resonance. For example, *Caleb Williams* suggests that the most odious of monopolies is the one that turns women into fetishist prizes.

What Godwin's plot *does* is illustrate that powerful men like Tyrrel are able to torment someone from a lower class without restraint. What is important to this thesis is that Godwin's hero realises that the legal system itself generates injustice, even if in *his* case a 'just' decision is reached when he succeeds in his 'mistake' of bringing Falkland to trial.

Both Hays and Wollstonecraft recognised the critique of contemporary justice systems, the inconsistencies in the law, and the suffering of vulnerable members of society described in *Caleb Williams.* But Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* and Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman* expand on Godwin's examination of institutional and legal corruption by suggesting that justice not only hinges on wealth, rank and class but also on specific gender issues. Their novels manipulate Godwin's findings in order to tackle and highlight the effects on women. As Gary Kelly puts it,

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[65] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political* Justice, ed by K Codell Carter, (London: Clarendon, 1793) p 758

The Victim of Prejudice:

> Unlike *Emma Courtney*, it is not dialogical, nor is it as richly allusive, referential, concerned with 'facts', or systematically researched as *Things As They Are and The Wrongs of Woman.* But it gains intensity by concentrating on the emotional and bodily experience of victimization, as both the internalization of false social values ('prejudice') and the mental and physical suffering that results (the experience of 'the victim').[....] narrates the political body of woman as victim of 'things as they are'.[66]

In contrast to Godwin, Hays's critique of a corrupt society focuses on the effects of legislation and prejudice on a particular group, raped women. *The Victim of Prejudice* formulates a pressing question based on Godwin's view of corruption in the justice system, but Hays's point is specifically connected with the constructions of feminine 'virtue' and 'chastity' that underpin attitudes that cause injustice to women. In other words, what does constitute a 'just' decision in a rape trial?

> In a just society, the perpetrator and not the victim bears the responsibility

for the crime. For example, when Falkland accuses Caleb of theft, he does not stand trial for the alleged 'robbery' of his jewellery and money. Naturally, when Tyrrel is murdered he is regarded as the victim rather than the murderer. Although his behaviour undoubtedly prompted his fate he is certainly not held responsible for his death. To emphasise the particular difficulties that women face within the legal system, Mary Raymond is portrayed as someone who is more than a 'victim' of 'things as they are'. Hays's does this by making explicit that rape cases put women's chastity and virtue on trial and by suggesting that although rape laws exist they are inconsistent because women are routinely judged on their sexuality. Whereas Godwin's court scenes demonstrate that, since things are as they are, justice is difficult to achieve, *The Victim of Prejudice* spells out that the specific psychological

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[66] Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p 11

power struggle between female victim and male persecutor is bound to silence the woman.

When she explores systematic inconsistencies in the law in terms of rape, Hays makes the very important point that women are victimised because they are treated *differently* from men. Hays's and Wollstonecraft's fiction demonstrate that since things are as they are, the heroine is unlikely to get a hearing. Even if she does, the weight of prejudice reserved for a raped woman is likely to defeat her. As Osborne puts it, in open court his victim's suffering would be 'the sport of ribaldry, the theme of court jesters'.[67] Hays's unusual portrayal of her raped heroine emphasises that, like Emma Courtney, Mary Raymond sees herself as a sexual subject rather than an objectified 'keeper' of a male relative's property. After her rape, more 'visible' public injustices combine with 'invisible' psychological and personal factors to propel Mary into the domain of legislative procedures and to pit her against injustices that affect all women. Eighteenth-century societal prejudice and inconsistencies in the law become instrumental in Mary's rejection of a 'comfortable' closure of her predicament in marriage. Since a raped woman's choices are limited, Mary's defiance of her rapist, society and the law is all the more extraordinary.

On the other hand, for a woman like Mary, the prospect of marriage is not an alternative, since it seems merely to add to the injustices she feels. Her rejection of Osborne's offer to solve her predicament through marriage not only resists the convention that suggests death, marriage or prostitution as the only future for a raped woman, but also a contemporary taste for happy companionate endings. This is because late eighteenth-century marriage law subsumes women and robs them of the

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[67] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice,* pp 118 - 119

limited legal status and selfhood they possess.

One of the reasons for Mary's rejection of Osborne's marriage proposals is a recognition that patriarchal constructions of 'femininity' are put in place to protect male property and not women's status. That is, marriage to her rapist would define her as 'property' which would ensure a further loss of individuality and agency. Hays's independent heroine prefers prison to marriage, and she is prepared to defy convention however painful her decisions might be.[68] For her raped heroine to have agreed to marriage, that is to a further reduction in an already limited legal existence, would have been to contradict the arguments for women's rights that Hays outlines in her polemic. Importantly for our purposes, under the law marriage to a rapist complicates the issue of responsibility for the rape.

Rape, Marriage and 'Property'

Influenced by her sexual politics, Hays's *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* suggests that marriage without choice is no marriage. On the other hand, *The Victim of Prejudice* suggests that marriage to a rapist, even an aristocratic rapist, is not an option for a sexually independent, intelligent woman with a sense of her own identity. This is because, in spite of certain tensions, the eighteenth-century unmarried woman is viewed in legal theory as an individual before the law with the capacity for taking responsibility for herself and the capability of owning property. She can, for example, bequeath property and chattels if she owns them, and she can sue, be sued, and make

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[68] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 150

contracts. If she remains unmarried she retains complete control over her property.[69] But there is a dramatic change when a woman marries. The *feme covert,* the married woman's legal position, is quite different. According to Sir William Blackstone the law of 'coverture' decreed that 'the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection and cover, she performs everything'.[70] In other words, after marriage, a woman has no legal control.

Under the doctrine of 'Unity of person' the married woman's existence is figuratively 'covered' or subsumed by her husband.[71] As Janelle Greenberg has argued, the doctrine most famously enunciated by Blackstone that states that a married couple are as one person in law, imposed a number of disabilities on a wife.[72] For example, if a married woman is sued it is in fact her husband that is sued. On the other hand, if she commits a misdemeanour she is not liable for the act because it is assumed that her husband has coerced her.[73] As is well documented in law and in literature such as Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman,* a wife's property becomes her husband's after marriage including personal property given to her after marriage. In the late 1790s Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman* depicts a heroine who has been sexually exploited by a selfish, violent and merciless husband, who preaches liberty and freedom:

> Mr Venables prevailed on me to borrow certain sums of a wealthy relation; and, when I refused further compliance, he thought of bartering my person;

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[69] Janelle Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman in Early Eighteenth Century Common Law and Equity', in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 4 1975, 170 - 179 (175)

[70] Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries,* p 442. *Commentaries,* which sets out the structure of legislation and explained its major principles became the most influential exposition of English law.

[71] Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman', 173-174

[72] Blackstone, *Commentaries,* p 442

[73] Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman', 173-174

> and not only allowed opportunities to, but urged, a friend from whom he borrowed money, to seduce me.[74]

Venables is a lout, a wastrel and a drunkard who married Maria for her money. The heroine faces several dilemmas derived from a loveless marriage and the loss of property rights under contemporary marriage law. Yet she tolerates his unruly behaviour until he tries to prostitute her to one of his friends. When Maria escapes with her baby daughter Venables hunts them down by means of contemporary marriage and property legislation, and has her imprisoned in the lunatic asylum where the novel opens.

Maria falls in love with a fellow prisoner Henry Darnford, but discovers that since marriage and property law regard her chosen relationship as illicit, her lover has to pay damages to Mr Venables for seducing his wife. When she attempts to defend Darnford in court, her argument serves to highlight the injustices she suffers. She feels that since she and her warder Jemima are women, they are as much captives of society's view of a female's status as they are of the prison system. Maria links a married woman's lack of freedom and choice with her sexuality, and associates marriage with prostitution by explaining that duty should not force a woman into sex "We cannot, without depraving our minds, endeavour to please a lover or husband, but in proportion as he pleases us". Furthermore, she denies that a woman tied by marriage to a man she did not love should be "obliged to renounce all the humanizing affections".[75] Finally, she pleads for divorce with retention of her own property so that she can marry the man she loves.

Although Maria's argument is meant to defend Darnford, the passage exposes

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[74] Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p 196
[75] Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p 153

the double bind for women. The Judge's response alludes to "the fallacy of letting women plead their feelings". He objects to women being allowed to plead emotion as an excuse or palliation of infidelity on the grounds that it will open the floodgates for immorality. "What virtuous woman thought of her feelings?".[76] Maria's claim, and the narrow-mindedness of the judge's charge, illustrate Wollstonecraft's connection between women's 'rights' and society's prejudices. The problem for Maria is that at the end of the eighteenth century, the Anglican Church did not allow divorce when marriages broke down (which was usually due to adultery). Although she attempts to create an assertive heroine who leaves a vicious husband to defy marriage and property law in the name of feeling, Wollstonecraft's novel suggests that the much needed reforms of the laws that apply to married women, had nowhere near begun:

> The magnitude of a sacrifice ought always to bear some proportion to the utility of the view; and for a woman to live with a man, for whom she can cherish neither affection or esteem [....] Is an abjectness of condition.[77]

One of the concerns that had haunted female writers since the late seventeenth century was that prevailing pernicious marriage and property laws made marriage a kind of 'legal' prostitution.

As early as 1676 Aphra Behn made the connection in *The Rover*. Although the rake hero Willmore desires her, when he belittles Angellica Bianca's profession he focuses on the independence that her profession affords her, something which betrays his fear of female power and sexuality. Angellica Bianca is quick to recognise the hypocrisy in his anxiety. When he claims that because he is a gentleman, he could not 'sell' *his* body and condemns her for doing so, she points out that the distinction

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[76] Wollstonecraft. *Wrongs of Woman*, pp 149 - 50
[77] Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, pp 149 - 50

between the whore and the bartered virgin bride is negligible:

> When a lady is proposed to you for a wife you never ask how fair, discreet, or virtuous she is; but what's her fortune - which if but small, you cry 'she will not do my business', and basely leave her, though she languish for you.[78]

John P Zomchick has argued that throughout the Long Eighteenth Century the law developed in favour of the needs of an expanding commercial society:

> Through the interrelation of law and economics, the subject is conceived not only as a carrier of rights but also as an economic agent. [....] rights and economic agency go hand-in-hand, contributing to a new 'sense of identity' for human nature.[79]

On the other hand Bridget Hill has argued that according to Samuel Johnson 'confusion of progeny constitutes the essence of the crime', and, when the inheritance of property is involved a man needed to know that the children his wife delivered were his own.[80] Predictably, it was on women's chastity that 'all the property in the world depends'.[81] As Mary Lyndon Shanley puts it 'the theoretical arguments that emerged from these debates [....] became the basis for liberal arguments about female equality in marriage'.[82] One of the most important debates in this area was the need for property to be freely alienable, whoever owned it. The liberation of married women's wealth was entirely necessary for the eighteenth-century commercial revolution.

Yet Mary Raymond, the *feme sole* of 1798, had no property, except in the

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78 Aphra Behn, *The Rover* Act II. Sc 2.

79 John P Zomchick, *Family and Law in Eighteenth Century Fiction: The Public Conscience in the Private Sphere,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p 25

80 Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth Century England,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p 180

81 Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth Century England,* p 180

82 Mary Lyndon Shanley, 'Marriage Contract and Social Contract in Seventeenth-Century English Political Thought', in *Western Political Quarterly, 32* 81 - 92 (81)

Lockean sense, in her 'Self', and neither had she rights as an 'economic agent'. Furthermore as a raped woman she had lost her 'market' value, or in other words, the 'property' in an unsullied female body. As marriage law stood, Radical women were apt to see it as disadvantageous to women, and to refer to it in terms of slavery. For example, Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman,* which traces a maze of legal and domestic oppression leads to the same conclusion advanced in *A Vindication*:

> Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subjected to prejudices that brutalize them, when principles would be a surer guard, only to sweeten the cup of man?[83]

William Blake's 'Visions of the Daughters of Albion' connects his heroine's experiences with the social and legal oppression of women in terms of the ideology described by Wollstonecraft and Hays as a stifling 'magic circle'.[84] 'Visions' can be read as an exploration of the ethical implications of Empirical conquest, the 'rape' of new worlds and the exploitation of a slave trade that enriched England's land owning classes.[85] But Bromion's ideology also connects the unjust legal systems with the domestic and social slavery of women that forces them to accept the ethos of subjection and repression:

> Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine they north and south.
> Stamped with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun;
> They are obedient, they resist not, they obey the scourge;

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[83] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication,* p 262

[84] Blake's 'Visions' was inspired by Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication.* Hays frequently uses the term 'magic circle' to describe the constraints which society imposes on women, e.g. in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney,* p 32. In *The Victim of Prejudice* she uses the term to refer to an illusory romance, 'I felt guarded as by a talisman, encompassed in magic circle, through which neither danger could assail nor sorrow pierce me'. p 122. For discussion of Blake's work see Michael Ackland, 'The Embattled Sexes: Blake's Debt to Wollstonecraft, in *The Four Zoas'*, Blake, vol. 16 (Winter), 1982 - 3. Nelson Hilton, 'An Original Story' in *Unnam'd Forms: Blake and Textuality*, ed by Nelson Hilton and Thomas Avogler (Berkeley, Cal: University of California Press, 1986) pp 69 - 104

[85] See D. V. Erdman, *Blake, Prophet against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of his Own Times,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) pp 233 - 4

Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent.[86]

Oothoon eventually submits to her master's power and violence unlike Blake's contemporary Radical women writers' heroines. After Bromion rapes her she is punished for her sexuality. Sitting at Theomorton's feet she adopts the role of:

> she who burns with youth, and knows no fixed lot, is
> bound
> In spells of law to one she loaths: and must she drag the chain
> Of life, in weary lust!.[87]

Bromion and Theotormon reiterate their static patriarchal mental positions, since as 'property' under eighteenth-century law, Oothoon's violation marked her as the site of patriarchal violence and rivalry. From the conventional and legislative eighteenth-century perspective, Oothoon is 'stamped' with a man's 'signet', that is tied, morally, to Bromion, her violator.[88]

In contrast, Mary signals her defiance of aristocratic property ownership and pernicious unjust property law early in *The Victim of Prejudice* before she is raped, in order to please her lover William. When Mary risks prosecution by trespassing on Osborne's property to steal the fruit from his greenhouse she does so in the name of love "because - *I love him*".[89] Since Hays's heroine does not love her rapist, marriage to the baron would be a kind of prostitution that Behn's Angellica Bianca described and Wollstonecraft's Maria would recognise. On the other hand, like Blake's Oothoon, Mary has a *moral* title as a victim. Yet Hays's heroine chooses to

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[86] William Blake, 'Visions of the Daughters of Albion', in *William Blake: Selected Poetry*, ed by W. H. Stevenson, (London: The Penguin Poetry Library, 1988) Plate 1 Lines 20 - 24

[87] Blake, 'Visions', Plate 5 Lines 21 - 24

[88] Blake, 'Visions', Plate 1 Line 20

[89] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 15

reject it since she sees her rapist's behaviour as criminal. What is important to this thesis is that the doctrine of 'Unity of person' meant that husband and wife could not testify against one another in court, which meant that a wife could not accuse her husband of the crime of rape committed before marriage.

Moreover, Mary's decision not to marry Osborne highlights complications arising from the shift from unmarried to married status for *any* woman, due to the problem of 'contract' in marriage and the suggestion of female 'weakness' in consent. It was the emphasis on 'consent' as the foundation of civil government and the terms of marriage that drove the law's reluctance to recognise women's legal identity. If individuals were able to re-negotiate government, then why not wives?

Earlier in the chapter we discussed George Saville, Earl of Halifax's advice to his daughter on the subject of her responsibilities in marriage.[90] It was when the term 'contract' came into the picture that Halifax admitted to the existence of a problem. There was a contradiction in the contractual nature of the institution since obedience was required of a woman in marriage. Halifax's employment of a contractarian vocabulary effectively put women on trial. He asked whether a woman ought to have a right to negotiate herself out of obedience in an appropriate contractual fashion, and he concluded that they should not because ultimately, unlike the 'contract' made between the monarch and his subjects, marriage is a 'contract' that transcends man's civil law:

> The *Institution of Marriage* is too sacred to admit a *Liberty* of *objecting* to it; That the supposition of yours being the weaker *Sex*, having without doubt a good Foundation, maketh it reasonable to subject it to the *Masculine Dominion*; That no Rule can be so *perfect*, as not to admit some *Exceptions*; But the Law presumeth there would be so few found in this Case, who would

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[90] *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. by Vivien Jones, (London: Routledge, 1997)

> have a sufficient Right to such a Privilege, that it is safer some *Injustice* should be *conniv'd* at in a very few Instances, than to break into an Establishment, upon which the Order of Humane Society does so much depend.[91]

Emerging from these conflicting discourses is an enduring ambivalent female subjectivity. A woman is allowed a certain amount of selfhood, but she risks losing it due to a transcendental power which she cannot overcome, that of her father, her husband, her God. Yet, underpinning Halifax's platitude is an understanding of the personal and social function of religion for the subjugated, be they a class, a race or a sex. This is a view that is related to John Locke's argument that 'every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*'.[92] Locke holds that the marriage union is established through a contract which is an agreement between two equals. Carol Pateman argues that Locke failed to explain why the marriage contract is necessary when women are 'naturally' subject to men.[93] Marriage becomes an agreement which the woman is permitted to sign. Pateman points out that the contractual freedoms advanced by Locke's social contract did not challenge patriarchal assumptions about the nature and function of women, in spite of its egalitarian implications 'women represent all that men must master in order to bring civil society into being'.[94] Yet Susan Staves has argued that women were not absolutely excluded from the legal domain nor were they understood entirely as objects of exchange amongst men. Staves suggests that

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[91] *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, p 19.

[92] Laslett, P. J., ed., *Locke, Two Treatises of Government*, [1690] 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 'Of Property' p 27. This is Locke's response to Robert Filmer's defence of Patriarchy in *Patriarcha* (1680).

[93] Carol Pateman, 'Contract, the Individual and Slavery', in *The Sexual Contract*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) pp 54 - 66. See also Janelle Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman in Early eighteenth-century Common Law and Equity', in *Studies in Eighteenth-century Culture* 4 1975, 170-175. For discussion of the marriage contract, see Sue Chaplin, 'Sublime Bodies and bodies in law', in *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth Century Women's Fiction: Speaking of Dread*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004) pp 11 - 41

[94] Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) p 102

they had a limited degree of legal subjectivity, which is evident from the controversy surrounding rape, seduction and marriage since 'if women have no rights over their own bodies but are simply the property of men to use as they will, as female slaves were the property of slave owners, the idea of seduction is incomprehensible'.[95] The idea of seduction is a source of concern in the eighteenth century, only because women are 'on their way to equality'.[96]

One of the debates surrounding Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753) had been the issue of consent, since a woman's consent was a prerequisite for a valid marriage. Henry Gally's Hobbesian *Some Considerations on Clandestine Marriage,* published in 1750 argued that the law has a divine quality, and, like Hobbes, he presents English Law as an authority which transcends individual men, and to which they must submit.[97] Whilst Gally accepts that as a legal subject a woman is capable of giving meaningful consent, he problematises the issue by exploring how easily she might be persuaded into marriage. Gally assumes that if a witness exists that will contradict her, she will never be believed, a notion that comforts Lovelace greatly in *Clarissa.* It also anticipates Blackstone's discussion of rape trials in his *Commentaries.* Blackstone urges the Court to pay particular attention to a variety of factors that seem to him to be more relevant than the woman's testimony. They include details of her reputation, a delay on her part in reporting the rape, and the possibility that she may be a liar.[98]

On the other hand, Henry Stebbings' Lockean *Enquiry into the Force and*

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[95] Susan Staves, 'British Seduced Maidens', in *Eighteenth Century Studies,* (1980) 116

[96] Staves, 'British Seduced Maidens', 116

[97] Henry Gally, 'Some Considerations on Clandestine Marriages' (1750), in *The Marriage Act of 1753: Four Tracts,* ed. by Randolph Trumbach (New York and London: Garland, 1984) pp 6 - 11

[98] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* 1753, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) p 150:210

Operation of an Act for the Prevention of Clandestine Marriages published in 1754 argues that contractual relations exist between men in the state of nature, that men enjoy complete contractual freedom therein, and insists that this freedom should be extended to all rational individuals.[99] The important issue for Stebbings is that the right to contract in marriages is inseparable from selfhood, and it is as unalienable as the self. What is significant is that he argues that the freedom extends to women.

For our purposes, what is crucial to Hays's heroine is that the lack of sexual choice in marriage renders women vulnerable to sexual exploitation. What is at stake in *The Victim of Prejudice* is the link between the loss of identity and agency for a woman like Mary Raymond within such limitations. Like Richardson's Clarissa, Hays's raped heroine sees the symbolism in her situation as an acute loss of identity that an eighteenth-century marriage contract does not cure. When she spurns Osborne with, "Think not that I would ally my soul to yours", Mary recognises the religious pressure, or act of conscience, that legitimises the marriage contract, as clearly as Halifax.[100] But she also sees, with Stebbings, the connection between such contracts and an unalienable effect on the self. Within eighteenth-century law the marriage contract is a sexual contract in which the woman participant is afforded sufficient legal competence to reduce herself to the status of chattel.

Mary's refusal to marry her rapist is an assertion that after rape the rapist, and not the raped, should strive to gain society's respect. For the reader, the fictional rapist's attempt to redeem himself by offering his victim closure in a respectable marriage goes some way towards reconciliation. Yet for Hays's heroine, this kind of

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[99] Henry Stebbings, 'Enquiry into the Force and Operation of an Act for the Prevention of Clandestine Marriages' (1754), in *The Marriage Act of 1753: Four Tracts,* ed by Randolph Trumbach (New York and London: Garland, 1984) p 106

[100] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 164

'respectability' does not represent justice because marriage complicates and obscures the responsibility for rape. To pin this down, Hays's novel challenges the assumptions in the conventional rape text by recording Mary's courageous and unblemished conduct in the events both leading to the rape and during the aftermath.

In the opening of this chapter I suggested that because family honour is lost when a fictional woman is raped, the conventional rape narrative insists that she either 'disappears' in marriage or has to die. The next section explores the suggestion that more usually, the unmarried raped heroine 'falls' into prostitution.

2. Prostitution: The Link between Reputation, Rape and Prostitution

One of the anxieties underpinning the rape narrative is the fear generated by the women who, because of their liaison with 'gentlemen', cross the barrier between the discreet 'public' sphere dominated by men and the discreet 'private', domestic, feminine world that men seek to control. As Mary Poovey has argued, the fictional woman who (inappropriately in society's eyes) forms an alliance with a gentleman, is seen to have conducted herself above her social standing and has to be punished.[101] Vivien Jones suggests that what lies at the heart of the anxiety generated by links between female sexuality and prostitution is a separation between discreet public and private spheres. She argues that the literature of Sensibility that appeared between the 1720s and the 1790s has a political agenda of its own:

> [....] issues of state power and responsibility are mediated through the gender and class preoccupations of popular fictions; as so often in the literature of sensibility, stories about penitent prostitutes disturb strategic attempts to separate 'public' from 'private'.[102]

Before we look at the link between rape, prostitution, and the transgression of important eighteenth-century social boundaries I want to examine the terms used by Poovey and Jones. Support for the existence of discreet 'public' and 'private' spheres in eighteenth-century society is based on Jurgen Habermas's argument that a bourgeois public sphere that was separated from the state and the realm of private life

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[101] Poovey, *The Proper Lady,* pp 3 - 8. See also Susan Staves, 'British Seduced Maidens'. *Eighteenth Century Studies* 14 (1980 - 81), pp 109 - 134; Vivien Jones, '"The Coquetry of Nature": Politics and the Picturesque in Women's Fiction', in *The Politics of the Picturesque,* ed. by S Copley and P Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp 120 - 144 . See also Vivien Jones, 'Scandalous Femininity: Prostitution and Eighteenth-Century Narrative' in *Shifting the Boundaries,* ed. by D Castiglione and L Sharpe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2003) pp 54 - 70

[102] Vivien Jones 'Scandalous Femininity', pp 55 - 56

in civil society, was developed in late seventeenth-century Europe.[103] Habermas contended that because of its autonomy, the 'public' sphere criticised both these spheres, and as a result, propelled the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century. The implication was that the first public sphere was a literary sphere, and that newspapers, novels, art criticism and magazines were the literary equivalents of the coffee houses, the debating societies and the literary salons, where men habitually met as equals.

As Moyra Haslett has pointed out, various writers, particularly feminists, have challenged the idea of the idealisation of a theoretical public sphere in which an abstract humanity makes all equal.[104] For example, Paula McDowell suggests that we ought to think in terms of overlapping spheres. Whilst she does not discuss the particular space of the coffee house, Amanda Vickery argues that since women participated in extensive social activities there must be doubts about the actual exclusion of women from even that most apparently homological example of public sphere life.[105] Steven Pincus and Helen Berry offer evidence that women did indeed frequent the coffee house, at least in the seventeenth century.[106] Haslett argues that in

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[103] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois society*, trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). Also, Jurgen Habermas, 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge; MA: MIT Press, 1992) pp 421 - 61

[104] Moyra Haslett, *Pope to Burney, 1714 - 1779,* (Hampshire: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2003) pp 138 - 168

[105] Haslett, *Pope to Burney*, p 141; Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', in *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 383-414; Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England,* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1998)

[106] Steven Pincus, '"Coffee Politicians does Create": Coffee houses and Restoration political culture', in *Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995) 807 - 834: Helen Berry '"Nice and Curious Questions": Coffee Houses and the Representation of Women in John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury'*, *The Seventeenth Century*, 12 (1998) 257-276.

the end there are no absolute conclusions. While for the most part, women 'were excluded from almost all forms of formal clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Britain and America, including the societies of the coffee house and the tavern', many women *did* feel included within informal literary societies and did participate in the community of letters.[107] And there were some women who subscribed to a separation of the spheres:

> The principal virtues or vices of a woman must be of a private and domestic kind. Within the circle of her own family and dependants lies her sphere of action-the scene of almost all those tasks and trials, which must determine her character, and her fate, here, and hereafter. Reflect, for a moment, how much the happiness of her husband, children, and servants, must depend on her temper, and you will see that th greatest good, or evil, which she ever may have in her power to do, may arise from her correcting or indulging its infirmities.[108]

Since publicity and gender were intertwined, it was only:

> as a woman writer that a woman emerged as a public literary figure. And that was both her triumph and her handicap.[109]

Nevertheless, it is fairly safe to argue that one of the factors that contributed to the anxiety about prostitution was the way that prostitutes and mistresses were able to cross social boundaries. Rape narratives that focused on the erosion of these divisions betrayed an anxiety within the shifting class alliances about the figure of a sexually desiring female as 'other' than the emergent ideal of the 'proper' lady seeking social success. For example, Richardson's *Pamela* addressed middle-class suspicion of the female fortune-hunter in her role as mistress or prostitute.

But whether the fictional raped woman was regarded as a naïve, weak fool

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[107] Haslett, *Pope to Burney*, p 168

[108] Hester Mulso Chapone, 'On the Government of the Temper', *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady,* (1773), Letter 6 II 5 - 6

[109] Haslett, *Pope to Burney*, p 169

who had been enticed by a plausible lover, or as a sexually depraved practitioner of seductive 'arts', the rape narrative tended to see her sexuality as the reason for her prostitution. Discourse on the subject betrayed patriarchal anxiety focused either on prostitution's effects on the economy or, on the debate concerning 'masculinity'. For some, the idea of 'natural' chastity, virtue and genuine feminine modesty was judged to be amusing as well as hypocritical.

Early in the century the satirist Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) asserted that the act of seduction is an art, and a woman's defence of her Chastity is learned, rather than natural. In a recommendation for licensed brothels, his ironic *A Modest Defence of Public Stews* (1724), Mandeville ridicules the very notion of female modesty and respectability, and he describes the experience of consorting with a prostitute in military terms. The fun is derived from the 'battle' as she struggles to justify her art as a 'salvo' to her conscience. He argues that the entire defence of her honour is an 'act', performed before the surrender:

> Young Girls are taught to hate a *Whore,* before they know what the Word means; and when they grow up, they find their worldly Interest entirely depending upon the Reputation of their Chastity. [....] Besides, not to mention the actual Pleasure a Woman receives in Struggling, it is a Justification of her in the Eye of the Man, and a Kind of *Salvo* to her Honour and Conscience, that she never did fully comply, but was in a Manner forc'd into it. This is the plain natural Reason why most Women refuse, to *surrender* upon Treaty, and why they delight so much in being *storm'd.* [...] by far the greater Part of Womenkind hold their Virtue very precariously; and that Female Chastity is, in its own Nature, built upon a very *Ticklish* Foundation.[110]

According to this view rape can be justified since most women are whores who act the part of the modest lady. That is, a man bent on rape may argue that a woman's protest is an 'act' and therefore the rape is also an 'act'.

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[110] *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity,* p 65

Unfortunately, in an important sense Mandeville was right. Due to the absolute necessity of guarding their reputations women *were* taught the art of 'modesty'. Although his argument specifically concerned a man's relationship with a prostitute and the justification for dismissing any evidence of a 'natural' feminine 'modesty', he touched on a problem that had an impact on the fictional representation of sexual relations. If modesty is an 'act' learned from conduct literature, what *is* considered to be natural female behaviour, and how *does* one distinguish between what is an 'act' and what is real?

As late as the 1790s when Hays was producing polemic and novels, Richard Polwhele expressed similar doubts about feminine 'modesty'. He feared that, inspired by a group of 'Amazons' led by Mary Wollstonecraft 'A Female band Despising NATURE'S Law', women would discard the use of 'feminine' artifices in order to opt for passion, energy and powers of mind.[111] He recommended a list of desirable feminine traits and warned that women must conform to them. Yet, the traits he described resemble the kinds of practices that a woman might use to encourage male lust: weakness, blushes, rolling eyes, flutters, coyness and delicacy. It is also the kind of behaviour that Mandeville discussed in terms of the artifices prostitutes use. More importantly, it is exactly the kind of 'sentimental' and 'quivering' artifice that Radical 'Amazons' thought to be dangerous and sexually exploitative of women. As we discussed in Chapter One such behaviours tend to complicate the problem of what *is*, and is *not* rape in fiction.

Mandeville's irony was summoned in defence of a project designed to ensure a plentiful supply of willing sexual partners for men:

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[111] Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females: A Poem*, (1798) in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, pp 186 - 192 Line 2 p 186.

When this Project is first set on Foot, the vast Choice and Variety there is at present of these Women, will give us an Opportunity of making a very beautiful Collection; and will, doubtless, for some Time, occasion a considerable run upon the Publick; so that *Private Whoring*, the only Nursery of our Courtezans, may probably remain too long neglected; For the whole Body of our incontinent Youth, like a standing Army, being employ'd in constant Action, there cannot well be spar'd a sufficient Detachment to raise the necessary Recruits.[112]

Whilst the use of titillating words such as 'standing' and 'raise' in Mandeville's misogynistic libertinism panders to male fantasy it also betrays fear of female sexual desire and agency, in much the same vein as Robert Gould's *Love Given O're*:

> But if the Tyde of Nature bois'rous grow
> And would rebelliously its Banks o'erflow,
> Then chuse a Wench, who (full of lewd desires)
> Can meet your flouds of Love with equal fires;
> And will, when e're you let the Deluge flie,
> Through an extended Sluce strait drain it dry.[113]

Since in Mandeville's and Gould's texts she is one of the 'recruits' enlisted in order to stem 'The Tyde of Nature', the prostitute is celebrated as a necessary functionary in male sexuality. But behind the ironic misogyny there is an expression of a very real contemporary anxiety about female sexuality in general. Not only does female sexual insatiability threaten male superiority in sexual intercourse it also poses a threat to patriarchal dynastic ambitions:

> That Whirl-pool sluce which never knows a Shore,
> Ne're can be fill'd so full as to run ore,
> For still it gapes, and still cries - room for more!
> Such only damn the Soul; but a damn'd Wife,
> Damns that, and with it all the Joys of Life:
> And what vain Blockhead is so dull, but knows,
> That of two Ills the least is to be chose.

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[112] *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, p 68

[113] Robert Gould, 'Love Given O're: or, a Satyr against the Pride, Lust, and Inconstancy, & of Woman' (1682), in *Satires on Women*, Augustan Reprint Society. 180 p 3 Lines 76 - 81

> But now, since Womans boundless Lust I name,
> Womans unbounded Lust I'le first proclaim.[114]

Until Hays wrote *The Victim of Prejudice* rape texts focusing on the necessity for prostitution and narratives focusing on its 'problems' failed to tackle the ways that women were forced into it. One of the problems was that stories designed to encourage young girls to 'mind' their manners and guard their honour were often complicated by accounts in the style of conduct books that were conveyed in terms that only served to arouse the reader's curiosity about sex:

> He, in all the frantic rage of distress, sought the child of his tenderest affection. He found, forgave, and brought her home. But, whether, through an infatuation for her seducer, (which however strange, is found but too often the case), whether through the admonition of her afflicted parents too repeatedly urged, or through restraint, not known before; once more, in an evil hour, she left her father's house, and soon, abandoned by her seducer, plunged into total licentiousness and debauchery.[115]

Although passages such as this sought to deliver 'lessons' by highlighting the father's anguish, they actually tended to fuel an obsession with the seducer.

On the other hand, since mid-century novels of Sensibility began to acknowledge the prostitute's humanity she became a redeemable character. But the temporary shift in attitudes did not address either the cause or the problems of prostitution. For example, in Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) the sensitive hero encounters a prostitute, Emily Atkins and 'restores' her to her father. In typical rape narrative fashion, the episode focuses on patriarchal concerns, which is to say, the father's loss, but fails to consider the seducer's betrayal, or the

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[114] Gould, 'Love Given O're', Lines 82 - 91

[115] 'An authentic Narrative of a Magdalen in An Account of the Rise, Progress and present state Of the Magdalen Hospital, for the reception of penitent prostitutes, Together with Dr. Dodd's Sermons, 1770' reproduced in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. by Vivien Jones, (London: Routledge, 1999) p 90

consequence for the individual woman.

Although Harley has faith in the goodness of human nature (which explains his sympathy for Emily), he is regarded as irredeemably gullible by his friends (which criticises *her*). They suggest that his trust is stupidity, and his generosity towards Emily, naivety. For example, his friend the lawyer remarks:

> Here's a very pretty fellow for you: to have heard him talk some nights ago, as I did, you might have sworn he was a saint; yet now he games with sharpers, and loses his money; and is bubbled by a fine story invented by a whore, and pawns his watch: here are sanctified doings with a witness![116]

Another friend scoffs at Harley's belief that a face is an indication of character:

> Let me advise you to be a little more cautious for the future, and as for faces- you may look into them to know, whether a man's nose be a long or a short one.[117]

When he finds that he cannot pay the waiter because he has given his last penny to Emily, Harley offers to leave his watch in lieu of payment. The waiter's response is to sneer:

> Twirling the watch in his hand, made him a profound bow at the door, and whispered to a girl, who stood in the passage, something, in which the word CULLY was honoured with a particular emphasis.[118]

The hero is 'good' because he is sympathetic to the prostitute figure, but ultimately, his friends' and the waiter's cynicism says more about them (and society in general) than him.

When the 'ideal' Harley restores the 'ruined' woman to patriarchy by pleading

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[116] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2001) p 40

[117] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, p 40

[118] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, p 39 Cully. 1. One who is cheated or imposed upon, e.g. by a sharper, strumpet; a dupe, gull: one easily cheated or taken in; a silly fellow, simpleton. 1751 Smollett *Per. Pic.* 1779 II Ivi. 147 The French syren was baulked in her design upon her English cully. OED 2nd edn. IV (Oxford: Clarendon 1989)

on her behalf, his entreaty ignores her agony in order to identify the suffering that her behaviour causes to her father:

> "Allow me, Sir" said he, "to intreat your pardon for one whose offences have been already so signally punished. [....] did you know by what complicated misfortunes she had fallen to that miserable state in which you now behold her, I should have no need of words to excite your compassion. Think, Sir, of what once she was! Would you abandon her to the insults of an unfeeling world, deny her opportunity of penitence, and cut off the little comfort that still remains for your afflictions and her own!".[119]

Since the appeal for mercy focuses on the father's future 'comfort', Harley's speech is designed to excite compassion on the grounds of her former value to the family. A subliminal message is delivered here. Since Emily has allowed herself to be seduced and duped she only has herself to blame both for her descent and her father's anguish. Furthermore, since the father's forgiveness hinges on the daughter's 'penitence', the seducer's crime is completely ignored. As is usual in the conventional trope, what Mackenzie's narrative fails to address is the part played in the innocent and naïve girl's 'ruin' by her vulnerability to the accomplished rake.

In an effort to present a man of Sensibility, Mackenzie relied on the familiar seduction, rape and ruin theme to produce a figure that transgresses social boundaries. Yet, Emily is not the sexually depraved whore that Harley's friends' reactions suggest. She did not choose the life of a prostitute. She is actually the naïve victim of the stock rake character. Like Mary Raymond's mother in *The Victim of Prejudice,* and Mary Wollstonecraft's Jemima in *The Wrongs of Woman,* starvation and fear of prison force Emily into the streets:

> [....] I was now in a situation which could not make any extraordinary exertions to disengage itself from either; I found myself with child. At last the wretch, who had thus trained me to destruction, hinted the purpose

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[119] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling,* p 51

> or which those means had been used. I discovered her to be an artful procuress for the pleasures of those, who are men of decency to the world in the midst of debauchery. [....] I was conveyed to prison, weak from my condition, weaker from that struggle of grief and misery which for some time I had suffered. A miscarriage was the consequence. Amidst all the horrors of such a state, surrounded with wretches totally callous, lost alike to humanity and to shame, think, Mr Harley, think what I endured: nor wonder that I at last yielded to the solicitations of that miscreant I had seen at her house, and sunk to the prostitution which he tempted. But that was happiness compared to what I have suffered since. He soon abandoned me to the common use of the town, and I was cast among those miserable beings in whose society I have since remained.[120]

Since it fails to condemn the 'men of decency' who are the authors of Emily's ruin and that of those like her, 'wretches [....] lost alike to humanity and to shame', the passage ignores the sexual double standard. What it *does* is to draw attention to the part played in Emily's downfall by a woman, the 'artful procuress'.[121] This is entirely usual in the conventional rape narrative.

In texts such as this, the reader's attention is frequently focused on the consequences to the family of a girl's 'ruin', which it is assumed is achieved through the services of another woman. For example, Defoe's Moll Flanders enters her street-walking career through the 'kindnesses' of a series of 'mother' figures. Mrs Sinclair the brothel keeper is instrumental in Clarissa Harlowe's rape and Mrs Jewkes, in Mr B's attempt on Pamela:

> [....] and you'll hear what a vile unwomanly part that wicked wretch, Mrs Jewkes, acted in it. [....] [122] The pretended Nan ([...] then came into bed, trembling like an aspen-leaf; [....] What words shall I find, [....] to describe the rest, and my confusion, when the guilty wretch took my left arm, and laid it under his neck as the vile procuress held my right; and then he clasped me round the waist![123]

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[120] Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling,* pp 48 - 49
[121] Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling,* p 49
[122] Richardson, *Pamela,* p 237
[123] Richardson, *Pamela,* p 241

Because the middle classes were committed to a programme of sexual regulation that hinged on the integrity of its women, the figure of the procuress or cock-bawd stood as a figure of shame and suspicion. The stress on these women in rape narratives displaces the responsibility for prostitution from men's lust to women's wickedness. Richardson used the symbol to add a pertinent piquancy to the disgrace Clarissa Harlowe suffers when he locates the virtuous heroine's incarceration and rape in the brothel housing her rapist's former mistresses and the female procuress who assists him in the rape.

On the other hand, in 1752 Ludovicus *does* express his concerns about contemporary women who had been abandoned to, as Emily Atkins had put it, 'the common use of the town'. More importantly, he addresses the question of culpability on social grounds:

> As when any one Member of the Natural Body is aggrieved, all the other Members are sympathetically affected therewith; even so in the Political Body, when any Sect or Denomination thereof are mal-treated or persecuted by uncharitable and partial Men, it is a Duty incumbent upon all those who are Friends to Liberty and Property, these great, happy and advantageous Privileges, to rouze themselves up in Defence of those most valuable Jewels, and never give over the generous Undertaking, until they have stifled in the Embrio such unjustifiable Attempts.[124]

The appeal to the reader's sensitivity and understanding and call for generosity towards the victims of 'uncharitable and partial Men' is in complete contrast to the ironic misogyny expressed by Mandeville and the economic pragmatism of Defoe's 1726 pamphlet entitled, *Some Considerations upon Streetwalkers.*[125]

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[124] M. Ludovicus, *A Particular but Melancholy Account of the Great Hardships, Difficulties, and Miseries, that those Unhappy and Much-to-be-Pitied Creatures, The Common Women of the Town, Are plung'd into at this Juncture,* (London, 1752) pp 2 - 11 (3)

[125] Campaigns such as this mobilized funds for Magdalen House for Penitent Prostitutes, established in London in 1758.

Dedicated to lessening the number of prostitutes, Defoe's pamphlet describes such women as beyond redemption. A letter attached to the pamphlet of 1726 tells the story of a girl who following her father's death is raped, reduced to prostitution, imprisoned and executed. The narrative engages the reader's sympathy and suggests that 'suppression' might involve a form of redemptive transformation. It is a private and moral version of Defoe's redirection of sexual resources for the use of the 'public' described elsewhere in the pamphlet.[126]

In the context of a budding capitalism, Defoe's irony seems to suggest a solution to the impact on labour and reproduction caused by the loss of young women to prostitution:

> The great Use of Women in a Community, is to supply it with Members which may be serviceable, and keep up a succession. They are also useful in another Degree, to wit, in the Labour they may take for themselves, or the Assistance which they may afford their Husbands or Parents. It will be readily allowed, that a Street-walking Whore can never answer either of these Ends; Riot and Diseases prevent one, and the Idleness which directs her to this Course of Life incapacitates her for the other.[127]

On the other hand, Defoe is not entirely unsympathetic to prostitutes. For example, the eponymous heroine of *Moll Flanders* (1722) prudently turns her early experiences of sexual abuse to a life of crime and profit, and ends her days with a prosperous and devoted husband. But the practical economics of the proposal set out in Defoe's pamphlet is definitely not, as the sentimental literature of the middle of the eighteenth century will be, concerned with humanitarian issues or the relief of fallen womanhood from either a 'private' or a 'public' point of view.

The distinction between 'public' and 'private' spheres that Jones and Poovey

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[126] Daniel Defoe, *Some Considerations upon Streetwalkers. With a Proposal for lessening the present Number of them. In Two Letters to a Member of Parliament,* (London, 1726) pp 16 - 18

[127] Defoe, *Some Considerations upon Streetwalkers,* p 6

identify becomes relevant in a discussion of *An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs Teresia Constantia Phillips*, published serially, and then in three volumes, between 1748 -1749. Phillips's account of seduction, rape and prostitution, told in letters from the point of view of several 'voices', refuses to adopt the pattern of the conventional seduction narrative by calling for a vindication of the writers' sexual conduct.[128] *The Apology* became one of the scandalous 'memoirs' that produces wrath rather than sympathy and earned its author the reputation for unacceptable femininity. For example, John Duncome's poem *The Feminiad,* which on the whole, praises women writers, condemns Phillips's text as 'the dangerous sallies of a wanton Muse'. Samuel Richardson also dismissed Phillips, Laetitia Pilkington and Frances Anne, Viscountess Vane, as a 'Set of Wretches, wishing to perpetuate their Infamy'.[129]

Phillips was a well known courtesan who, at the age of fifteen, attempted to ward off creditors by marrying a man who specialised in bigamous marriages. Later, she married a Dutch merchant whose family urged him to seek an annulment. She cites a 'Mr Grimes', one of the letter writers, as the author of her misfortunes since he raped her when she was only thirteen.[130]

Escaping from her step-mother and finding herself alone and penniless in London, she falls victim to Mr Grimes who plays on her vulnerability. With the help of a bawd he rapes her in his home during a public function:

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128 Teresia Constantia Phillips, *An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs. Teresia Constantia Phillips More Particularly That part of it which relates to her Marriage with an eminent Dutch Merchant...*, (1748) extracts reprinted in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. by Vivien Jones, (London: Routledge, 1990) pp 160 - 168

129 J Duncombe *The Feminiad A Poem* (1754), Augustan Reprint Society, 297 (1981) 15. See also Janet Todd, *Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction 1660-1800,* (London, 1989) p 13. Samuel Richardson, quoted in Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction,* 1660 - 1800, (London, 1980) p 131

130 'Mr Grimes' is assumed to be Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, whose mother was Elizabeth, the daughter to whom Halifax addressed his *Advice.*

> If any thing can be said to extenuate the Misconduct of a Girl, hurried into the Love of these delusive Pleasures before she had Reason, or Judgement, to distinguish Right from Wrong, I think some Allowance may be made *for her*, whose first setting out in the World portended nothing but inevitable Ruin and Destruction, to the eternal Shame and Infamy of him who brought it upon her.[131]

Phillips does not dwell on the rapes that propel her into her life as a prostitute preferring to use them to explain her profession. However, her account provides useful information about ways in which sexually abused young girls find themselves reduced to prostitution.

The first volume presents Phillips as a condemned streetwalker. In the second, she explains herself to an anonymous defender of the Earl who denies his crime. His response is that, all 'the Follies and Enormities that you have been guilty of since that Time, are chargeable to his Account, as the first Betrayer of your Innocence'.[132] Making a political point, Phillips draws attention to the difference between wealth, influence and integrity by characterising her husband as a merchant who 'may find that other Qualities besides Wealth, are necessary to constitute him (in the Trading Phrase) a *good Man'*. [....] being hereafter mistaken for a *Man of Honour'*.[133] Since the narrative maintains its accusatory stance throughout Phillips manages to disengage herself from the role of victim. For our purposes, Phillips's successful disengagement actually engages the reader in questions about the responsibility for the plight of raped young women.

To put Phillips's *Apology* (1748-49) and Ludovicus's pamphlet (1752) in a political context it is important to consider the developing debate about the

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131 Teresia Constantia Phillips, *An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs Teresia Constantia Phillips* (1748), vol. 1 p 270

132 *A Defence of the character of a Noble Lord, from the Scandalous Aspersions Contained in a Malicious Apology. In a Letter to the supposed Authoress,* (London, 1748) pp 23 - 24

133 Teresia Constantia Phillips, *An Apology,* vol. III pp 314 - 315

suppression of prostitution and its policing in London. Vivien Jones has argued that in 1749 the 'Penlez Riots' (after Bosavern Penlez) focused attention on London brothels and the way prostitution was policed. Penlez was subsequently hanged for his part in the disruption of public order.[134] John Cleland wrote a pamphlet in which he condemned the execution and praised the riot as an example of good sense.[135] In his view, the prostitute is to be considered an innocent victim deprived of property rights. Yet, women do not escape entirely since yet again the 'Cock-Bawd' is regarded as responsible for exposing the victims, the innocent 'fallen Angels', to 'the Seduction of Men superior to them at least in Experience'.[136] Both Ludovicus and Cleland attack the bawd who is seen as a monstrous figure who forces prostitutes 'to hang and drown themselves, to be free of their Persecutor [.....] a most cruel and intolerable Imposition in a Land that bears the Name of Freedom'.[137]

From a reformist middle-class perspective Phillips represented aristocratic licence in her role as 'private' whore, in spite of her literary efforts to establish a reputation within the respectable institutions of law and marriage. She was not unique. Women writers routinely attempted to raise the issue of sexual exploitation across social boundaries, both within and outside marriage. For example, Wollstonecraft's prostitute Jemima in *Wrongs of Woman* (1798) speaks from a long tradition of rape narratives. But by telling her story to Maria, the middle-class heroine who has herself been sexually abused by her own husband, the writer highlights the similarities between speaker and listener. As Vivian Jones has argued, this technique

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134 Vivien Jones, 'Scandalous Femininity', p 63
135 John Cleland, *The Case of the Unfortunate Bosavern Penlez* ,(London, 1749) p 19
136 Cleland, *The Case of the Unfortunate Bosavern Penlez,* pp 9 - 13
137 Ludovicus, *A Particular but Melancholy Account*, p 26

tends to disrupt the instrumental power of the 'classic humanitarian audience'.[138]

As we have seen, as early as 1676 Aphra Behn's *The Rover* made connections between rape, marriage and prostitution, and used the themes to engage playgoers in wider issues. When the play's aristocratic virgin sisters, Hellena and Florinda wear ordinary women's clothes in a bid to taste the freedom of the carnival, audiences understand their enthusiasm for an opportunity to experience sexual adventure. Yet, what do we make of the girl's 'freedom' when almost every male character in the play, including their brother, attempts to rape them? Is this merely a comment on male lust or something else?

The focus of the play is directed on the all-important marriage negotiations. Yet, the multiple rape attempts appear to highlight the permanent existence of, and female vulnerability to, sexual exploitation of various kinds, since virgins and prostitutes alike are fair game on the streets. Audiences are also aware that because of the link between the transfer of property and family aggrandisement, the rich women's reputations are crucial. In spite of this the virgins do not discuss the attempts on their bodies. What concerns them is the problem of marriage to men they do not love:

> Hellena: Why do you blush again?
>
> Florinda: With indignation; and how near soever my father thinks I am to marrying that hated object, I shall let him see I understand better what's due to my beauty, birth and fortune, and more to my soul, than to obey those unjust commands.[139]

The sisters discuss the parallel between marriage to unwanted partners and sexual

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[138] Vivien Jones, 'Scandalous Femininity', p 56

[139] Aphra Behn, *The Rover,* in *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon,* ed by W. R. Owens and Lizbeth Goodman, (London: The Open University, 2002) 1.1: Lines 16 - 20 p 295

violation. In this way the play examines the similarity between marriage negotiation and prostitution. What playgoers ponder is why it is that the prostitute and not her client who generates so much disgust.

Behn's play focuses on patriarchal sexual stereotypes and contradictions, including the defence of the sexual double standard explored in the rake Willmore's attempt to humiliate the prostitute. Behn suggests that marriage negotiation and prostitution are commercial processes and that rape in the streets is no different from sex within a marriage forced on the virgin bride. Because Behn takes these issues seriously she places virgins and prostitutes in the same marketplace to suggest that marriage negotiation, and rape in marriage, are no less a problem than the prostitute's trade. In one sense, both Behn's play and Phillips's 'confessions' expose the problem of female vulnerability to a sexual double standard that judges the prostitute and the raped woman and holds them responsible for male lust. In one way or another the conventional rape narrative demonstrates that women like Mackenzie's Emily Atkins, the seduced heroines of *The British Recluse,* and Manley's Charlot, take the consequences and bear the responsibility for sexual violence perpetrated on them.

On the other hand, Hays's narratives expose the unfair treatment meted out to violated women. *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* attempts to highlight the distinction between female sexual agency and sexual exploitation. The second novel demonstrates that injustices are due to inconsistencies in the law and the prejudices that support them. *The Victim of Prejudice* also traces the mental and physical effects of rape on the woman concerned. Importantly, both novels suggest that prejudice is generated by a view of women that emphasises patriarchal priorities rather than women's rights.

The link between Rape, Prostitution and lack of Employment,

The portrayal of her heroine's struggle to find work not only examines the link between rape and prostitution but also the lack of opportunities for education and employment. In their polemic and fiction both Hays and Wollstonecraft argued that without financial independence and the opportunity to use their intellectual capabilities daughters, sisters and wives are reduced to a reliance on the sensual and instinctive qualities that Radical women writers deplored. For example, in a letter to a friend, Hays complains:

> Young women without fortunes, if they do not chance to marry (and this is not a marrying age) have scarce any other resources than servitude, or prostitution. I never see, without indignation, those trades, which ought to be appropriated only to women, almost entirely engrossed by men, haberdashery, millinery, etc. even mantua-making. - Fine citizens and soldiers this race of delicate, contemptible beings would make, if called out for the defence of their country![140]

Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* urged women to pursue education and some kind of occupation to prevent them from 'common and legal' prostitution:

> Business of various kinds, they might likewise pursue, if they were educated in a more orderly manner, which might save many from common and legal prostitution. Women would not then marry for a support, as men accept of places under Government, and neglect the implied duties; nor would an attempt to earn their own subsistence, a most laudable one! Sink them almost to the level of those poor abandoned creatures who live by prostitution. [141]

She believed that earning her own living was the most respectable occupation for a woman:

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[140] Hays, *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous,* (published 1793) ed. by Gina Luria (New York and London: Garland, 1974) Letter No V1 To Miss - pp 67 - 86 (84 - 85) The collection includes Hays's views on various feminist, Unitarian, political and philosophical Subjects.

[141] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, pp 266 - 267

> But what have women to do in society? I may be asked, but to loiter with easy grace; surely you would not condemn them all to suckle fools and chronicle small beer! Women might certainly study the art of healing and be physicians as well as nurses [....] They might also study politics, and settle their benevolence on the broadest basis; for the reading of history will scarcely be more useful than the perusal of romances, if read as mere biography [.....] How much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread by fulfilling any duty, than the most accomplished beauty! - beauty did I say! - so sensible am I of the beauty of moral loveliness, or the harmonious propriety that attunes the passions of a well-regulated mind, that I blush at making the comparison.[142]

Wollstonecraft's polemic drew attention to the paradox that Thomas Paine had identified twenty years earlier in his 'An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex' (1775). Written during his stay in Pennsylvania, Paine's letter begins with:

> If we take a survey of ages and countries, we shall find the women, almost - without exception - at all times and in all places, adored and oppressed. Man, who has never neglected an opportunity of exerting his power, in paying homage to her beauty, has always availed himself of their weakness. He has been at once their tyrant and their slave.[143]

Unfortunately, Paine's interest in gender issues appear to have faded over time. His 'Reflections on Unhappy Marriages' (1776) identified three different kinds of marriages: those made in haste and repented, marriages made for money which he compared with prostitution (a point argued by Wollstoncraft in *Wrongs of Woman*) and mutually agreed unions which disintegrated over time. In his *Common Sense* of the same year, he acknowledges the existence of a natural sexual hierarchy, Mankind, 'being originally equals in the order of creation [....] equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance'. Yet when he theorised on the origins of society he wrote in terms of a male-only community brought together by the need to co-operate

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[142] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 266

[143] Thomas Paine, 'An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex', in *The Pennsylvania Magazine* (August, 1775) reproduced in *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. by Eric Foner (New York: The Citadel Press, 1945) 1 pp 34 - 8 (34)

in labour.[144] The high point of Paine's Radical career, *The Rights of Man* (1791-1792) tackled issues of illegitimate authority, prejudice, and enforced ignorance, but interestingly made little mention of women. On the other hand, like Wollstonecraft, Hays insists that women's education artificially forced them into roles that are alien to natural femininity and that since education is a matter of gender, it is therefore a matter of chance.

In *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, Hays's exploration of her heroine's 'sexual character' identified the consequences of denying educational and occupational opportunities to women based on eighteenth-century attitudes to the female's capacity to reason. In 1798, Hays's *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women*, complains that many 'arts' have been employed to keep women, 'in a state of PERPETUAL BABYISM', and argues that women's education is the wrong kind of education:

> Many a good head is stuffed with ribbons, gauze, fringes, flounces, and furbelows that might have received and communicated far other and more noble impressions. And many a fine imagination has been exhausted upon these, which had they been turned to the study of nature, or initiated into the dignified embellishments of the fine arts, might have adorned, delighted, and improved society.[145]

When Hays wrote *The Victim of Prejudice* single women with no financial means were viewed as social exiles. The struggle without success of the raped Mary Raymond to find work in the male trades of printing and engraving illustrates that women of the 1790s were still marginalised by the fixed ideas of female sensibility. Although a woman's place was still more or less in the private sphere, female

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[144] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), (London: Penguin Classics, 1986) pp 71 - 2

[145] Mary Hays, *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women,* (1798) published anonymously by Joseph Johnson p 97

behaviour was subject to public scrutiny.

In her bid for self sufficiency Mary Raymond applies to be a companion, to teach drawing, to learn engraving, to embroider and copy. Each application is ruined by the rumours of the rape. Prospective employers trivialise her attempts to find work, and men regard her as a sexual object. For example, the master of a print-shop employs her, and immediately attempts to seduce her:

> "My dear little angel" said the insulting wretch, "why this distress? Why these pretty romantic airs? Sir Peter Osborne and Mr Pelham found less difficulty, I have a notion, with my charmer. It is time you abated a little of this theatrical coyness".[146]

Humiliated and degraded by his suggestions Mary rejects the advances. She temporarily considers a change of name but realises that it would suggest guilt, 'I am guiltless, [....] why should I then affect disguise, or have recourse to falsehood?'.[147] Once again, she struggles to understand why society regards the rape as her 'crime', and why she is denied what she sees as a basic right:

> I sought only the base means of subsistence: amidst the luxuriant and the opulent...I put in no claims either for happiness, for gratification...yet, surely, I had a right to exist! – For what crime was I driven from society?.[148]

The portrayal of Mary's struggle to survive not only examines the link between the policing of women's sexuality through a resistance to women's appearance in the workplace, but also society's prejudice towards raped and prostituted women. In the same way, Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman* examines the circle of circumstance that plagues raped and abandoned women.

Jemima is the illegitimate daughter of a servant and, like Mary Raymond's

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[146] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 140
[147] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 140
[148] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 141

mother, Mackenzie's Emily Atkins and Inchbald's Hannah, she is ruined when her lover seduces and then abandons her. Poverty and persecution through the Poor Laws lead her to scrape a living through theft, begging and prostitution. Jemima's refined and influential libertine is admired by progressive, literary, educated friends. But her lover's death in Hampstead leaves Jemima destitute. She writes for advice to one of the luminaries, "an advocate for unequivocal sincerity [....] (who) often, in my presence, descanted on the evils which arise in society from the despotism of rank and riches", but his response that she "look into herself, and exert her powers" suggests that he expects her to return to prostitution to support herself.[149] His cynical and unhelpful advice ends with the opinion that someone of her energy "could never be in want of resources". In other words, he adopts a stance typical within the rape narrative that because she had foolishly allowed herself to 'fall', she had no option but prostitution.[150] Jemima's ironic response is that the opportunity to pursue legitimate work may be true for men "but, in respect to women, I am sure of its fallacy".[151] Since Jemima takes the view seriously, her creator obviously wants to make the point. Jemima knows, and Mary Raymond discovers, that after rape prejudice prevents a woman from supporting herself through any of the usual female occupations. Although there is a lack of employment opportunities for women in general, raped women like Mary Raymond and Jemima find that there is even less choice for them.

Eventually, starvation forces Jemima to work for the prison system, as Maria's supervisor. The language she uses to describe the sense of shame and debasement felt by an abandoned and prostituted woman is stereotypical "Fate dragged me through

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149 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria, or, The Wrongs of Woman,* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975) pp 113 - 114

150 Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p 114

151 Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p 114

the very kennels of society; I was still a slave, a bastard, a common property".[152] Like Mary Raymond's mother, Jemima assumes a sense of guilt and shame when she is driven out of her lover's house:

> Man, however vicious, however cruel, reaches not the depravity of a shameless woman. Despair shuts not against him every avenue to repentance; despair drives him not from human sympathies; despair hurls him not from hope, from pity, from life's common charities, to plunge him into desperate, damned, guilt.[153]

Jemima feels herself to be a social outcast whose presence in society functions as a mark on the features of the 'respectable' norm. Her problems are in the words of Barbara Taylor, the wrongs of woman 'writ large'.[154]

The Victim of Prejudice demonstrates the speed at which a seduced woman is defeated by a combination of society's unforgiving attitudes, starvation and a legal system that supports the rapist. She attracts no sympathy from a public that fears the sexually active female's influence in 'polite' society. Like Jemima, Mary's mother is hounded by a society that offers no options and a legal system that only provides 'fallen' women full legal subjectivity for just as long as it takes to imprison or hang them. The law treats these women as autonomous subjects who must face the consequences of their actions. In an eighteenth-century reader's experience, the legal system reserves very special treatment for women susceptible to desire and romance

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[152] Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p 109

[153] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 67

[154] Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) Ch 9 pp 241 - 242. See also Barbara Taylor, 'The Religious Foundations of Wollstonecraft's Feminism', in *Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed by Claudia Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp 99-118.Vivien Jones 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) 108 - 132; Joan B Landes , Mary Does, Alice Doesn't: the Paradox of Female Reason in and for Feminist Theory', in *Mary Wollstonecraft and 200 years of Feminism*, ed by Eileen James Yeo, (New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1997) pp 50-60; Orrin Wang 'The Other Reasons: Female Alterity and Enlightenment Discourse, in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*'. *Yale Journal of Criticism* 5:1 (1991) 129 - 149

or who offended the sexual status quo such as the prostitute and the cock-bawd.

Although Hays's educated, 'virtuous' heroine avoids a 'fall' (something which suggests the possibility of an alternative), it is prejudice, and the failure to find work in 'respectable' occupations, that thwart her ambitions to overcome her predicament. But her difficulties highlight the problems for less well educated women like Wollstonecraft's Jemima.

In spite of the Sentimental novel's tendency to see fallen women as redeemable, increased anxiety prompted by political uncertainty in the 1790s re-kindled the fear of the female sexual transgressor. Gary Kelly has argued that a combination of crop failure, wartime economics and unemployment drove men and women into the towns, one of the results of which was increasing concern about the growth of prostitution.[155] Whilst it was generally believed to be the product of a decline in moral and social stability, Radical women argued that it was the product of male selfishness.[156] They understood that 'respectable' and 'decent' citizens, and the law itself would prefer to ignore women like Mary Raymond's mother and Jemima, and to overlook the part played by male seducers in a raped woman's decline in the world.

The problematic relationship between women, rights and economic agency is a problem centring on the perception of women as 'subjects', or autonomous agents, which in turn underlines the close relationship between women's legal status and their status as citizens. As Clare Brant has pointed out, it is the importance of chastity and

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155 Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p 117

156 For example, Hays, *Appeal,* 116; 145.

reputation that 'helped restrict economic options for non-working class women'.[157]

In their study, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall also refer to the growing conflict between on the one hand the desirability for middle-class women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to contribute labour to family enterprises, and on the other the importance of conforming to a definition of femininity 'which ran directly counter to acting as a visibly independent economic agent'.[158] The consequence was an expectation that within an enterprise, women could 'do preparation of products and services or finance as long as these activities were kept out of sight'.[159] In the 1790s, keeping 'out of sight' was still a matter of 'reputation' for women and the maintenance of 'reputation' was a matter of protecting her chastity, the quality so crucial to the *feme sole*.

By the end of the eighteenth century female protest had become a prominent part of the political discourse. An attack on the sexual mores of a society that overlooked promiscuity in men, but punished women severely for any breach of chastity was amongst the feminist issues taken seriously by Radical novelists. In Hays's 1790s, influential rapists were as likely to go unpunished as they were in Behn's 1670s. In spite of Radical novelists' hopes that revolution in France would reform society, their novels demonstrate that in England aristocratic landowners like Osborne, Tyrrel, and Falkland could use their influence to silence those who opposed them.

The maintenance of virtue and chastity before marriage is obviously a class

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157 Clare Brant, 'Speaking of Women: Scandal and the Law in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', in *Women, Texts and Histories 1575-1760,* ed. by Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) pp 258 - 259

158 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780 - 1850,* (London: Routledge, 1994) p 315

159 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* p 275

issue since it is principally related to the transmission of property in marriage. Yet Hays described a raped heroine who had no family or property. She preferred to concentrate on the effects of violation to an individual woman rather than the consequences to her family. Because the heroine is raped by an influential man, her problem is seen to be the impossibility of obtaining justice until such time that her society is enlightened and the law changes. Furthermore, she illustrates that as things are as they are, even a 'respectable' marriage to Osborne would actually mean loss of identity as well as the loss of the opportunity to accuse her rapist.

When she refuses to marry her rapist Hays's fiercely independent heroine refuses to consent to a situation in which she and her rapist are 'one person in law'. This is because under its restrictions, the law affords the bride sufficient subjectivity to enable her to alienate her legal 'person', and to participate in the suspension of an already precarious (in legal and social terms) self.[160] As we have seen, after 1753 a woman was required to fulfil conditions designed to establish that she obeys her spouse and describes her as 'other'. Mary's decision not to marry her rapist represents an attempt to be counted as a subject, that is, a person with at least the minimum of identity.

Yet there is a note of optimism at the close of the novel when the heroine suggests the possibility that her story would inspire men to re-consider women's rights:

> I have lived in vain! Unless the story of my sorrows should kindle in the heart of man, in behalf of my oppressed sex, the sacred claims of humanity and justice.[161]

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160 Blackstone, *Commentaries*, p 97

161 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 174

Hays's choice of the word *'Appeal'* (to the Men of Great Britain), rather than for example, Wollstonecraft's choice of a *'Vindication'* (of woman's rights) suggests that she believed that if men understood the inconsistencies of their views on women and the laws that affect them, there would be more justice. She argued that the practice of educating women to a 'sexual character' deluded men into thinking that women have 'no need of law or right on their side, and have only to be seen to be obeyed'.[162] She asserts that 'with respect to each other [men] enforce justice, because they have power so to do; - where the weaker sex is concerned [...] what cannot be *enforced*, remains *undone*'.[163] Whilst Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman* depicted the kind of justice meted out to married women by legislation because men had the 'power so to do', the rape theme in Hays's second novel described a system of prejudice and 'justice' that for women like Wollstonecraft's Jemima and Hays's Mary Raymond and her mother remained 'undone'.

In spite of the air of optimism in Hays's *Appeal,* things stayed as they were for a further one hundred years. The Married Women's Property Act was not passed until 1882, and a woman's right to refuse conjugal relations with her husband, even if they were estranged, was not legally guaranteed until 1891.

In Chapter Three, I explore the debate surrounding aristocracy and patriarchy triggered by political upheaval in England at the end of the eighteenth century. As they did in the uncertain political climate at the end of the seventeenth century, fictional and dramatic rape episodes focused on 'aristocracy' and 'masculinity' as well as 'femininity, but most importantly, the gentry's fitness to rule. Patriarchal

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162 Hays, *Appeal*, p 118
163 Hays, *Appeal*, p 288

anxiety also betrayed fears about women's role in the 'new' society. Inevitably, such fears imposed even greater scrutiny of, and restrictions on, women's sexual behaviour.

I continue to interpret Hays's novels, but this time to argue that since it was written in the wake of the French Revolution *The Victim of Prejudice* demonstrates ways in which fathers and husbands could become despots unfit to rule their families. The exploration raises an unexpected question. Why was Hays's wealthy, influential and despotic baronet so obsessed with his rape victim?

Chapter Three

Anatomy of a Rape

Perpetrators: The Myth of the Benevolent Patriarch

'[....] all monarchical and aristocratic governments
carry within themselves the seeds of dissolution'.[1]

In the Introduction I suggested that the rape narrative familiar to Hays's readers exploited the image of a raped woman's body to focus on and symbolise various topical patriarchal priorities and anxieties. As such, rape in late seventeenth and eighteenth-century literature and drama can be read as the expression of political propaganda or protest rather than as the scrutiny of the event itself.

In the first and second chapters I discussed ways in which Hays revised the shape and focus of the trope in order to pin-point the impact of socially acquired and reinforced prejudices on the individual raped female. I argued that her novels not only focused on the responsibility for the rape and its consequences to women, they also exposed the conventional rape narrative's part in perpetuating the sexual double standard that allowed perpetrators to escape justice.

In this chapter I argue that one of the ways that Hays's novels expose the gravity of the rape event is by drawing attention to the link between the sexual exploitation of women and the role of men in the domestic and public spheres. We

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[1] Hays, Letter No II, 'Thoughts on Civil Liberty', *Letters and Essays*, p 17

find that examples of (not too heavily veiled) criticism of patriarchy in eighteenth-century women's texts not only question men's role as rulers in the home, but also as rulers in country estates. However, Radicals, including Hays and Wollstonecraft, were particularly opposed to definitions of women grounded in the preservation of the notion of women's 'natural' weakness in support of a 'natural' ordering of the sexes.

Yet, an examination of on-going debates concerning 'aristocracy', 'masculinity' and 'patriarchy' reveals that men, as well as women, are the victims of society's obsession with 'manners'. For example, according to some writers and thinkers the notion of what it was to be a 'proper man' turned on the meaning of 'benevolence'. In this chapter I argue that since there was a link between the way men related to women in the eighteenth century and the debate on 'masculinity', an examination of the revision of the male player in Hays's rape story is as important as an examination of her unusual heroine. I claim that *The Victim of Prejudice* not only focuses on the rape victim, but also on the prevailing obsession with the sexual behaviour of the aristocracy and gentry.

Overall, this chapter examines the impact of Hays's portrayal of an unconventional raped heroine on the representation of her 'Gentleman' rake-hero. It also explores the notion that unless there are changes in patriarchal privilege marriages based on companionship are unlikely to succeed.[2]

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[2] On the rise of the companionate marriage see, Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England,* (New York: Academic Press, 1978) Ch 2 and 3; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 - 1899,* (London: Penguin Books, 1990) p 422

'Benevolent' patriarchy and the Companionate Marriage

Edmund Burke's *Reflections* (1794) defended the father's and husband's property in England by exploiting the image of the revolutionary mob in late eighteenth-century France. As early as 1777 Burke argued that men raised in possession of hereditary wealth were taught probity and decency, the temperate, permanent virtues that made them an example.[3] Furthermore, property tended to political virtue more directly when held in land since it was an irremovable part of the community, and a stake in the country.[4] What is important to this thesis is that Burke insisted that the man of established property is best fitted to govern because his wealth frees him of any interest in keeping office, and the temptation to subordinate private to public benefit.[5]

Furthermore, Burke suggested that tradition ensured that an hierarchical order maintained by power and privilege was passed on to generations of Englishmen as their birthright. In exchange for special privileges the nobility protected the Crown and the people:

> It has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers and to be transmitted to our posterity...the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission.[6]

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[3] The notion of 'benevolent' patriarchy can be traced back to Aristotle. See J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (Oxford, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[4] *Edmund Burke* 'A Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol' 1777, in *Pre-Revolutionary Writings,* II ed. by Ian Harris, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp 282; 134

[5] *Edmund Burke* 'A Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol', II p. 282

[6] *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1794], ed. by Conor Cruise O'Brien, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982) pp 119 - 120. See also, *The French Revolution , and British Culture,* ed. by C. Crossley and I. Small (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Steven Blakemore, *Edmund Burke and the French Revolution in the Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine and James Mackintosh*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1997)

At the same time, Burke appeared to have little trust in the monarchy or faith in the people's innate rationality. He also argued that the sanctity of the domestic family would preserve England from the forces of anarchy, the destruction of society, and the loss of national heritage. This view had certain similarities with Locke's *Second Treatise* (1689), and the more recent *Social Contract* (1762) in which Jean Jacques Rousseau promoted the idea that sovereign power did not reside in the monarchy or in the aristocracy. But unlike Burke, Rousseau argued that a community could only derive its legal authority from the consent of every individual governed by it because consent could as easily be withdrawn by the individual as it had been given.[7] Readers of Locke and Rousseau could argue that if they abused the power invested in them by the people, institutions that derived their authority from the Constitution should be changed by individuals using the capacity to reason intelligently.

The Memoirs of Emma Courtney and *The Victim of Prejudice* show no sign that Hays believed that the sanctity of the domestic family would preserve England from the forces of anarchy, the destruction of society and the loss of national heritage. Although they do not exactly criticise companionate marriage per se, the novels define the difference between marriages based on love and those grounded in patriarchal convenience, economic gain and the preservation of landed families. Hays's first novel suggests that the heroine's parents who marry for material gain experience an unhappy and short-lived marriage. Furthermore, after his wife's death the Rational Mr Courtney, a man 'little moved by [....] domestic distresses', proves incapable of

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[7] *Jean Jacques Rousseau: The Basic Political Writings*, trans. and ed. by Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987) Book 2, Chapter 3

parenting his daughter.[8] In contrast, Mr Melmoth has an 'affectionate heart' and views his marriage and family as a 'source of joy'.[9] Urged by 'nature, reason, and virtue' Emma is depicted as seeking to imitate the domestic harmony of the Melmoths rather than replicate the experiences of her own parents. However, since the cerebral Harley is unable to respond to the passionate Emma, the companionate 'ideal' ending is impossible.

On the other hand, *The Victim of Prejudice* pits the image of the ideal companionate family against the image of a despotic landowner. From the beginning of the novel Mary Raymond sees her landlord Sir Peter Osborne as the embodiment of a patriarch who abuses his privileges, and indulges his lascivious needs. Mary sees Osborne as a man who prefers to 'sport' rather than tend to the well-being of his tenants.

When the Nevilles support Mary after the rape they risk retribution from their despotic landlord. True to form, when he discovers their 'indiscretion' Osborne uses his power to punish the family by evicting them. The distraught Mr Neville reports:

> "I must resign my curacy, our cottage, and little farm. A week only is allowed for our removal, and God knows what is to become of us afterwards!".[10]

Because she sacrifices the little money she possesses to finance her friends' escape to the Continent, the raped heroine is left unable to support herself.

After years of struggle Mary is rescued from debtors' prison and cared for by James, her Guardian's faithful old servant, and the Nevilles, who have returned to England. When Mary recovers, she and James go back to her little farm where she is

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[8] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 10
[9] Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp 11 - 13
[10] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 88

warmly welcomed by her neighbours:

> Beloved and respected by our neighbours, my heart once more expanded itself to sympathy, my cheeks recovered their bloom, my eyes their spirit and lustre. I began to persuade myself that the malice of my fortune was exhausted; that I should, at length, reap the harvest of my activity and perseverance.[11]

In order to contrast the welcome Mary receives with the typical rape narrative scenario, Hays returns to Moore's fable. The passage describes the raped maiden's return to the 'land of virtue', where she meets nothing but hostility from her friends:

> Amaz'd, with headlong speed she tends,
> Where late she left a host of friends;
> Alas! Those shrinking friends decline,
> Nor longer own that form divine;
> With fear they mark the following cry,
> And from the lonely Trembler fly,
> Or backward drive her on the coast
> Where peace was wreck'd, and honour lost.
> From earth thus hoping aid in vain,
> To heav'n not daring to complain,
> No truce by hostile clamour giv'n
> And from the face of friendship driv'n.[12]

When she juxtaposes the hostility the maiden experiences with the generosity shown to Mary, Hays suggests that her heroine has nothing to fear from her friends. At the root of her problem is the despotic landlord. The peace and tranquillity Mary enjoys in the community is short-lived because the Squire renews his efforts to find her. Making a final effort to disappear, she leaves her home, 'intent only on escaping the cry of infamy' that 'Gathering in the wind/ Still shew'd my instant foes behind'.[13]

Osborne's callous cruelty to the Nevilles, and his brutality to the heroine

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[11] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 159

[12] Edward Moore, 'The Female Seducers' , in *Fables for the Female Sex*, Third edn. (London: T Davies and J Dodsley, 1766) Lines 401 - 412 p 146

[13] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 167. Hays misquotes 'But echo gathers in the wind/And shows her instant foes behind'. Moore, 'The Female Seducers'. Lines 399 - 400 p 140

directly contradict Burke's image of the kindly patriarch at the head of his family and the ruler of a country estate. The depiction also suggests that for an ordinary family in the 1790s the companionate 'ideal' has little chance of succeeding without the support and co-operation of the landowning gentry.

Fears generated by the revolution in France re-ignited anxieties about the sexual behaviour of the aristocracy, and mirrored those felt at a time of political crises, a century earlier. The late seventeenth century was an aristocratic era in which land and power was held in the hands of an elite few. As Jessica Munns has argued, anxiety was generated by the view that birth and worth had been surgically sundered and that social categories 'were becoming unfixed'.[14] Since I have suggested that the raped body of a woman traditionally symbolised patriarchal anxieties at times of political unrest, I want to look at some of the rape texts produced in the late 1600s in order to illuminate those produced in the 1790s.

Birth and Worth: Patriarchs and Libertines

In Chapter Two we noted that the popular perception that a raped woman was so defiled that she had to die had its roots in Restoration Theatre.[15] Seventeenth-century drama sought to visualise, encapsulate and analyse changes in the concepts of masculinity and morality, and to portray the consequences of aristocracy's sexual behaviour. Munns has argued that in comedy, although the rake-hero and the hero of

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[14] Jessica Munns, 'Change, Skepticism, and Uncertainty', in *The Cambridge Companion to Restoration Theatre*, ed by Deborah Payne Fisk, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p 146

[15] See the discussion of Sedley's *Bellamira* (1687) and Brady's *The Rape*, (1692) in Chapter Two pp 144-5.

serious drama have been seen as diametrically opposed figures, they are better understood as:

> differently nuanced versions of figures who pit their drives - for sex, for glory - against civil or religious authority. However, while libertine skepticism with regard to the binding power of oaths, the sanctity of marriage, or the personal relevance of morality or social control, may, as in Shadwell's *The Libertine*, be allowed full expression, it is not endorsed.[16]

The finale usually sees the rake character reformed and engaged to the virtuous heroine, or, if unrepentant, discomforted and ridiculed.

Since Restoration dramas were attached by law and patronage to the policies (and indeed to the fortunes) of the court elite they stood as metaphors for either a fear of, or support for, political change. Munns suggests that 'Long-established habits of analogical thought had formed an integral part of the seventeenth-century discourse of man, state, and religion, inscribing a signifying chain of correspondences between the natural world and the social and political world'.[17] However, analogical thought had broken down, partly due to the self-evident failure of traditional government and partly to a new confidence in scientific explanations of the world. The image of a raped female body was associated with patriarchal failure because it was connected with loss of property and authority.

Felicity A. Nussbaum suggests that one of the effects of the political uncertainty in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was that satire designed to denigrate women was in fact directed at the failings of mankind. In satire, women embodied the situation men most feared, the absence of patriarchal order. The diversity of representations of women defined them as being either

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[16] Munns, 'Change, Skepticism, and Uncertainty', p 150
[17] Munns, 'Change, Skepticism, and Uncertainty', pp 142 - 3

inherently unstable, or the creators of order in the domestic sphere.[18] In uncertain times, the myth of the whore justifies Puritan attitudes to women because it entitles them to generalise that if women personify lust, they can be accused of uncontrollable passion. This means that they can be held responsible for carnal sins, which in turn allows men to ignore individual women's feelings. It also provides a way of dealing with wider social anxieties about capitalism, individualism, dynasticism and the role of kings. When anxiety is symbolised in the image of the body of a raped woman, late seventeenth-century society increasingly focused on the necessity of preserving female chastity.

High drama after the 1660s also problematises the political aspect of the family as a microcosm or 'sign' of the state, and the state as an emblem of the family. After the 1670s royal families are often depicted as dysfunctional. Kings and queens are adulterous, incestuous and murderous, and sons rebellious. Furthermore, political and social forces working against the unquestioning acceptance of authority are demonstrated in plays that portray rulers as weak, tyrannical, lustful and sometimes obviously insane: for example, Emperor Maximin in Dryden's *Tyrannick Love* (1669) and Nero in Nathaniel Lee's play of the same name (1676).

Comedies of manners such as Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) and Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695) defend the ideal of aristocratic, English masculinity. The menaces to this standard include, as Pat Gill puts it, 'conniving, competent women, but also Frenchified fops, rich, libidinous old men, and aspiring businessmen'.[19] These comedies also work to feminise the socially-ominous triad of

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[18] Felicity A Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660 - 1750* . (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984) p 15

[19] Pat Gill, 'Gender, sexuality, and marriage' in *Cambridge Companion to English Restoration*

young fops, old lechers, and greedy businessmen. However, rake-heroes attempt to distinguish themselves from all three. The appropriate composite of aristocratic composure and virility, the hero, pits his identity against fatuous contenders, and attaches it securely to the admiration of the worthy heroine. It is the woman who authenticates the hero, and her attraction to him expresses his pre-eminence over fops and lechers who try to mimic him, and the businessmen who put money before love.

Comedies also registered a weakening of patriarchal power. There had been a long tradition of strict fathers functioning as blocking devices to prevent children from marrying the partner of their choice. Fathers and elders appeared as incompetent, sometimes perverse, and often men whose authority needed correction. For example, the virtuous Benzayda in Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1670) argues that 'When parents their commands unjustly lay,/Children are privileged to disobey'.[20]

Giles Slade has suggested that 'the centrality of impotence to Restoration discourse of all types, derives [....] from the upheavals following the Civil War which challenged cavalier gender ideology and led to a pervasive insecurity about what masculinity was'.[21] Masculine supremacy is no longer axiomatic since anxiety is articulated in male impotence. The consequence is the appearance of the nightmare figure of the eunuch, as well as the compensatory figure of the rake. On the other hand, the figure of a monarch famed for his many mistresses associates sexual potency with political power. Authority is restored in the form of sexual acts, (rapes in tragedies and seduction in comedies) that equate the female body with territory

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Theatre, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p 202

[20] *The Plays of William Wycherley,* ed. by Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) (4.2. 289 - 290).

[21] Giles Slade, ''The Two Backed Beast': Eunuchs and Priapus in *The Country Wife'* in *RECTR*, Second series, 7.1 (1992). 23.

(implicitly England) to be possessed and controlled.

Between 1662 and 1700 a cluster of dramatic comedies featured attempted rapes: Dryden's *The Assignation* (1662) Etherege's *Man of Mode* (1676), Behn's *The Rover* (1677), Durfey's *Squire Oldsapp* and *Trick for Trick* (1678), Behn's *The Young King* (1679) and Crowne's *The English Friar* (1690). Tragedies featuring attempted and accomplished rapes include: Dryden's *Amboyna* and Payne's *The Fatal Jealousie* (1670) (in which rape had taken place in the past), Settle's *Love and Revenge* (1674), Shadwell's *The Libertine* (1675), Nathaniel Lee's *Mithridates* (1678), Edward Ravenscroft's *Titus Andronicus* (1679), Lee's *Lucius Junius Brutus* (1680), Sir Charles Sedley's *Bellamira* (1687), Brady's *The Rape* (1692), (discussed in Chapter Two), Pix's *Ibrahim* and Gildon's *The Roman Bride's Revenge* (1692), Scott's *The Unhappy Kindness*, (1696) Hopkins, *Boadicea* (1697) Crown's *Caligula*, Walker's *Victorious Love*, (1698), Cibber's *Xerxes*, Durfey's *Massaniello* (1699) and Rowe's *The Ambitious Step-Mother* (1700). These tragedies are linked with political crises and uncertainty, fear of civil upheaval and the loss of property and power associated with such events as the Exclusion Crisis and the aftermath of the Popish plot rumour.[22] As Susan J Owen argues, *Lucius Junius Brutus* celebrated the rule of law, parliamentary institutions, and a society's ability to place political obligations before personal ones. Tarquin's rape of Lucrece, like the attempted rape of Otway's Belvidera, 'is a signifier of corruption, but here it is Royalists who are the villains'.[23]

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[22] Derek Hughes, *English Drama 1660 - 1700,* (New York; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) pp 256 - 9, 262 - 3, 194 - 9. See also, Derek Hughes, 'Lee's *Lucius Junius Brutus* and Seneca's *Hercules Furans'*, in *American Notes and Queries*, 19 (1981) 103 - 104

[23] Susan J Owen, 'Drama and political crisis', in *Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre,* ed. by Deborah Payne Fisk, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p 170

Owen suggests that Aphra Behn's rape plots put a different slant on political uncertainty. For example, in *The Young King* (1679) she uses gender stereotypes to excuse the royal brothers Charles' and James' behaviour. This was a (for her) rare criticism of their education, but it conveyed the idea that exclusion was inappropriate. Owen also argues that Behn's prologue to *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679), staged early in the crisis, suggests that the Popish Plot is scare-mongering. The Puritan tutor Tickletext is portrayed as crudely anti-papist, stupidly patriotic but hypocritically glad to exploit Roman custom to get a whore (something which is defined as a procedure justified by a legalistic quibble).[24] Elsewhere, Owen suggests that Behn's satire coexists with a feminism that tended to destabilize contemporary male assumptions, and stereotypes of women.[25] Alison Shell has argued that Behn's plays and novels problematise representation and misrepresentation, and that *The Feign'd Curtizans* appears to champion Roman Catholicism in an attempt to trivialise the rumoured great state 'plot'.[26] Several of Behn's plays written between the Exclusion Crisis and her death in 1688, the year of the Williamite revolution, also address the political dilemma concerning the value of oath-taking by using the figure of a heroine torn between vows to a religious life and to a lover. This can be seen in *The Fair Jilt*, *The Perjur'd Beauty*, *The Impious Vow Punish'd* and *The Fair Vow-Breaker*. In Behn's imagination, embattled virginity and ravished virtue serve to symbolise the rape of land and Monarch. Owen argues that Restoration dramatists actively alter the rape

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24 Susan J Owen, 'Drama and political crisis', p 160

25 Susan J Owen, 'Suspect My Loyalty when I lose my Virtue: Sexual Politics and Party in Aphra Behn's Plays of the Exclusion Crisis 1678-1683', in *Aphra Behn New Casebooks*, ed. by Janet Todd (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1999) pp 57 - 73

26 Alison Shell, 'Popish plots: *The Feign'd Curtizans* in context', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd , (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp 30 - 49. See also Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

trope as social corruption, and that both 'Whigs and Tories use rape as a trope of the monstrous, associated by Tories with rebellion, and by Whigs with popery and arbitrary government'.[27]

Yet the audience's reaction to assault on the Restoration stage depends on, as Cynthia Lowenthal has argued, whether 'the focus is the rapist or his victim'.[28] That is to say, whether the focus is an indictment of the sexual rapaciousness of men, or a criticism of a larger patriarchal culture. For example, Anthony Kaufman argues that rape in Behn's plays functions not merely as the actions of a fool but as a constant threat in all male characters.[29] Elizabeth Howe argues that rape gives virginal heroines a sexual quality.[30] A third reading is that rape offers the audience the opportunity to see the nakedness of a vulnerable, victimised woman player.[31] What is significant to this thesis is that since Restoration drama sees women's bodies as 'property', the plight of the individual woman herself is ignored.

Shadwell's *The Libertine*, which in the shape of the serial murderer and rapist Don John features the most monstrous protagonist of all, displays such unprecedented levels of sexual violence that some contemporary audiences and present scholars seem unable to account for it.[32] Yet this play is interesting because Don John justifies his actions as a matter of 'nature' or 'culture'. He feels that there should be no restraint

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27 Susan J Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis,* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) p 175. See also. ''He that should Guard My Virtue Has Betrayed it': The Dramatization of Rape in the Exclusion Crisis', in *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research,* 9 (Summer, 1994) 559 - 568

28 Cynthia Lowenthal, 'Monstrous Identities' in *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage,* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: S. Illinois University Press, 2003) pp 144 - 178 (155)

29 Anthony Kauffman, 'The Perils of Florinda: Aphra Behn, Rape, and the Subversion of Libertinism in *The Rover*, Part I' in *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research,* 11 (Winter, 1996) 1 - 21 (3)

30 Elizabeth Howe, *First English Actresses: Women and Drama* 1660-1700, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p 43

31 Elizabeth Howe, *First English Actresses,* p 46

32 Lowenthal, 'Monstrous Identities', p 157

on any appetite. Susan Staves's extensive analysis of 'authority' concludes that an immediate consequence of a distinction made between custom and nature is that things that are not natural become stigmatised as 'only customs or mere conventions'.[33] Many Restoration dramatists are fascinated by the question of whether the law of nature bound every man to considerations such as morality, obedience, faithfulness to oaths, a respect for property and the avoidance of murder, incest and fornication.[34] Societal control on women's behaviour linked with the difficulty of identifying heirs triggered an obsession not only with the sexual behaviour of aristocrats but also with 'masculinity', with patriarchy and with the possibility of incest, an anxiety that reappears in Sentimental and Gothic novels in the eighteenth century. Aphra Behn makes the connection in *The Dumb Virgin* (1698), but she uses the possibility of incest to focus on masculine specularity and narcissism, as well as female vulnerability to male power.

Readers are alerted when Dangerfield and his sisters are separated as children. He meets them again when they reach adulthood, and is captivated by the dumb Maria's beauty and the deformed Belvideera's wit. The possibility of incest is signalled when both sisters show signs of attraction to him:

> Maria [....] found something so Sweet in the Mien, Person and Discourse of this Stranger, that her Eyes felt a dazzling Pleasure in beholding him, and like flattering Mirrours represented every Action and Feature, with some heightning Advantage to her Imagination: Belvideera also had some secret Impulses of Spirit, which drew her insensibly into a great Esteem of the Gentleman.[35]

Behn eroticises the possibilities of transgression in the suggested power of

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[33] Susan Staves, *Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979) p 254

[34] Staves, *Players' Scepters,* p 260

[35] Summers, *The Works of Aphra Behn,* (London, 1915) V p 429

Dangerfield's gaze. When he walks beneath Maria's window just as she leans out she is unaware of *him*, but he devours *her* with his eyes:

> He saw her in all the heightening Circumstances of her Charms...her Nightgown hanging loose, discover'd her charming Bosom....her Breasts with an easy Heaving, show'd the Smoothness of her Soul and of her Skin [....] [36]

Incest is confirmed when Dangerfield is killed by his 'true' father and everyone realises what has happened. Maria resolves the problem by committing suicide, but before she dies she complicates things by crying out 'Oh! Incest, incest....O my Brother, O my Love'.[37] Ros Ballaster has argued that Maria's recognition of the incestuous nature of their love triggers her entry into subjectivity/speech:

> the non-subject, the dumb virgin, simultaneously empty and whole (without speech she cannot enter subjectivity and thus does not 'know' desire and, hence the 'lack' or separation that engenders desire), offers the possibility of 'wholeness' to the Oedipal lover. Expenditure of desire need not be loss because the 'smooth' mirror will restore that same desire replete with selfhood to the lover.[38]

As Luce Irigary has argued, since patriarchy embodies the virgin as 'pure exchange value' she does not exist as a 'self'. She is merely the sign of relations among men and because her body is purely representative, it is subsumed into 'thingness'.[39] On the other hand, under seventeenth and eighteenth-century aristocratic patriarchy sexual difference had the important if limited responsibility for ensuring the transmission of the patrimony through male members of a family. The responsibility was consistent with same sex behaviour for those wishing to be regarded as 'masculine'.

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[36] Summers, *The Works of Aphra Behn,*, V p 433
[37] Summers, *The Works of Aphra Behn,* V p 444
[38] Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* , (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) p 88
[39] Luce Irigaray, 'Women on the Market', in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. by M. Whitford, (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991) p 186

A perception of masculinity as allowing a relatively inclusive sexual behaviour was dominated by the masculine figure of the Restoration rake, personified by the notorious libertine John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester.[40] One of his songs acknowledges this inclusiveness and suggests that heterosexual sexual behaviour is the unappealing work of the menial servant whose duty is to produce children:

> Love a woman? You're an ass!
> 'Tis a most insipid passion
> To choose out for your happiness
> The silliest part of God's creation
> Let the porter and the groom,
> Things designed for dirty slaves,
> Drudge in fair Aurelia's womb
> To get supplies for age and graves

On the other hand same sex behaviour is the pleasurable work of the gentleman whose task is to produce 'wit':

> Farewell, woman! I intend
> Henceforth every night to sit
> With my lewd, well-natured friend,
> Drinking to engender wit.
> Then give me health, wealth, mirth, and wine,
> And, if busy love entrenches,
> There's a sweet, soft page of mine
> Does the trick worth forty wenches.[41]

Tim Hitchcock and others have traced the historical process by which a 'new' man negotiated a path between aggressive masculinity and effeminacy through a

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[40] For accounts of contemporary aristocrats associated with nonexclusive zoometrical behaviour see George S Rousseau, 'An Introduction to the Love Letters; Circumstances of Publication, Context, and Cultural Commentary', and Randolph Trumbach, 'Sodomy Transformed: Aristocratic Libertinage, Public Reputation and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century'. in *Journal of Homosexuality*, 19 (1990) 47 - 91;105 - 124

[41] *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. by David M Viet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968) p 51

binary model of gender which produced homosexuality as a distinct sexual category.[42] Anna Bryson elaborates on the masculinity represented by Rochester as elite 'anti-civility' which was a by-product of fundamental social change.[43] Similarly, Barker-Benfield places Rochester at the cross-roads of traditional and 'modern' patterns of conduct since 'He combined elements of modernity with links to ancient Carnival elements reiterated in his literary successors'.[44] At the same time, as McKeon has argued, Rochester's division of society resulted in the view that birth and worth had been surgically sundered:

> On the one hand, personal worth was relocated in the common woman, the repository of a normative honor that had been alienated from an undeserving male aristocracy and that would be apotheosised in the domestic virtues of the modern heterosexual family.[45]

Barker-Benfield also contrasts him with the third Earl of Shaftesbury who 'earned a reputation as a type literally antithetical to the Restoration type epitomized by Rochester'.[46] In spite of the different audiences they addressed, Lawrence Klein notes a correspondence between Shaftesbury's project in the *Characteristicks* (1711), and that of Addison and Steele. According to Barker-Benfield, Shaftesbury's intention was to establish a model of masculinity that could neither be described as 'foppish'

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[42] On binary gender see, Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities 1700-1800* , (London: Macmillan, 1997) p 2. Hitchcock argues that there was a sexual revolution which transformed attitudes and increasingly saw heterosexuality as the 'natural' sexual behaviour. See Nancy Copeland, *Staging Gender in Behn and Centlivre,* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004) pp 1-5. On homosexuality as a distinct category see, Erin Mackie, *Market a la Mode: Fashion, Commodity and Gender In The Tatler and The Spectator,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) p 165; Shawn Lisa Maurer, *Proposing Men: Dialectics of Gender and Class in the Eighteenth-Century English Periodical,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p 146. On homosexuality as a distinct Category, Robert B Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850 (The Emergence of Separate Spheres?),* (London: Longman, 1998) p 60

[43] G. J. Barker - Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) p 252

[44] Barker - Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, p 45

[45] McKeon, 'Historicizing Patriarchy', 307

[46] Barker - Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, p 112

nor 'licentious', and 'effeminacy', a derogatory term which when applied to men, was coupled with cowardice and weakness.[47]

Vivien Jones argues that there is a dynamic of 'attraction and repulsion' to be seen in the representation of heterosexual relations through which in marriage, class differences were 'both cemented and redrawn'.[48] That is to say, the rake must be dangerous, but he must also be represented as 'sexually and aesthetically fascinating: aristocratic masculinity is both threat, and object of (illicit desire). Upward social mobility is thus motivated and legitimated through female sexual fantasy'.[49] What emerges is an anxiety connected with the legitimacy of authority, and its association with aristocratic sexual behaviour. In fiction, these anxieties are represented by the figure of the predatory rake.

In order to interpret Hays's rape narrative in terms of her portrayal of the aristocratic libertine and the prevailing debates on 'masculinity' and 'patriarchy', I shall examine rape texts written by women familiar to Hays's readers that advance a critique of patriarchal authority. In the next section I argue that whilst there is an element of sexual fantasy in early women's narratives, rape episodes connect female vulnerability to sexual violence with the negligence of figures such as fathers, guardians and mentors. Of particular significance is the fact that in an effort to overcome their anxieties, some of these writers attempt to imagine 'new' heroes.

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47 Barker - Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, p 113. For discussion of 'molly culture', see Michael McKeon, 'Historicizing Patriarchy: The emergence of gender difference in England 1660 - 1760', in *Eighteenth Century Studies* 28 (1995) 295-322 (307). Mary McIntosh, 'The Homosexual Role' in *Social Problems*, 16 (1968) 182 - 192

48 Vivien Jones, *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvie Roberts, (Macmillan, 1996) pp 106 - 132, (118); McKeon , 'Historicizing Patriarchy', 321

49 Jones, *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, p 118

'Benevolent' Patriarchs: Fathers and Guardians

Penelope Aubin's 'pious' novel *The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family* (1722) is packed with rape episodes that examine 'masculinity' and male authority.[50] Although Aubin describes the novel as an affirmation of Providence, it actually advances the view that there are multiple ways of interpreting both female 'virtue' and patriarchal 'benevolence'. She does this by describing a heroine who represents the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century notion of ideal female 'honour'; that is to say Ardelisa is a sexless automaton. On the other hand, the representation of a raped character who forms a sexual attachment to her exotic rapist identifies a lack of attractive fictional male love objects available to early women novelists. Significantly, the novel undermines the Christian teaching that underwrites patriarchy's policing of wives' and daughters' sexual behaviour

When his businesses fail Count Vinevil leaves England to trade abroad with his daughter Ardelisa, and his young male ward Count de Longueville. On arrival, the whole family is put in danger when Ardelisa attracts the attention of the local Turkish ruler Mahomet. Before de Longueville leaves to find help, he marries Ardelisa so that he might 'enjoy her'. But before he departs he warns her that if she is captured, she must "prefer a noble death to dishonor".[51]

Hearing that Ardelisa and de Longueville are married, the enraged Mahomet bursts into the father's apartment bent on revenge:

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[50] Penelope Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family', in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660 - 1730: An Anthology*, ed. by Paula R Backscheider and John J Richetti (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp 114 - 151

[51] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family' p 123

> Show me to your daughter's bed, and with her honor buy that life which I on any other terms won't spare. Make me happy in her arms and silently conceal all that shall pass this night, or I will plunge this dagger into your heart [....] Then with Ardelisa I'll return to my own palace and there force her to give all her treasures up me and glut myself in her embraces.[52]

Count de Vinevil's response to these threats is to leave his daughter to Providence, claiming that "the God I serve will both preserve her virtue and revenge my death". Undeterred, Mahomet continues to search for the object of his desire, with "Slaves, go search the chambers and bring her naked from her bed that I may ravish her before the dotard's face and then send his soul to hell". With a smile, Vinevil lifts his hands to heaven and declares "'Tis just, my God, that I who have thus exposed my child should first feel the misery my rashness merits, but do not let her perish here".[53]

The text suggests that as far as Vinevil and de Longueville are concerned Ardelisa is merely a vessel, that is, a body whose value exists in its purity. De Longueville expects his wife to preserve her virtue by preferring death to rape; and when he is faced with his daughter's violation, Vinevil begs for death so that *he* is released from disgrace. Fortunately, Ardelisa escapes with the help of her servants. On their arrival at a nearby village she attracts the attention of a second Turk, the great General Osmin, who instantly falls in love with the beautiful young creature.

It *is* possible that, as her prologue promises, Aubin's intention is to provide her readers with 'instruction' and 'delight' in the shape of Christian teaching and conduct advice. However her descriptions of fascinating Islamic sexual practices actually put patriarchal dynastic values in a poor light. For example, Osmin is very

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[52] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family' p 123
[53] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family' p 123

considerate towards the object of his desire, unlike Ardelisa's husband and father. On the other hand, he is not quite sure about its gender:

> Lovely boy, or maid, I know not which as yet to call you, fear not the treatment I shall give you. My heart is made a captive to your eyes. I will enjoy and keep you here, where nothing shall be wanting to make you happy.[54]

It is not until he clasps her to him, and 'rudely opening her breast', that he discovers that Ardelisa is 'of the soft sex'.[55] The heroine and her maid are taken to a beautiful apartment where she plans to kill her captor, arguing (in the name of Christian virtue) that it is a lesser sin to kill a human being than to submit to rape. As far as Ardelisa is concerned, Death is "but a trifle in comparison of infamy".[56] But before Osmin is able to rape Ardelisa he is imprisoned by the Sultan. All the captives seize the opportunity to escape the seraglio.

Osmin reappears at the centre of the Venetian lady Violetta's story. However, the combined histories of the captives Violetta and the opportunist Fernando (who will be discussed shortly) present contradictions that advance an unusual view of 'good' and 'evil', of Christianity and Islam, and of the patriarchal insistence on 'Chastity' and 'Virtue'. These contradictions work to complicate gender stereotypes, and notions of the 'natural' lack of female desire. During the escape from the seraglio, Ardelisa meets Osmin's concubine the beautiful Violetta:

> with many others of our wretched nation, noble virgins who like me have lived too long, being now made slaves to the wild lusts of cruel infidels, from which nothing but death can deliver us.[57]

Aubin does not detail Violetta's rape, or her life as Osmin's slave, but readers would

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[54] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family' p 131
[55] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family' p 131
[56] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family', p 132
[57] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family', p 133

notice that her name means 'little rape', from the French 'viol', as well as 'little violet'. There is also a child from the union. What is interesting is the way Aubin parallels the virtuous Ardelisa's story with an exploration of Violetta's sexuality. Violetta should be overjoyed at her rescue, but as she explains to the priest she is confused by her feelings:

> Father, till I saw Ardelisa I found my conscience undisturbed, I submitted to the fatal necessity of my circumstances; and Christianity forbidding me to finish life by my own hand, I thought I had done all that was required. But that noble lady's heroic conduct has convinced me I did not what I ought. She never would have permitted a lustful Turk to possess her, but by his death would have preserved her honor, or resisting to death not have survived it.[58]

Ardelisa's story insists that 'chastity' and 'virtue' is expected in all women. Her husband and father assume that if threatened with rape she has to die or kill her would-be violator. On the other hand, the raped Violetta's attitude to her 'virtue' is completely different. Furthermore, she does not sound like a rape victim. Until she hears Ardelisa's story, Violetta is content and her conscience clear. She feels that she has done, all 'that was required'.[59] The suggestion is that Ardelisa's story served to remind her of what she ought to have done to prevent her rape, rather than what she wanted to do. Violetta's grief and pain also challenges patriarchal expectations of 'virtuous' female behaviour. She expresses regret to the priest, but not a sense of shame and 'ruin'. When she admits that she loves Osmin, with "to you I confess I even loved him, saw him with a wife's eyes, and thought myself obliged to do so", Aubin suggests that Violetta is suffering more from the separation from her rapist than from the anguish of guilt.[60]

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[58] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family', p 139
[59] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family', p 139
[60] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family', p 139

Because he assumes that she is wracked with guilt, the priest attempts to explain the difference in the context of the women's experiences. In his view, the married woman commits a crime if she allows herself to be raped, but the single virgin commits no sin by yielding to a rapist:

> In Ardelisa, who was married to another, it would have been a horrid crime to suffer another man for to possess her, but as you were single, a virgin, and made his by the chance of war, it was no sin in you to yield to him.[61]

However the priest's liberal interpretation presents the reader with disturbing contradictions. Not only does the priest re-arrange Christian patriarchy's rules, he also blurs certain clearly defined female 'proper' sexual behaviours.

Later, when Violetta is to return to Europe she is reluctant to leave. She is inconsolable. When Violetta arrives at Venice she is still unaware that Osmin is dead; and her reaction to a new suitor confirms her devotion to her rapist "he was tender of me and whilst he lives my modesty cannot permit me to receive another in my bed".[62] Moreover, since the report of Osmin's fate states that he died of grief in prison, Aubin suggests that in spite of his lust for the 'boy or maid' Ardelisa, Violetta's rapist returned her love. On the other hand, Don Fernando's story demonstrates that a Christian man's moral and sexual behaviour is no different than that of a Turk. Pretending to embrace Islam, Fernando is given command of a ship by the Grand Vizier. He enters and plunders churches, rapes virgins and is rewarded with a palace, a pension and a seraglio of women 'to enjoy all earthly delights'.[63]

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[61] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family', p 139
[62] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family'. p 146
[63] Aubin, 'The Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family' pp 135 - 6

Although Aubin's preface states that she invites us to witness the divine spectacle of Providence coming to the rescue of beleaguered innocence in an exotic setting, readers find a set of contradictions framed in her trope of abduction and rape. Both Turks and Christians abduct and ravish young girls, and patriarchal 'rules' are re-written. The effect is to pose questions about Christian patriarchy and the dynastic priorities that insist on tight restrictions on women's sexual behaviour.

In 1722 knowledge of Islam and Islamic sexual practices was extensive in England. According to Linda Colley, records show that from the 1630s Muslim Corsairs took hostages from the West coast of England and Ireland for slavery and ransom.[64] At the same time trade was established between Europe and the Muslim Mediterranean. Although the first Chair in English was not established in Cambridge until 1917, there were Chairs in Arabic in both Oxford and Cambridge in 1630 'in part so that officials and interpreters could be trained up to deal with Barbery and the Ottoman Empire in the future'.[65] Islam inspired awe because it ruled almost one quarter of the world's population over a wide geographical area. Aubin's knowledge of Islam would have been a mixture of commercial reports, Christian scholarship, and stories of captivity.[66] Within these, hatred of Muslim stereotypes co-existed with more measured attitudes.

Aubin's depiction of Osmin's seraglio is romantic fantasy. There are records of a handful of British and Irish females captured and taken into North African private

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64 Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* , (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002). See also: Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

65 Colley, *Captives*, p 105 See Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558 - 1685* (Cambridge, 1998) pp 74 - 86 and G J Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England*, (Oxford, 1996)

66 Colley, *Captives*, pp 103 - 6

and royal households, but there are no known examples of British women of any kind suffering this fate after the 1720s. Colley argues that representations of Barbary as a sexual threat to females was unusual before 1750.[67] For example, Elizabeth Marsh was a twenty-one year old single woman held captive in 1756. Yet her novel *The Female Captive,* made little of any threat of sexual danger during her encounter with Sidi Muhammad, the acting ruler and future Sultan of Morocco. By the time the book was published in 1769, she writes of an obvious sexual frisson between them. Although her writing voices female sexual desire, Marsh wanted to retain the image of the 'proper' lady. The belated decision to 'give prominence in *The Female Captive* to issues of sexual danger and virile importunate sultans stemmed from something more than just remembered terrors, or even the simple desire to write a quasi-novel and sell copy'.[68]

Eighteenth-century records show that it was men who had most to fear from captivity and slavery. Colley explains:

> Most of those who accused North African and Ottoman males of sodomy were not anyway seriously interested in delineating the sexuality of those they were denouncing. Nor were they using accusations of homosexuality merely as a way of 'othering' Islam and its adherents. Sodomy in the context of writings on Barbary and the Ottoman world before 1750 was rather a metaphor, a particularly acute expression of the fear and insecurity that Britons and other Western Europeans continued to feel in the face of Islamic power and, as they saw it, aggression.[69]

Furthermore, contemporary discussions are concerned primarily with 'whether North African and Ottoman males allowed themselves to be sodomised'. Male Christians in Britain and Europe feared Islam because of the threat of penetration and invasion to

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[67] Colley, *Captives,* p 128
[68] Colley, *Captives,* p 128
[69] Colley, *Captives,* p 129

them.[70] Colley argues that when *The Female Captive* was published in 1769 global relations between Islam and Europe had radically changed, and the claims that Turks, Moroccans and Algerians abducted and kept sexually pliant women in harems reflects the fact that Islam was no longer considered a threat to British power. To put it another way, it is only after the diminishing power of the Ottoman Empire is recognised in the late seventeenth century that it became possible to emphasise the heterosexual lust of Muslim men.

In summary, Aubin's story subverts British patriarchy when an innocent virgin is more or less abandoned to her fate by her Christian male relatives, and Turkish characters are described as valuing and protecting the women they desire. Furthermore, since her raped Christian noble woman loves and is valued by her Turkish rapist, patriarchal definitions of 'Virtue' are also blurred. Aubin's story not only destabilises familiar stereotypes, it also poses an important question. If female Chastity and Virtue are to be maintained by male authority, what *should* women expect from male friends, guardians, protectors and mentors?

Mary Davys's account of the relationship between a patriarchal mentor (a 'Man of Sense') and his female ward associates rape with punishment for naivety.[71] Although comedic, ironic, and heavily influenced by Restoration and eighteenth-century stage marriage comedy, *The Reform'd Coquet* (1724) can also be read in terms of an association between the incompetence of fathers and guardians and sexual violence to their wards.

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[70] Colley, *Captives*, p 130

[71] Mary Davys, 'The Reformed Coquet', (1724) in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660-1730: An Anthology*, ed. by Paula R Backscheider and John J Richetti (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp 251-323

Davys's dedication 'To the Ladies of Great Britain' asserts that:

> When you grow weary of Flattery and begin to listen to matrimonial Addresses, choose a Man with fine Sense, as well as a fine Wig, and let him have some Merit as well as much Embroidery: This will make Coxcombs give ground, and men of Sense will equally admire your Conduct with your Beauty.[72]

In fact although Davys's ironic narrative represents various examples of the familiar rapacious male juxtaposed with a more 'Rational' man, in the end, the reader might prefer the rake, because at least he is recognisable.

In order to teach the coquet of the story some typical rape narrative 'lessons', the patriarchal hero Lord B disguises himself as Formator, an old manservant. Having established himself as a friend, and gained Amoranda's trust through pretence, Formator continues to deceive and even endanger his charge. In other words, the heroine's play-acting patriarch and 'mentor', the 'new' man bent on control rather than rape, inadvertently leaves her open to sexual violation and murder under the guise of 'protection' and 'instruction'. Davy's heroine is beautiful, rich and fiercely independent. Ignoring offers of advice, Amoranda delights in attracting the attention of men all over the County, from 'the old Justice to the young Rake'.[73] Davys signals the dangers to lone heiresses with the appearance of a string of unsuitable suitors and dubious characters, which include one Lord Lofty.

Amoranda arranges to meet Lofty in her gardens. The reader (if not the naive heroine) becomes aware of Lofty's evil intentions when he walks 'with the utmost Pleasure among the Jessamine and Orange-Trees' and stops at:

> a Seat, over which was a fine painted Roof representing the Rape of *Helen* on

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[72] Davys, 'The Reformed Coquet', pp 252 - 253
[73] Davys, 'The Reformed Coquet', p 258

> which he gazed with some Admiration and could not forbear comparing *Amoranda* to her nor thinking the whole Scene unlike his own design.[74]

At the same time Amoranda's neighbours, Mr Froth and Mr Callid, whose 'Estates have sunk to a low ebb', scheme to abduct the young heiress from her summerhouse:

> now where would be the difficulty of whipping her out of this low Window into a Coach provided ready and carry her to a House which I have taken care of, keeping her with the utmost privacy, till she resolves to marry one of us, and the other shall share the Estate.[75]

Fortunately, Amoranda is absent-minded. She forgets the assignation with her would-be abductors and the rape plot is foiled for the moment.

Yet more danger is introduced in the figures of two men dressed as women. Like Callid and Froth, the 'women' plan to abduct, rape, and rob the heroine. Although Davys's imagery is comical, her readers would recognise that this new 'friendship' is likely to end in tragedy. The moment Berintha (who is Birinthus) jumps on Amoranda with "This minute, by the help of thy own Servant, I will enjoy thee; and then, by the assistance of my Arm, he shall do so too", the servant-protector disappears. He re-emerges as a handsome young stranger who rescues the maiden in distress.[76] It is true that the rape is interrupted by Formator the 'rescuer', but in order to make his grand gesture, Formator the 'protector' leaves his terrified young ward begging two men bent on rape for mercy.

Both Aubin's and Davys's novels not only advance a critique of patriarchy but

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[74] Davys, 'The Reformed Coquet', p 258 - 9. The editors's footnote suggests that 'The painting could be of Helen's abduction by Theseus and Polydeuces when she was a young girl, or, of her abduction by Paris after her marriage to Menelaus'.

[75] Davys, 'The Reformed Coquet', p 263

[76] Davys, 'The Reformed Coquet', p 298

also of the conventional rake figure. Whilst Aubin casts doubt on the wisdom of fathers and husbands, her portrayal of General Osmin imagines an aristocratic figure that a woman might love. On the other hand, although Davys's dedication offers readers a man of 'sense', it is obvious that the hero's conduct is no more sensible than that of the 'coxcomb' he is meant to replace. At best, Formator's antics are ridiculous and inappropriate, and at worst his attempts at 'protection' too frequently place his ward in danger. But whilst Davys's 'man of sense' cuts a foolish figure, he is at least an attempt to re-write the conventional rake figure.

One of the ways Hays approaches the presentation of a rapacious landowner and his victim is to draw attention to the way rape narratives routinely hold women responsible for the rake's lust. The Baronet first observes Mary Raymond in his greenhouse stealing 'a cluster of grapes, of uncommon ripeness, bloom and beauty'.[77] In the manner of rape narrative psychology explored in our discussion of Manley's Charlot in Chapter One, Osborne calculates that since she has aroused him, she must be a whore. As far as he is concerned she is a 'true daughter of Eve'.[78] Yet the portrayal of a heroine that is a more probable and realistic woman than either a 'Virgin Mary' or an 'Eve' also associates the heroine with her creator.

As I noted in the Introduction, it is through John Eccles that we have one of the few, albeit rather biased, descriptions of Hays (apart from a satirical portrayal of her in Eliza Hamilton's in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*). Characteristically, although he is writing to Hays, Eccles describes her as if she were a third person:

> I shall begin with the first time I saw a little girl with dark hair, and features soft as those of the peaceful messengers of heaven. - ... I saw every

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77 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 12
78 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 14

> thing that was engaging and amiable in her face; she fascinated me I believe; I could think of no one nor any thing but her 'she engrossed me all' yet I was afraid to look at her, or ask who she was, for fear it should be thought I loved her;... the beauties of her mind and person were ever before my view; ... every time I saw her, she was more lovely than before.[79]

The similarity between Eccles's description of Hays and Hays's description of Mary Raymond, is striking:

> Tall, blooming, animated, my features were regular, my complexion a rich glowing brunette, my eyes vivacious and sparkling; dark chestnut hair shaded my face, and floated over my shoulders in luxuriant profusion; my figure was light and airy, my step firm, my aspect intelligent, and my mind inquisitive.[80]

In this passage, the erotic image of a beautiful female body captured in Mary Raymond's description of herself invites the reader to gaze at the heroine in order to exploit the time-honoured sexual obsession with the object of male desire. Conventionally, the fictional rake's structuring gaze was the means with which a woman was denied the opportunity of anything other than sexualised heroism, through the myth of the reformable rake.

But Hays's heroine complicates the trope by defying traditional sexualised stereotypes. Significantly, Hays's re-fashioning of the rape narrative completely rejects the ridiculous notion that, as Sarah Pennington had put it in 1761, a 'reformed libertine makes the best husband'.[81] Hays's characterisation suggests that the heroine has no intention of attempting to reform the rake with the force of her 'purity'. On the other hand, she is not drawn as a self-interested character like Defoe's Moll

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79 *The Correspondence (1779 - 1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, ed. by Marilyn L. Brooks, (Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales: Edwin Mellin Press, 2004) p 30. John Eccles's letter to Mary Hays, 28 October, 1779

80 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 5

81 Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters*, (1761) reprinted in *The Young Lady's Pocket Library, or Parental Monitor*, (1790), reprinted with a new introduction by Vivien Jones (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995) pp 85 - 7

Flanders, or a sexually aggressive opportunist like Behn's fair jilt. Importantly, she is not described as the rape text's protean innocent and virtuous woman in whom sexuality is 'unnatural'. Instead, Mary shares Emma Courtney's view that since it obeys the law of Nature female sexual desire *is* natural.

In Hays's presentation, the self confidence, beauty and intellectual potential drawn in her heroine's self-portrait foreshadows and adds particular piquancy to the moral, physical and mental violation that is to be perpetrated on her. The reader mentally rapes the heroine, and later in the novel she is physically violated by the older, wealthy and influential fictional gazer.

In retrospect the heroine realises that her feminine beauty is a 'material link in the chain of events' that led to disaster, and that:

> The modest and candid reader will excuse this seeming vanity in the description of my personal accomplishments, when informed, that the graces with which nature had so liberally endowed me, proved a material link in the chain of events, that led to the subsequent incidents in my life; a life embittered by unrelenting persecution, and marked by undeserved calamities; the measure of which appears at length to be filled up.[82]

For our purposes, the portrayal also insists that Mary Raymond would rather succumb to disgrace than to the 'benevolence' of wealth, rank and power:

> Let my ruin be complete! Disgrace, indigence, contempt, while unmerited, I dare encounter, but not the censure of my own heart. Dishonour, death itself, is a calamity less insupportable than self-reproach. Amidst the destruction of my hopes, the wreck of my fortunes, of my fame, my spirit still triumphs in conscious rectitude; nor would I, intolerable as it the sense of my wrongs and of my griefs, exchange them for all that guilty prosperity could

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[82] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 6. 'A link in the chain of events' refers to William Godwin's theories on 'necessitarianism'. Godwin argues that: 'the characters of men originate in their external circumstances'. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. by K. Codell Carter (London, 1793) I iv p 27

bestow.[83]

Earlier in the eighteenth century Aubin and Davys were reluctant to have their heroines voice their uneasiness about patriarchal and aristocratic behaviours. Mary Raymond's more vocal rejection of Osborne's offers of 'protection' signals a late eighteenth-century Radical suspicion of his sincerity, precisely because he is a wealthy and influential man.

In the next two sections I shall raise questions relating to the link between patriarchal authority and sexual violence to women. As a baronet, is Osborne the only person fit to rule the country, as Edmund Burke suggests? As a man, is Hays's rake hero a 'Man of Feeling' or a 'Man of the World'? Is a 'hero' a hero because of the way the heroine behaves, or the way the rake is portrayed?

Re-writing the 'Gentleman' Rake-Hero

As we have discussed, *The Victim of Prejudice* insists that the consequences of rape are more important than the destruction of a heroine's virtue. That is to say, Hays's examination of her raped heroine's problems are in complete contrast to Richardson's study of the effects of rape on an 'ideal' woman and her family. As far as Hays is concerned, Clarissa is the example of a too perfect character:

> a beautiful superstructure upon a false and airy foundation, can never be regarded as a model for imitation. It is the portrait of an ideal being, placed in circumstances equally ideal, far removed from common life and human feelings.[84]

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83 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, pp 128 - 129

84 Mary Hays, 'On Novel Writing', in *The Monthly Magazine*, (September, 1797) 180

The Victim of Prejudice emphasises that the heroine's enlightened upbringing ensures an independent consciousness of 'self', which in turn generates an awareness of, and insistence upon, sexual choice. It is this awareness that differentiates Mary Raymond from the 'ideal' Clarissa, and the somatic heroines of earlier texts. Mary is portrayed as a corporeal creature with explicit sexual desire for her lover William. Furthermore, her independence is confirmed when after her rape, she refuses to ally her soul with her rapist, in spite of the prudence of doing so.

However, in Chapter One we noted that the representation of an independent heroine in *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* has a profound effect on the characterisation of the hero figure. It is the creation of an unusually 'silent' and passive Harley that enables the 'vocal' Emma to achieve a semblance of sexual identity and freedom. When she revisits the issue of 'heroes' in *The Victim of Prejudice*, Hays tackles the question of *what* makes a hero a *hero* in the rape narrative. She also examines the way the portrayal affects the behaviour of the heroine, and vice versa. As we discussed, the woman writer has to 'protect' the heroine's reputation in the conventional rape narrative, which in turn obliges her to represent the fictional sexual encounter as a matter of force.

In order to turn the familiar portrayal of coercive sexual relationships on its head, the rake hero has to be as unconventional as the heroine. As it does in her first novel, the revision of the hero leans heavily on the image of the woman who defies long-standing patriarchal structures of femininity. Because Hays rejects the idea of the familiar, protean cynical libertine, and the Sentimental hero that is too good for the world, she creates a rake character that is no more 'ideal' than the heroine-victim.

In seventeenth-century drama the word 'rake' (which was derived from 'hell-rake') is used to describe a dissolute, wholly immoral and debauched male who takes

a deeply cynical view of love. However, Robert Jordan draws a distinction between two separate kinds of rakes using the terms the 'judicious' and the 'extravagant' figure.[85] Jordan argues that although both types ignore social conventional and moral patterns of correct behaviour, the 'judicious' rake is polished, controlled, and smooth, whereas the 'extravagant' rake such as Behn's Willmore in *The Rover* is promiscuous, intense, impulsive, reckless, frivolous, vain, self-assured and boasting.

We have seen many texts by women writers throughout this thesis that associate relations between the aristocratic rake and young women with the eighteenth-century sexual double standard that supports the sexual fantasies and misbehaviour of rich and powerful men. However, Aubin's characterisation of General Osmin moves away from that of the usual rake (such as the hero of Restoration drama or the cynical Duke in Manley's *New Atalantis*) since she suggests that female desire calls for a male love object that responds to female sensitivity. Even so, Osmin is depicted as a more masculine figure than the hero characterised, for example, by Frances Burney's young and worthy Orville in *Evelina* (1778), or Ann Radcliffe's rather vulnerable Valencourt in the *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).

On the other hand, Sentimental heroes can be read as the products of the debate on 'masculinity' and masculine 'sensibility'. For example, the anonymous, 'Moral Weeping' (1755) asserts that:

> We are pleased when our friends are happy, but are proportionably deeper struck to see them weak under affliction. At this sight, our hearts are instantly moved; we weep by sympathy with them; we benevolently hasten to assist them; and find so noble a reward of satisfaction and self-complacency in the action, as assures us it is better to be in the house of mourning, than in the house of mirth.[86]

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85 Robert Jordan. 'The Extravagant Rake in Restoration Comedy', in *Restoration Literature: Critical Approaches*, ed. by H. Love (London: Methuen, 1972) pp 86 - 89

86 Anon. 'Moral Weeping' (1755), in '*Man: A Paper for Ennobling the Species*'.

When translated into fiction such as Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759), and later Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), masculine sensibility interrogates conceptions of what men are, or should be. One of the issues raised is the notion of 'benevolence', a masculine quality that is explored in Mackenzie's character, Harley.[87]

Mackenzie was a product of the Scottish Enlightenment philosophical project that attempted to account for the individual within economic structures, social conditions and historical and social institutions. These theories hinged on the question of whether human action is fundamentally selfish or benevolent. For example, David Hume argued that benevolence is the primary, and self-love the secondary, passion, 'the simplest and most obvious cause which can be assigned' for any passion or operation of the human mind. It is useful as well as beautiful. [88] Adam Smith argued that:

> There is a helplessness in the character of extreme humanity which more than anything interests our pity. There is nothing in itself which renders it either ungraceful or disagreeable. We only regret that it is unfit for the world, because the world is unworthy of it [....].[89]

Many historians argue that this philosophy is symptomatic of a general and detectable shift in attitude towards violence amongst the new middle classes, although

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www.engl.virginia.edu/enec981/dictionary/19anonVI.html. 01/05/06

87 On 'Sensibility', see Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Marshall Brown, *Preromanticism,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Syndy McMillen Conger, *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics,* Essays in Honour of Jean H Hagstrum (London: Associated University Press, 1990); Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction,* (London: Methuen, 1986)

88 David Hume *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) Third Edition Section Two 'Of Benevolence', pp 176 - 182

89 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1976) p 96

they disagree on the causes of the shift.[90] What is interesting is that in spite of eighteenth-century theories asserting man's innate capacity for benevolence, and recent historians' research on the decrease in violence, in the 1790s patriarchal and aristocratic values continued to maintain a grip on the governance of domestic and public affairs. For the purposes of this thesis, the problem raised by the portrayal of men of Sensibility like Mackenzie's Harley and Sterne's Tristram Shandy is not whether men of 'feeling' are 'fit' for the world or they for it, but *how* they live and more importantly, love, in the world. To put it another way, does the rape narrative become obsolete in a world comprised of sensitive fictional heroes? As we have seen, any discussion of attempts to re-fashion the rake figure in order to create a 'new', or credible, male lover, such as Aubin's Osmin and Davys's Formator, simply return us to the difficulties of portraying reciprocated sexual desire in eighteenth-century courtship narratives.

Gina Luria Walker has argued that in her illicit correspondence with Eccles Hays vacillates about the propriety of her own 'erotic explorations', while at the same time she 'sounds the female voice clear, distinct, and subversive, much as Pope's Eloisa and the historical Heloise do in their epistolary interchanges with men'. Walker explains that as far as Hays was concerned 'masculinity' was suspect. This was due to her vulnerability, and reinforced by 'what she has been taught to fear about men's mistreatment of women'. As such she sought constant reassurance of Eccles' fidelity.[91] However, he does appear to be 'reliable':

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[90] See J. M. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p 124; Ted Gurr, 'Historical Trends in Violent Crime: A Critical View of the Evidence', in *Crime and Justice* (1981) 295 - 353

[91] Gina Luria Walker, *Mary Hays (1759 - 1843): The Growth of a Woman's Mind,* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006) p 13

> She voices her emerging consciousness of the different realms in which the two sexes exist, a complex response composed of envy, resentment, admiration, longing, and scepticism. Again and again in the letters, she questions Eccles's ability to be faithful, to withstand the blandishments of the "world and its amusements" because he is a man.[92]

Yet, conventionally, novels suggest that rape hinges on the heroine's and not the hero's behaviour. For example, the comparison Burney's Evelina makes between her 'suitors' illustrates the continuing strict attention a woman has to pay to her reputation. As Davys's Formator had in the 1720s, Evelina's mentor takes pains to teach his ward, but in the 1770s the guardian insists that proper action is inseparable from the capacity to judge. As far as Villars is concerned, Judgement involves two separate collateral powers, self-knowledge and an apprehension of external reality, the 'forms' and 'manners' of the world.[93] Ultimately, Evelina is held responsible for any lapses of 'proper' behaviour, especially in the search for a suitor. In other words she must act for herself. Evelina's attempts to distinguish between suitors demonstrates that however respectable she might be, and however much she aspires to maintain her position in society as virtuous 'lady', when she appears in public she risks her reputation because of a man's behaviour:

> I could not but remark the striking difference of [Sir Clement's] attention, and that of Lord Orville: the latter has such gentleness of manners, such delicacy of conduct, and an air so respectful, that, when he flatters most, he never obtrudes his attention, and forces mine; it is so pointed, that it always confuses me, and so public, that it attracts general notices.[94]

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[92] Luria Walker, *The Growth of a Woman's Mind*, p 13

[93] 'Forms' and 'manners' were contemporary standard subjects of moral discourse. For example, see Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) Treatise III 'Advice to an Author'. Characteristics: Treatise V 'The Moralists'. For discourse on good breeding and good nature such as Orville's, see Defoe *The Complete English Gentleman.* Addison, *Spectator* Nos. 169, 177. Fielding, 'An Essay on Conversation', 'An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men'.

[94] Frances Burney, *Evelina,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) p 241

Evelina's observations on Orville's 'gentleness of manners, such delicacy of conduct, and an air so respectful' can be read as her anxiety about the nature, sexuality and suitability of available suitors, especially the aristocratic variety.[95] Burney's novel focuses on the minutiae of manners, the problems of how the heroine addresses people, who she may dance with, from whom may she borrow a carriage. But above all, *Evelina* is a reminder of the ever-present risk of sexual invasion.

The picture of freer movement for young women in the late eighteenth century is borne out in Burney's novel. Evelina comes out in very public circumstances, at Ranelagh, Balls, Assembly rooms, the Opera, and the baths at Bristol, in spite of the difficulties. When she and the younger Branghton women are met by a group of gentlemen 'hallowing, leaning on one another, and laughing immoderately' who rush from behind the trees in order to encircle and seize them, she is horrified when one of them succeeds, and calls her 'a pretty little creature'.[96] She frees herself only to be trapped by another crowd of men who attempt to assault her. Evelina is eventually 'rescued' from her ordeal by the aggressive and brutish rake Sir Clement Willoughby, who interprets her presence alone in the Gardens as an invitation. He leads her to a dark alley where 'we shall be least observed'.[97] Later, at the fireworks display in Marylebone Gardens she is accosted again:

> Every other moment, I was spoken to, by some bold and unfeeling man, to whom my distress, which, I think, must be very apparent, only furnished a pretense for impertinent witticisms or free gallantry.[98]

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95 Burney, *Evelina*, p 241
96 Burney, *Evelina*, pp 195 - 196
97 Burney, *Evelina*, p 197
98 Burney, *Evelina*, p 233

Almost all the male characters Burney's heroine encounters are violent or disruptive. The Branghton youth declares pleasure in seeing the 'riot' at Vauxhall Gardens where there is 'such squalling and squalling! [....] and the women run skimper scamper'.[99] In the Bristol pump room, Evelina and her friends are attacked by three gentlemen who are revealed to be a gang of rakes including Lord Merton whose manners 'evidently announced the character of a confirmed libertine'.[100] Furthermore, Merton had 'dissipated more than half his fortune: a professed admirer of beauty, but a man of most licentious character: that among men, his companions consisted chiefly of gamblers and jockies, and among women, he was rarely admitted'.[101]

Evelina's search for a husband casts her in the role of 'angel' by Sir Clement when he first meets her at the ball, or the opposite, as a 'devil' when he meets her unprotected in a public place. These instances are examples of the models of ascension or fall that typify the familiar courtship plots that separate women into deserving 'angels' or 'fallen' women.

What Evelina's experiences illustrate is that although there is the increasing opportunity for women to appear in public, their presence in the male sphere of dominance activates violence rather than romance. The portrayal of the behaviour of Sir Clement Willoughby, Mirvan and Lord Merton illustrates that 'the manners of the times' marks out women as the victims of men of all kinds but crucially, it emphasises that 'birth' is no guarantee of correct or benevolent 'good' behaviour. At the same time Burney's fictional representation of a woman's private world in the male public

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99 Burney, *Evelina*, p 195
100 Burney, *Evelina* p 276
101 Burney, *Evelina*, p 276

world of action and business illustrates that she is still very dependent on the good auspices of men.

When she enters the world in the 1770s Burney's Evelina is as vulnerable to physical abuse as are Behn's Hellena and Florinda when they attend the Carnival in the 1670s.[102] In public, Evelina is treated in much the same way as Haywood's thoughtless Betsy when she wanders in search of a little fun and is mistaken for a prostitute in 1750. But, Burney's heroine is right to fear attack in the streets and public spaces in London. As Gregory Durston has argued, although rare, stranger rapes were hardly ever prosecuted due to the difficulties in proving the crime. When they were, they included assaults committed in the course of other serious crime such as robbery and burglary and the occasional gang rape.[103] Durston cites an attack on Margaret Macculough by seven men who had recently assaulted another woman. A witness heard the leader, a blacksmith, encourage his colleagues to 'Take a Colly-flower Stalk and [....] the Bitch to death'.[104] Cases such as this often involved up to twenty men.[105] In spite of the new sentimental wave of consideration for human feeling, and the feelings of animals and slaves, fiction and polemic written by women in the last quarter of the eighteenth century continued to describe women's private lives in terms of violence or slavery.

In the light of the women's texts we have examined in this chapter, it is significant that *The Victim of Prejudice* deliberately omits a sentimental aristocratic suitor figure such as Lord Orville to offset the danger and rescue the heroine, and that

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102 Behn, *The Rover* 1:1. See my discussion in Chapter Two pp 179 - 180
103 Gregory Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis', pp 172 - 3
104 Durston, 'Rape in the Metropolis', pp 172 - 3
105 Old Bailey Sessions Pamphlet 11 September, 1735. Trial of John Whitney. Durston informs us that the 'Colly-flower stalk' is an erect penis, ibid 173

she also omits a controlling, mechanistic, Rational, patriarchal figure such as Aubin's Vinevil and de Longueville, Davys's Formator, Burney's Villars or Emma Courtney's Mr Francis to 'teach' her.

At the beginning of the novel Hays portrays her rakish hero as one of the eighteenth-century landowning hunting squires and aristocratic villains who abuses the wealth and power that privilege bestows on him. In order to emphasise this and to add to the tension, Hays also deploys the image of a sexually vulnerable woman. Mary irritates the Squire when she attempts to protect his 'prey':

> By G-d. my pretty dear! You shall not escape me now; but shall pay the full forfeit of all your trespasses. Saying which, he seized me, and, clasping me in his arms, kissed me with an odious violence.[106]

Osborne's threats and actions describe the kind of patriarchal dominance and proprietorship that urges the rake to take sexual possession of a woman, in spite of her resistance. As we saw in Chapter One, assumptions of female 'weaknesses' lead men to believe that female resistance to male sexual pressure adds piquancy to the chase. As Eleanor Ty has argued, Osborne's cruel enjoyment links Mary lexically to the animal, since he 'desires to sport with her much in the same way as he does with the hare, chasing it and eventually killing it in the guise of adventure'.[107] His enjoyment links him to Rousseau, Fordyce, and Gregory who respond to women's 'natural' resistance to sexual force with pleasure. It also links him to Richardson's arch-libertine Robert Lovelace. When he explains his abduction strategy to John Belford, he is excited by the idea that Clarissa will yield under coercion:

> I doubt not but I shall meet with difficulty. I must therefore make my first

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106 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 22
107 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p xviii

> effort by surprise. There may possibly be some cruelty necessary. But there may be consent in struggle; there may be yielding in resistance. But the first conflict over, whether the following may not be weaker and weaker, till willingness follow, is the point to be tried. I will illustrate what I have said by the simile of a bird new caught. We begin with birds as boys, and as men go on to ladies; and both perhaps, in turns, experience our sportive cruelty.[108]

In the same letter, Lovelace suggests that the sport of hunting ladies is 'the most noble of all chases':

> Does not the keen foxhunter endanger his neck and his bones in pursuit of a vermin which, when killed, neither fit food for men nor dogs? Do not the hunters of the nobler game value the venison less than the sport? Why then should I be reflected upon, and the sex affronted, for my patience and perseverance in the most noble of all chases; and for not being a poacher in love [....][109]

It is a notion with an extensive pedigree. Indeed Ovid had gone even further by suggesting that since the female 'prey' *wants* to be captured she 'dissembles ill' when she 'hides her yearnings':

> First tell yourself all women can be won:
> Just spread your nets; the thing's as good as done.
> Spring birds and summer crickets shall be mute
> And greyhounds flee before the hare's pursuit,
> Ere woman spurns a wooer's blandishments;
> Even she you'd swear would ne'er consent, consents.
> To stolen joys both man and woman thrill;
> She hides her yearnings, she dissembles ill.
> Could men agree to ask no woman first,
> The asker's role perforce would be reversed.[110]

However, Hays's depiction of Mary's resistance to Osborne's cruelty is as 'real' as the depiction of the heroine herself. Since the portrayal of the heroine's 'proper' conduct in her dealings with Osborne before the rape shows no sign of

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108 Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985) p 557
109 Richardson, *Clarissa,* pp 557-558
110 Ovid, The Art of Love, Book One in *The Love Poems*, trans. by A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p 94

'consent' (in the way Ovid describes) Mary is in no danger of being 'won'. Although she is not 'ideal', Mary's dislike and distrust of her aristocratic pursuer and rapist is always palpable. As far as the heroine is concerned, when he succumbs to his despotic urges Osborne typifies the conventional, cynical rake who seeks to seduce, coerce, degrade and humiliate women.

Yet, I am going to argue that Hays's development of her rake character challenges the image of the familiar rake seducer. Because her rapist displays a complex range of characteristics, Hays disrupts conventional constructions of the despotic country squire. What we are presented with is a much more complicated relationship between the baronet and his victim than we usually see in the familiar rape narrative. The picture of the cynical rake hero is reversed as soon as Osborne begs the heroine to hear his plea to be allowed to make amends for the rape. Unconventionally, the worldly rake figure is combined with the image of a man of feeling, and drawn as a reasonable and sympathetic man who persistently claims to adore his victim:

> Hear me but patiently, and may God for ever blast me, if I cannot prevail upon you to listen to reason, and to permit me to liberate you, [....] nor will I any more molest you by the presence of a man who adores you, who is solicitous only to repair the wrongs into which his passion has hurried him [....][111]

Furthermore, unlike Richardson's womanising Robert Lovelace, Osborne is only associated with Mary Raymond, and, unlike his confident precursor, he overreacts when he is confused by his feelings. For example, when Mary trespasses on his property and steals his fruit the baronet is more teasing than cruel:

> "By God!" said he, "a little beauty! A Hebe! A wood-nymph! I must and will have a kiss; and d--n me! You shall be welcome to all the grapes in the green-house".[112]

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[111] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 150
[112] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 14

After the rape his behaviour ranges from brutish to contrite. He is either wracked with guilt or filled with desire, and his confusion prompts his offers of money and marriage. Mary's rejections fill him with frustration, to which he responds with 'rage and surprise', and 'a torrent of invective and brutal menaces'.[113] Yet, Mary's description of his demeanour during his proposal of marriage conveys a genuineness that would be hard for a woman to resist:

> Humbling himself before me, he implored my forgiveness, cursed the consequences of his barbarous acts (consequences, he swore, alike unforeseen and deprecated,) and besought me, with apparent sincerity, to accept the only recompense in his power to bestow, - a *legal* title to his hand and fortune.[114]

Osborne's mood is gentle when he rescues her from the sea, a 'critical situation', from which she has had 'a fortunate escape'.[115] He sends a servant to ask after Mary's health, and to convey an 'apology for his behaviour of the preceding evening, and an entreaty to be allowed to pay his respects'.[116]

When Mary leaves his estate after Raymond's death he struggles with his feelings and a sense of loss that prompts the pursuit, the abduction, and finally the rape. Following this episode he is particularly disorientated. There are various visits and messages which either threaten Mary or offer assistance. Following the news of Raymond's death, he adopts the role of patriarch, protector and 'friend', and makes yet another offer:

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113 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 101
114 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 164
115 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 49
116 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 50

> [....] he has, I find with concern, left you in circumstances little suited to your merits or to the delicacy of your sex and education: added to which, the unfortunate events connected with your birth will, I fear, give to your situation peculiar disadvantages. Allow me, then, to be your friend, to recompense you for the injustice of fortune, and to pour into your lap those treasures.[117]

When he visits Mary in prison, the gaoler introduces Osborne as "a fine gentleman who is willing, if you will not jilt him again, to pay your debts, and to save you from rotting in gaol".[118] Although there is an undeniable element of coercion in his argument, once again Osborne's pleas are desperate and adoring:

> "You are in the hands of a king's officer; I have no power over you. Hear me but patiently, and may God for ever blast me, if I cannot prevail upon you to listen to reason, and to permit me to liberate you, if I do not that instant depart and leave, if you will have it so, the law to take its course; nor will I any more molest you by the presence of a man who adores you, who is solicitous only to repay the wrongs into which his passion has hurried him, yet against whom you entertain prejudices so unreasonable! [....] On one side, shame, despair, death, await you; on the other, lavish fortune, sheltering love, gaiety, pleasure, adulation, an adoring lover, an admiring world".[119]

Ultimately, his admiration for Mary forces the despot to relent. But since he is desperate and confused by her obstinacy, he withdraws 'utterly disconcerted by the vehemence of my manner, after a few moments pause and a visible struggle'.[120]

The various mental and emotional disturbances Osborne suffers suggest that he is both confused by, and drawn to, Mary's mental strength, self-reliance and fortitude. In spite of *his* rank and *her* past, Osborne's multiple declarations of love, reasonable offers of marriage and fortune, and unstinting admiration are paradoxical when contrasted with her lover William's reaction to the news of her background.

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[117] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 106
[118] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 148
[119] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, pp 149-150
[120] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 107

Osborne's instincts reveal a loyalty and affection for Mary in a way that William's does not. In effect, William betrays their idyllic relationship by escaping to Europe and marrying another woman. Unconventionally, and yet crucially the predominant image of Hays's 'hunting squire' is that of a confused, frustrated but passionately involved man who is completely unlike the cynical rakes of the familiar rape narrative.

Unconventionally, the hero obviously admires his victim's unusual and independent spirit, and after the rape his over-riding intention is to marry and protect the woman he desires and admires, rather than to harm her. In this way, Hays leads us to sympathise with Osborne the man, but never with Osborne the patriarchal hunting squire figure. Furthermore, the portrayal of Mary's negativity and her refusal to have anything to do with the Squire before and after the rape works to suggest that there is something more at stake.

From the beginning of the novel Mary sees her 'suitor' as an unprincipled criminal who takes advantage of the less fortunate members of his community:

> I will owe no obligation to a man who considers my misfortunes as a privilege to insult me, and who has proved himself alike destitute of humanity and of principle.[121]

The passage suggests that an aristocrat's appeasing and generous behaviours are more dangerous to the heroine than the more obvious, conventional aristocratic-rake characteristics that appeal so greatly to the 'quivering', naive heroines of the Sentimental rape narrative. Hays's brand of unusual heroine is immune to the partiality to rakes described by Wollstonecraft:

> Men of wit and fancy are often rakes; and fancy is the food of love. Such men will inspire passion. Half the sex, in its present infantile state, would pine for a Lovelace: a man so witty, so graceful, and so valiant; and can they

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[121] Hays. *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 107

deserve blame for acting according to principles so constantly inculcated?[122]

The image of a chivalric, witty and graceful rake might appeal to the more naive reader of romance, but Mary's obstinate rejection of Osborne suggests that she understands his threats to be representative of corrupt aristocracy and gentry. To put it another way, unlike Wollstonecraft's Maria in *The Wrongs of Woman*, Mary Raymond recognises her suitor's behaviour. As Claudia L Johnson has argued, although Wollstonecraft's Venables 'practices active deceit', on the other hand, 'Darnford's narrative says it all'.[123] Maria was unaware of her husband's libertinism, yet her lover brags of his dealings with prostitutes 'the women of the town (again I must beg pardon for my habitual frankness) appeared to me like angels'.[124] As Johnson puts it:

> But republican discourse having clothed what might formerly be damned as 'libertine' grossness in the new garb fashioned of frankness, Maria sees his selfishness as admirable in servility, sees his impulsiveness as manly resoluteness and sees his gallantry as liberality.[125]

In contrast, Mary Raymond not only rejects the idea of consorting with an attractive and plausible rake, she also refuses to have one for a husband.

Unlike Davys's Amoranda, Burney's Evelina and Wollstonecraft's Maria, Hays's heroine realises that Squire Osborne's terms of reference to a woman are likely to ruin her because she recognises coercion in all its guises. Since Osborne proposed marriage to Mary on two occasions *before* he raped her, Mary's rejection of his offers is grounded in an immoveable view of his status in society. Mary is not

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[122] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p 229

[123] Claudia L Johnson 'Mary Wollstonecraft's Novels', in *Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp 189 - 208 (204)

[124] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, 1:102

[125] Johnson, 'Mary Wollstonecraft's Novels', p 204

persuaded by the glimpses of aristocratic generosity suggested by his frequent offers of marriage and, 'a *legal* title to his hand and fortune'.[126] In spite of his pleas, Mary sees Osborne's attentions as 'persecution' rather than flattery. When she refuses his offers she justifies the rejection with a condemnation of his patriarchal 'principles' as criminality via an unequivocal assertion that marriage does not offset the consequences of rape:

> Restore to me if you can [....] my fame, my honour, *my friend*, my unbroken mind, and unsullied youth; then might you, indeed, talk of your contrition; then might you dare to propose amends for my sorrows. O wretch! [....] unprincipled and selfish voluptuary! What havoc has your criminal passion wrought! Think not that I would ally my soul to your's; my haughty spirit, wounded, but not crushed, utterly contemns you [....]; mock not the woes you have heaped upon my defenceless head. Pitiless man, death will, ere long, free me from your persecutions![127]

Like Frances Burney's *Evelina*, Hays's second novel illustrates that the bodies of young women, even (relatively speaking) poor young women, are the prey of 'benevolent' patriarchal rakes and squires. When the heroine is rich, as is Thomas Holcroft's Anna St Ives, notions of 'property' are figured through the image of her body, and the plot works through what Irigaray describes as an ordering law within modern culture of 'exchange among men'. As does Hays, Holcraft draws his heroine with intellect and feeling, but he retains the tradition that a heroine's physical beauty drives the sexual economy in which, as Irigary puts it:

> women lend themselves to alienation in consumption, and to exchanges in which they do not participate, and that men be exempt from being used and circulated like commodities.[128]

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[126] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 164
[127] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 165
[128] Luce Irigaray, 'Women on the Market', in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. by M. Whitford, (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991) p 172

Late Eighteenth-Century 'Benevolent' Patriarchs

Holcroft published *Anna St Ives* in 1792, the same year that Wollstonecraft published *The Wrongs of Woman.*[129] The novel examines the place of women in England following revolution in France by making a distinction between women who are made political pawns in the affairs of great houses, and women who have a place in the promised 'new' world. But because Anna is the means by which Coke Clifton manages to overturn his own aristocratic family's misfortunes, the novel explores notions of landed property that are figured through the property in Anna's body.

The plot carries a favourite theme in late eighteenth-century revolutionary novels. Frank, the intelligent young son of Abimelech Henley, gardener to Sir Arthur St Ives, cultivates his mind, becomes an advocate of equal rights and the perfectibility of man, and converts and marries the rich and beautiful heiress of his father's employer. Frank Henley also rejects both birth and wealth, arguing that he wants the application of prosperity to 'most benefit that society from which it first sprang'.[130] He believes that his superior mind and delicacy is sufficient to attract Anna, yet he also feels that he has a claim to her, at least to her body:

> Superior gifts, superior attainments, and superior virtues inevitably beget admiration, in those who discover them, for their possessors. Admiration is the parent of esteem, and the continuance and increase of this esteem is affection, or, in its purest and best sense, love.[131]

However, there is a variation in the usual pattern. The unscrupulous Abimlech

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[129] Hays met Holcroft through William Godwin. Between 1795-1796 Hays, Godwin and Holcroft met for tea at her house. See *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist,* ed by Marilyn Brooks, (Lampeter, Ceredigion: The Edwin Mellin Press, 2004) pp 315-6

[130] Thomas Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) pp 382-3

[131] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, p 316

manages to secure his master's fortune, and so the marriage becomes one of convenience after all.

The decadence and moral bankruptcy of the old social order of birth and influence is associated with the wealthy male characters: Anna's father, Lord Fitz-Allen who is determined to retain family honour and integrity of his estates through marriage in her own class; the 'prodigal' Edward, the young St Ives who abandons his aristocratic principles for money to repay gambling debts 'from a very different avarice of enjoyment is eager to dock the entail'; and Coke Clifton, the aristocratic suitor who wishes to restore his own well-born family's damaged fortunes.[132]

Clifton most closely represents the Radical notion of the sexually and socially privileged male property-owning tyrant. Typically, the rake-seducer constantly defines Anna's 'treasure' in terms of her body:

> How often have I gazed in rapture at the beauteous carnation of her complexion, the whiteness of her hands and arms, and the extreme delicacy of their texture.[133]

His strategy is to fulfil his intention to 'purloin her key, and afterward to rob her of all her treasure'.[134] In familiar rape narrative style he determines to claim the woman he desires as his right:

> She must she shall be mine. It is a prize which I am born to bear away from all competitors.[135]

Clifton believes that the prerogative of his birth and class entitle him to a woman's body, by rape if marriage does not sanction it, and like his predecessor Lovelace he uses 'reason' and 'justice' to coerce her:

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[132] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives,* pp 382 - 383
[133] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, p 413
[134] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives* p 201
[135] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, p 179

> You are my wife! Ask yourself the meaning of the word. Can set forms and ceremonies unite mind to mind? And if not they what else? [....] You are my wife, and I have a right to the privileges of a husband [....] behold her in the very state I wished! Cowed, silenced, overawed! Her eyes deranged, her tongue motionless.[136]

Mercifully, Anna is not yet Clifton's wife, but the passage reveals what marriage to a 'benevolent' patriarch would mean. Had she been his wife, it would be his right and privilege to see her 'cowed, silenced, overawed'.

On the other hand, Anna St Ives is a woman of feeling and intellect; and like Hays's heroines she is not a 'silent' woman. She loves Frank, but intellectually she is convinced that it is her duty to marry the wealthy and influential suitor. She attempts to persuade Frank that the most noble option open to them is to keep their love on a purely intellectual plane, and to unite in educating Clifton:

> Dare you suppose mind has no sex, and that woman is not by nature the inferior of man? [....] Dare you think that riches, rank, and power, are usurpations; and that wisdom and virtue only can claim distinction? Dare you make it the business of your whole life to overturn these prejudices, and to promote among mankind that spirit of universal benevolence which shall render them all equals, all brothers, all stripped of their artificial and false wants, all participating the labour requite to produce the necessaries of life, and all combining in one universal effort of mind, for the progress of knowledge, the destruction of error, and the spreading of eternal truth?[137]

But, Clifton is not convinced that a woman is capable of outwitting him. He smothers his outraged pride and pretends to have been converted to the principles of truth and justice. However, at times Anna's intelligence reduces him to reassert his supremacy, 'if my views were different from what they are, I doubt whether madam

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[136] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, p 326
[137] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, pp 156 - 7

Confidence might not be brought to lull madam Caution so fast asleep [...]'.[138] He allows the two reformers to think that they are succeeding, and then has them abducted, separately. Things go badly wrong when Frank is nearly murdered and Clifton is seriously injured whilst attempting to rescue him. The rescue bid works to suggest that with education, Clifton could be benevolent.

Yet in the same way that Godwin, Wollstonecraft and Hays suggest the inevitability of Man becoming what the institutions of society make him, Holcroft demonstrates that continuing to bow to wealth and power does not change things. Since the aristocrat's 'conversion' concerns 'principle' and not 'sexuality' at the novel's ending, the balance of power in the triangular relationship between Clifton, Anna and Frank is restored. In the end, like Mary Raymond, Anna does not want to marry her seducer. As she puts it, 'Let us never cease our endeavours to reform the licentious and the depraved, but let us not marry them'.[139]

The novel demonstrates that like Clarissa Harlowe, Anna is rendered powerless to resist the aristocratic rake's dominance since she is the pawn of family politics. Ownership of Anna's body has to be contested, her legal right to ownership of property is limited, and her Radical views are fettered under the legal terms of a patriarchal society. Since the male characters remain engrossed in the transmission of landed property, the novel illustrates that in the 1790s marriage still sanctioned the usual rights.

What Holcroft does is to use the male characters' bid to 'possess' Anna's body to place them within a wider debate. That is, Frank's 'right' (to Anna's body) is

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[138] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, p 201
[139] Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, p 217

based on their mutual equal intellectual ability, but the aristocrat's 'right' is based on the conviction that his innate superiority authorises him to satisfy all his desires, including his acquisitiveness.

In spite of Holcroft's insistence on female 'mind', marriage is final confirmation of Anna's willingness to surrender what little ownership she has in her 'self'. In any case, since the aristocratic Clifton's logic convinces him that raping the woman he desires is justified, the constant and very real threat of rape demonstrates the fragility of her tenure. Although Holcroft partially resolves Anna's position through marriage to her chosen partner, he also demonstrates that she is prepared to believe that the rake is reformable. Hays's heroine does not risk it.

The gender politics in *The Victim of Prejudice* demonstrates that the aristocratic view of male rights renders women vulnerable to the effects of a social system that deprives women of education and employment. The novel suggests that although Osborne the man professes to adore his victim, Osborne the baronet, like Holcroft's Coke Clifton, harbours a notion of women that equates the female body with territory, to be invaded, plundered, and conquered. Hays believes that as long as society retains the notion of patriarchy, and as long as patriarchal power remains unfettered, things for women will remain 'as they are'. Mary Raymond's resistance to Osborne signals that he has no right to coerce her either as a male suitor or as the wealthy and influential figure. But the complexity of Osborne's character raises another question. Where does Hays's presentation of her gentleman rake stand in terms of the eighteenth-century anxieties concerning 'masculinity' and 'patriarchy' played out in contemporary Gothic novels?

In my discussion of late seventeenth-century dramatic representations I suggested that rape themes became a literary depository for fears generated by

political turmoil and anxieties connected with patriarchal rule. As it does in the 1690s the image of a raped woman's body in the 1790s continues to symbolise all that threatened society at large. Political tension tends to produce more and more fiction in which 'normal' notions of integrity and duty are questioned and subverted. Yet scenes of sexual violence and rape direct readers' attention to wider issues, including mob rule, generated by revolution in France. By the end of the eighteenth century, readers were used to expressions of anxiety generated by aristocratic sexual behaviour couched in 'Gothic' texts which were set in exotic or 'Catholic' locations.

As did Behn's *The Dumb Virgin,* Richardson's *Clarissa* and Holcroft's *Anna St Ives,* Ann Radcliffe's novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) makes the connection between violence in the exchange of women's bodies for power and wealth, but deployed in the Gothic style. My discussion of the novel contrasts the compelling attraction of a patriarchal would-be violator with the impotence of a man of sensibility. As Susan Manning puts it:

> Sensibility featured heroines who had been rendered morbidly misanthropic through excessive emotional investment, and heroes who drew generic characteristics from the 'humorists' of Renaissance writing: Smollett's Matthew Bramble in Humphry Clinker (1771) or more analytically Godwin's Fleetwood.[140]

Radcliffe recognises that the rake's manipulative powers are a necessity in contemporary society as well as the source of wealth and pleasure. Her heroine is obviously drawn to the aristocratic rake figure, but the portrayal of his financial and sexual behaviour poses questions about his 'benevolence'.

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[140] Susan Manning, 'Sensibility' in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1730 -1840,* ed by Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p 87; William Godwin *Fleetwood, or the New Man of Feeling,* ed by Gary Handwerk and A.A. Markley (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2001)

Emily and her aunt are under the spell of a man whose motivation is power rather than lust. Unlike the aristocratic 'Man of the World' who hides his feelings in the tradition of a figure that dates back to Machiavelli, and more recently, Richardson's rake Lovelace, Montoni uses his skill in masking his feelings in his bid to manipulate and seduce the innocent young heroine out of her money. On the other hand, Emily's lover Valancourt is a man of sensibility, that is, he is a stranger to scheme and intrigue. He is also self-centred and child-like. Unable to defend himself, he soon becomes embroiled in 'the most gay and fashionable circles of Paris'. He is lost in the clutches of the Countess Lacleur who 'had passed the spring of youth, but her wit prolonged the triumph of its reign', as well as the Marchioness Champfort, a widow who was 'handsome and still more artful, gay and fond of intrigue'.[141] In Europe the naïve Valancourt is as much in danger of seduction and rape as Emily is in Montoni's Gothic Castle. The heroine has to face life with fortitude, and the romance she craves becomes fixed on the only object available, her captor, Montoni.

Emily's anxieties are set within the stout walls, dungeons and ramparts of the castle, with its myriad of passages and locked doors. Through this symbolism the reader is constantly reminded that the function of the fortress of a woman's body is to stand against siege, and that women are in constant physical danger of rape and murder. Yet the stark Gothic architecture of Emily's 'prison' combines with the beauty of the surrounding landscape to mirror the heroine's emotions.

Emily's fatal attraction to Montoni is made obvious when she sees him walking towards her one evening. In a mixture of terror and fascination she is aware of 'a sullen haughtiness and a kind of dark watchful villainy, that gave a thrill of

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[141] Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) pp 293 - 294

horror to her heart'.[142] Whilst Emily thrills to Montoni's villainy, he is plotting to seize his wife's property. Part of the plan is to sell Emily to the Count Morano. Within this scheme, the legitimate authority of the patriarchal aristocracy that uses and abuses women in its search for wealth, power and influence becomes the central issue.

In classic Gothic novels the action often takes place in a Mediterranean setting, and uses Catholic motifs including: nuns, priests, convents, monasteries, religious life and indeed, Roman Catholicism itself which becomes a standard and flexible trope.[143] As George E Haggerty has argued:

> If the emergence of the novel itself celebrates the codification of middle-class values [....] the Gothic novel records the terror implicit in the increasingly dictatorial reign of those values. Gothic fiction seems particularly, if not aggressively, open to interpretation from various social, political, and sexual points of view. The Gothic novel achieves this potential precisely because it reflects, in perhaps predictable but nonetheless powerful ways, the anxiety that culture itself generates in its members. Gothic fiction thereby challenges the cultural system that both commodifies desire and renders it lurid and pathological.[144]

In these novels rape focuses the reader's attention on terror and gloom, brutal sexual aggression, supernatural agency, lurid architectural motif and sadomasochistic fantasy in order to reveal the force of a patriarch's obsession with power and empire. As Jerrold Hogle has argued:

> [....]Gothic fictions generally play with and oscillate between the earthily laws of conventional reality and the possibilities of the supernatural - at least

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[142] Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* p 287

[143] On the association between Gothic and anti-Catholicism, see George E Haggerty, 'The Horrors of Catholicism: Religion and Sexuality' in *Gothic Fiction, Romanticism on the Net,* Issues 36-37. November 2004-February 2005.Erudit/RONn36-372004-2005 Haggerty. 01/05/06; Ellis Hanson *Decadence and Catholicism,*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); John Ingamells, 'Discovering Italy'. *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century,* (London: Tate Gallery, 1996) 13 - 19; Colin Haydon *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth Century England circa 1714-1780* ,(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993)

[144] George E. Haggerty, 'The Gothic Novel, 1764 - 1824', in *The Columbia History of the British Novel,* ed. by John J. Richetti, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) pp 220 - 246 (221)

somewhat as Walpole urged such stories to do - often siding with one of these over the other in the end, but usually raising the possibility that the boundaries between these may have been crossed, at least psychologically but also physically or both. This oscillation can range across a continuum between what have come to be called the 'terror Gothic' on the one hand and the 'horror Gothic' on the other.[145]

These characteristics hold both characters and readers in fearful suspense about threats to life, safety and sanity, that are kept largely out of sight in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past.[146]

Leslie Fielder and others have demonstrated that the Gothic genre usually concerns a 'son' who wishes to be, and yet wishes to kill, his 'father', and feels guilty about his desires. On the other hand, Gothic heroines seek to appease and free themselves from the excesses of patriarchal dominance. As it did in late seventeenth-century drama, power in Gothic novels is associated with rape, violence and subversive social-sexual relations, but in these novels power is achieved through a comparison with past, more corrupt times. Yet, beneath the tangle of contradictions lies a deeper fear, that older powers will adversely affect the reader.[147]

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[145] These extremes of the 'Gothic' were first defined theoretically in Ann Radcliffe's 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' in *Gothic Documents,* (1826), published posthumously, which appeared first in the *New Monthly Magazine* and then as a preface to her novel *Gaston de Blondeville,* pp 168 - 71. The same distinctions were best reinvoked for recent critical discussion in the 1969 essay by Robert Hume.

[146] Jerrold E Hogle 'The Gothic in Western Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* ed. by Jerrold E Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp 1 - 21 (2-3)

[147] Leslie Fiedler, 'Charles Brockden Brown and the Invention of the American Gothic' in *Love and Death in the American Novel,* rev. edn. (New York: Dell, 1966), 126-61. For the best histories of female Gothic see Julianne Fleenor, ed. *The Female Gothic,* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983); Kate Ellis *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology,* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Eugenia De Lamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: a Poetics of Gothic,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Susan Wolstenholme, *Gothic Revisions: Writing Women as Readers,* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); Diane Hoevelet, *Gothic Feminisms: the Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988); Susanne Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)

The inspiration for much of late-century Gothic was an earlier work, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). The death of Manfred's son Conrad fulfils a prophesy that threatens the patriarch's dynastic ambitions. He tries to avert disaster by embarking on the relentless pursuit of his would-be daughter-in-law Isabella. Since Isabella regards him as her father and his wife as her mother, the threat of incest is suggested; but in a sense, every relationship in the novel is suspect because of the constant revelations of relationships between the characters.

The novel offers its readers an image of the dysfunctional family as a trope or metaphorical device working to question patriarchy. Manfred defies society's rules in the rejection of his wife, the abuse of his daughter and the pursuit of his dead son's fiancee. Since he is driven by ambition, his family frustrates him because he sees his son as 'a homely youth' and his wife Hippolita as sterile: 'too long has she cursed me by her unfruitfulness'. On the other hand, Isabella represents the possibility of continuing his blood line.[148] The priest Jerome summarises Manfred's pursuit of Isabella as at least adulterous and at most a travesty, which casts doubt on the aristocratic patriarch's authority and honour:

> 'By me thou art warned not to pursue the incestuous design on thy contracted daughter'.[149]

Bent on rape, Manfred pursues his victim through the castle's intricate cloisters, the subterraneous regions and the labyrinth of darkness which symbolise sexual and political entrapment and become the material of societal anxiety and nightmare:

> Delay might give him time to reflect on the horrid measures he had conceived, or produce some circumstance in her favour if she could for that night at least

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148 Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* in *Three Gothic Novels,* ed. by Peter Fairclough, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968) pp 5; 59.

149 Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p 84

> avoid his odious purpose. - Yet where conceal herself! How to avoid the pursuit he would infallibly make throughout the castle! As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of saint Nicholas. Could she reach the altar before she was overtaken [....][150]

Although she is the object of Manfred's lust, Isabella merely represents a 'womb' that offers an opportunity to preserve his empire. In the end, Manfred's rapacious desire brings nothing but loss. He suspects his daughter Matilda of consorting with his rival who is the rightful heir to the dynasty; and when he mistakes her for Isabella he murders her. Whereas Walpole's novel signals loss of property, of power and of the possibility of heirs Radcliffe's novel follows one of the enduring foci of the Gothic novel: the sexual anxiety of the victimised heroine combined with the perverse incestuous desire of an older aristocratic male characterised by the features of the landscape which is read as physical and political entrapment.

As is usual in Gothic novels, rape episodes in Matthew G Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) tend to focus the reader on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of patriarchal authority, rather than the plight of the individual victim.[151] The story concerns a tormented young abbot Ambrosio, the revered 'Man of Holiness'.[152] Set in Roman Catholic Spain, the novel describes rioting, the tyranny and hypocrisy of the Church, murder and fornication, the consequences of a lack of proper legal systems and the existence of the 'Inquisition'. These elements arguably work to paint a picture of pre-revolutionary France, and the factors that contributed to the country's downfall. The rape episodes constantly link patriarchal corruption and the image of authority's

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150 Walpole, *'The Castle of Otranto,* p 61

151 Wollstonecraft lent Hays her copy of Lewis's *The Monk.* See Mary Wollstonecraft's letter To Mary Hays, March 29 1797 in *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist,* ed by Marilyn Brooks, (Lampeter. Eredigion: The Edwin Mellin Press, 2004) pp 307-8

152 Matthew G Lewis, *The Monk,* (London: Penguin, 1998) p 19

sexual perversion, for example, in the abbot's resolution to 'destroy Antonia's honour':

> Naturally addicted to the gratification of the senses, in the full vigour of manhood and heat of blood, he had suffered his temperament to acquire such ascendancy, that his lust was become madness. Of his fondness for Antonia, none but the grosser particles remained; he longed for the possession of her person; and even the gloom of the vault, the surrounding silence, and the resistance which he expected from her, seemed to give a fresh edge to his fierce and unbridled desires.[153]

According to convention the victim is seen as the temptress:

> And whom am I to thank for this? What seduced me into rimes, whose are remembrance makes me shudder? Fatal witch! Was it not thy beauty? Have you not plunged my soul into infamy? Have you not made me a perjured hypocrite, a ravisher, an assassin?[154]

On the other hand Ambrosio is seduced by Matilda, a novice disguised as Rosario.

At the end of the novel Matilda is described by Lucifer as 'a subordinate but crafty spirit' who assumes a female guise in a successful bid to tempt the monk.[155] Satan claims that the guise is based not on a woman, but the representation of a woman, and the portrait of the Madonna that Ambrosio idolises.[156]

Drawing on Judith Butler's argument that drag, and by implication gender, calls into question the 'originality' of normative delineations of sexual identity, Lauren Fitzgerald suggests that Lewis's authorship lacks stable ground.[157] Clara Tuite argues that Rosario's unveiling is 'a strategy of evasion. This unveiling is in fact not an

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153 Lewis, *The Monk*, p 325 - 326
154 Lewis, *The Monk*, p 329 - 330
155 Lewis, *The Monk*, p 375
156 Lewis, *The Monk*, p 361
157 Lauren Fitzgerald, 'The Sexuality of Authorship in *The Monk*' *Romanticism on the Net*: Queer Romanticism, Issues 36-37 November 2004-February 2005. See also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) p 41

unveiling but a re-veiling in female costume'.[158] In other words, this is an attempt to closet the homoerotic relationship between Rosario and Ambrosio. It is important to note that there is never a disclosure of a true gender or the definition of an identity which determines the nature of the relationship. The ambiguous sexuality of Rosario/Matilda provides an homoerotic background against which larger dramas are played out. What confirms Matilda as a creature of evil is that she corrupted a man of God. Once the female side of the ambiguous figure is revealed, she is held responsible for the male figure of authority's perversions. When Ambrosio sees before him 'a young and beautiful woman, the preserver of his life, the adorer of his person; and whom affection for him had reduced to the brink of the grave', Lewis draws the female as the seducer whilst the male is excused. Sex is presented as the reward for the man, even though the man is a celibate priest. Further, the reader is implicated in the assumption since the narrator asks: 'Who then can wonder if he yielded to the temptation?'. Yet there are complications. Matilda (albeit in the role of Rosario) is disturbed by the nightingale's song, the usual fictional indicator of an impending rape:

> The nightingale had now taken her station upon an orange-tree fronting the hermitage, and poured forth a strain the most melancholy and melodious. Rosario raised his head, and listened to her with attention.[159]

Who is the perpetrator and who is the victim?

The Monk is a comment on Catholicism versus the world since, after all, Ambrosio's hypocrisy *is* revealed. Yet, Lewis's examination of 'authority' is not concerned with leadership, corruption, the mismanagement of finances, but with sex.

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[158] Clara Tuite, 'Cloistered Closets: Enlightenment Pornography, The Confessional State, Homosexual Persecution and *The Monk*', in *Romanticism on the Net* 8 (November 1997; 18 December 2002)

[159] Lewis, *The Monk*, p 52

For our purposes, Matilda is, in the end, rejected in favour of the virtuous Antonia, and the dangerous conflict between Ambrosio's public reputation and his private sexual longings symbolise the individual's struggle in a dangerous and unpredictable world. However, although the novel explores corruption and the deep social anxieties of its time, it does not offer solutions, which in itself constitutes a sinister warning.

In contrast to Manfred, Montoni and Ambrosio, Hays's baronet is not wholly corrupt. What Hays's treatment of the rape theme explores and recognises is the *inevitability* of a violent and catastrophic result of a meeting between a beautiful girl and a powerful man, the 'material link in the chain of events'.[160] Hays's portrayal of a villainous but repentant baronet recognises the 'manners' of the age, but it also seeks a definition of 'civilisation' in the 1790s by probing the consequences of society's deference to the rich and powerful.

In the same way, Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of the World* (1777) explores the sexual behaviour of the gentry and its effects on the notion of 'civilisation' in a patriarchal society. At the beginning of the novel Richard Annesly warns his daughter against wealthy and influential rakes:

> Look on those men, my child, even in their gayest and most alluring garb, as creatures dangerous to the peace, and destructive of the welfare of society; look on them as you would on a beautiful serpent, whose mischief we may not forget while we admire the beauties of its skin.[161]

Nevertheless, the baronet Thomas Sindall inveigles his way into the lives of the Annesly family. When he eventually attempts to rape his own daughter, issues of parental integrity and authority are raised.

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160 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 6

161 Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of the World,* (London: Garland, 1974) pp 59 - 60

Unfortunately, Sindall is clever, prudent, intelligent as well as handsome, and like many country squires in eighteenth-century fiction 'he did what he liked'.[162] Sindall sets out to seduce Harriet with her brother Billy's help, but sensing Billy's disapproval of the plan, he plans to ruin *him* by introducing him to vice, gambling, and following a minor theft at University in Oxford, to Newgate. When she visists Billy before his deportation Harriet is kidnapped and drugged, in order to:

> assist the execution of his villainy [....] Beset with toils like these, his helpless prey was, alas! Too much in his power to have a chance of escape; and that guilty night completed the ruin of her'. [163]

The end of the first part of the story sees Harriet's baby daughter accidentally falling into a river and feared drowned.

Some years separate the first from the second part of the novel. Sindall acquires a ward who is the daughter of a friend who died abroad. Suspecting that there are plots to reunite Lucy with her lover, the distraught Sindall makes sexual advances to her. Recounting the event Lucy complains 'he rose, and clasping me round the waist, would have forced a kiss; I screamed out, and he turned from me'.[164] Running from the house Lucy meets peasants who reveal that she is the foundling that they took to Sir Thomas. Predictably, Harriet is Sindall's daughter. The episode draws the reader's attention to both the aristocratic baronet's debauched life-style and the knotty problem of identifying heirs. However the plot carries another message, conveyed in the adventures of Harriet's brother amongst the North American Indians.

The complex, highly charged symbol of the savage had been used since

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[162] Mackenzie, *The Man of the World,* p 78
[163] Mackenzie, *The Man of the World,* p 254
[164] Mackenzie, *The Man of the World,* p 130

Tacitus (c.55-120) to contrast the virtues of the rural over the urban, or simply as a commentator on civilisation.[165] In the late seventeenth century Aphra Behn described a savage prince whose honour and loyalty surpassed that of the white men who betrayed him in *Oroonoko,* (that is to say, before Rousseau's 'noble savage' haunted the fiction of the late eighteenth century*).* As Jane Spencer points out, it is possible to draw parallels between Behn's enslaved African man and a European woman.[166] Mackenzie's Billy spends time with natives during his sentence in the West Indies and North America. The society he adopts is presented as hard and warlike compared with civilised Europe, but, it is honest and honourable. On his return Billy is cheated, robbed and almost killed by members of a 'civilised' society ruled by 'benevolent' land-owning patriarchs.

In the last years of her life, Hays acknowledged the part played by Rev. Robert Robinson in her, as Luria Walker puts it 'cognitive development'. She had 'cut her Nonconformist teeth' on books he gave her, including translations of works written by the Huguenot Theologians Jacques Saurin and Jean Claude, as well as copies of the Reverend's own sermons.[167] A copy of one of these, *Slavery Inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity* (1788) was enclosed in a letter describing the death of his daughter. The sermon was based on a passage from Luke X:18 'The Lord hath sent me - to preach Deliverance to the Captives', and promoted the equal humanity and claim on God's justice of the fallen woman and the African slave

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165 Publius Tacitus, *Germania* (98) www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tacitus1.html. Also, Michel de Montaigne's essay 'On Cannibals' (1580). uvic.ca/Library/SLT/ideas/montaigne.html

166 Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: or The History of the Royal Slave, in All the Histories and Novels written by the late Ingenious Mrs Behn,* (London, 1705); Jane Spencer, *The Rise Of the Woman Novelist,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) p 50

167 Luria Walker, *The Growth of a Woman's Mind,* p 40. Hays described Robinson as 'the awakener of my mind' in a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson in April 1842. (Dr Williams' Library).

respectively. In the sermon Robinson provides examples of Biblical, Classical and historical accounts to demonstrate that slavery is indefensible for Christian believers. He stresses that Christians had a spiritual affinity with slaves, but Hays 'recognised that women's affinity was even more subversive than that'.[168] Whilst Radical women draw comparisons between the African slave and women's condition, Hays 'locates the genesis of her understanding of the nexus between gender and the existential condition of enslavement that is threaded through her works'.[169] *The Victim of Prejudice* explores the fundamental issue that stands in the way of universal freedom for women and slaves, that is, the ambitions and priorities of the landed classes together with the prejudices constructed to support their will.

As it does for Sir Thomas Sindall and the rake hero of Holcroft's *Anna St Ives* Coke Clifton, rank and privilege allows Osborne to do as he likes and have what he wants. Since he is a man who believes that *because* of his wealth and status he may coerce a woman into sex or marriage, Osborne is sincere in his belief that Mary entertains what he understands to be "prejudices so unreasonable!" against him.[170] Since he is the Squire and ruler of the estate where she lives with her guardian, Sir Peter Osborne is Mary's landlord, the man who according to Edmund Burke, is ultimately best fitted to assume the responsibilities of rule. But, not only does Osborne violate the heroine, he habitually abuses the residents on his estate by neglecting his duties and responsibilities towards them. Hays's portrayal of a despotic landowner invites the reader to judge the validity of Burke's belief.

On the other hand, we might assume that Osborne's fixation on Mary is

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168 Luria Walker, *The Growth of a Woman's Mind*, p 42
169 Luria Walker, *The Growth of a Woman;s Mind*, p 42
170 Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 150

rooted in the aristocratic urge to possess that which his victim refuses to supply. This leads us to the question posed earlier in this chapter. What is the nature of the self-respecting, powerful and influential aristocrat's obsession with an ordinary woman like Mary Raymond? Mark Breitenberg has argued that masculine desire hinges on a triadic structure of 'honour', 'publication' and 'desire'. In the next section I argue that since Hays's political agenda imagined a very different scenario, her portrayal of the hero's obsession and her heroine's reaction to it runs contrary to this sequence.

Fatal Attraction

Gazing at a mural depicting Helen of Troy's abduction, Shakespeare's Lucrece asks 'Why should the private pleasure of some one/become the public plague of so many?'.[171] Mark Breitenberg suggests that the reason for this is that 'in the early modern period, honor (in men) and chastity (in women) are the most definitive attributes of identity'.[172] However, 'honour' is a matter of public opinion. It must be assigned by others and not merely an inherent or intrinsic possession. Furthermore, masculine 'honour' must be made public. At the same time, a woman's virtue rests on 'reputation' which is also something that must be based on the opinion of others. Because men are dependent on something that is in others' control, 'honour', feminine 'virtue', and reputation become a source of private and public anxiety to

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171 William Shakespeare, 'The Rape of Lucrece', in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare,* ed by David Bevington, 3rd edn (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foreman, 1980) ll, pp 1478-1479. For a discussion on Rome as a 'shame culture' see Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987) pp 89 - 91. On a discussion of Lucrece's suicide as a symbolic restoration of her purified body which removes the stain that dishonours her husband, Collatine, see Coppelia Kahn, 'The Rape in Shakespeare's 'Lucrece'', in *Shakespeare Studies,* 9 (1976) 65

172 Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp 97-98

them.[173]

This kind of patriarchal masculine anxiety can be read as an inevitable and necessary condition that operates on two levels. Although it reveals contradictions and fissures within the patriarchal system, it is deployed in positive ways in order to drive and enable patriarchy's continuation of itself. On this argument, anxiety is so endemic within eighteenth century masculinity that it provides an analysis of the discourses that respond to it. As Breitenberg puts it, anxiety is:

> both a negative effect that leads us to patriarchy's own internal discord, but it is also an instrument (once properly contained, appropriated or returned) of its perpetuation. If anxiety were *only* a critical lens showing us the contradictions of the system that produced it, we would not see the function, the cultural work, that this physiological and psychological condition accomplishes - it would merely be an effect.[174]

If masculine anxiety is an indicator of cultural or individual turmoil, given the volume of anxiety we see in late-century Gothic novels we might reasonably assume patriarchy to be in the process of extinction. Yet in the 1790s patriarchal strategies of appropriation, containment and re-circulation within a social system whose most fundamental assumption, at least in theory, was the natural inequality of its members remains successful. On the other hand, according to Breitenberg's model, if Osborne is to accrue masculine honour with his peers in order to confirm his masculinity and the proprietorship of the female object of his desire, the rape has to be witnessed by others. Furthermore, according to Breitenberg, once the rape has been made public the heroine must be destroyed.

In a sense, Mary's stubborn resistance, her aloofness, and her desperate attempts to defy her rapist can be read both as a publication of the rape, and as the

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173 Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity*, pp 97-98
174 Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity*, p 2-3

public affirmation of her private virtue, integrity and honour. But Mary Raymond's actions and reactions to her rapist increase rather than decrease his desire and admiration for her. Moreover, Osborne wants to marry and protect his rape victim, not destroy her. In this way Hays's plot defies Breitenberg's argument as well as familiar rape narrative outcomes. As I have argued, the novel's message is that the threats to Mary Raymond's reputation and safety are the effects of the sexual double standard, the persistence of societal prejudice, and inconsistencies in the law.

In summary, Hays's resistance to conventional rape narrative 'resolutions' interrupts all former and usual sentimental and Gothic patterns and devices. Since Mary Raymond has no property she does not 'belong' to an extended family whose main concern is to orchestrate their daughter's union with a partner in the way that the Harlowes contrive. She is not 'sold' by her aristocratic kinsman as is Emily in Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Since Osborne's immediate family are not mentioned, and Mary is orphaned during babyhood, there is no potential of the link between families that we saw in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, and Mackenzie's *The Man of the World*. There are no gender complications in Hays's critique of her society such as we see in Lewis's *The Monk*. Since Hays's novels insist that prejudice itself is society's disease because it works to support all kinds of injustices to women couched in terms of female 'weakness' and male power, Hays's heroine is not blamed for society's ills as is Lewis's Matilda. On the other hand, Hays's hero functions as a form of social organization that results in distress and loss of equilibrium, and his obsession is shown to be part of a system that ensures an unequal distribution of power and authority, a system which always and only sustains itself in constant defence of the privileges of some of its members through its constraint of others.

In the 1790s there is a growing awareness amongst Radical women writers of

the conflict between the ambitions of patriarchy and political liberty and women's rights. Furthermore, as Helen Bruder has argued, any British observer could obtain vast amounts of information about the revolution since there was much traffic of news and people. Rapid reportage of every event appeared in the *Universal* and *Gentleman's* magazines.[175] *The Bon Ton Magazine* (1791-1796) elected to chronicle the events of the Revolution in an overtly sexualised way, and during the 1790s the association between invasion and the violation of women also featured in popular ballads, for example, 'Church and King' sung to the tune of Rule Britannia: [176]

> While O'er the bleeding corpse of France
> Wild Anarchy exalting stands
> And Female friends around her dance
> With fatal *lamp-cords* in their hands.[177]

With the imprisonment of the French royal family a new trend had begun. France became a threat from women rather than to them.[178] Yet the imagery of a helpless and sexually vulnerable French queen drawn in terms that promise rape betrays anxieties about 'patriarchy' and 'masculinity' as well as 'femininity'.

Tom Furniss has argued that Burke's view of the endangered queen is an Oedipal fantasy with features that resemble an 'obscene joke'.[179] Furniss argues that the 'joke' necessitates the existence of 'a voyeuristically inclined third person', that is, Burke's contemporaries, those 'male Radical readers through a shared aggression

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[175] *The Gentleman's Magazine* was an exclusively literary periodical developed by its editor Edward Cave in 1748.

[176] *The Bon Ton* carried a feature entitled 'Epitome of the Times' every month after September, 1792.

[177] Betty Bennett, *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism: 1793-1815,* (New York and London: Garland, 1976) Lines 1 - 4 pp 71-73

[178] Helen P Bruder, *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997) pp 166 - 168

[179] Tom Furniss, 'Gender in Revolution: Edmund Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft', in *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution,* ed by K Everest, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp 78 - 80

towards the female emblem of aristocratic society'.[180] Burke's description of a Parisian mob marching on Versailles in October 1789 also harked back to a 'Golden Age' in Europe in an attempt to condemn the French uprising and to restore the *ancien regime* 'the age of chivalry is gone. - That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever'.[181]

Hays's second novel confirms her opposition to Burke's belief in the aristocracy's fitness to rule. She understands patriarchal aristocratic governance to draw its strength from female 'weaknesses' in order to continue the commodification of women. When the image of patriarchal force and sexual violence is attached to the image of raped women in the way that Burke described, Radical women like Hays receive a message that they cannot ignore. When she takes egalitarian reform principles of the 1790s and applies them to women, she responds to the traditionalist emphasis on hierarchical order within society with vigour.

The Victim of Prejudice demonstrates that, like her contemporary Radical William Godwin, she does not hold with what Robert Miles describes as 'the venerable Whig belief in an ancient Gothic constitution as a means of providing intellectual support for the status quo'.[182] Godwin's *Caleb Williams* identifies Falkland's deference to the chivalric past, and 'through his attachment to 'honour' the chivalric code of the Gothic gentleman.[183] As such, Falkland unconsciously reproduces the 'spirit and character' of the government and through it enacts upon

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180 Furniss, 'Gender in Revolution', pp 78 - 80

181 Burke, *Reflections*, p 168 - 171

182 Robert Miles, 'The 1790s: the effulgence of Gothic' in *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* ed by Jerrold E Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp 41 - 62 (49 - 50)

183 Miles, 'The 1790s: the effulgence of Gothic' pp 49-50

others the despotism implicit in its anachronistic codes'.[184] Tyrrel is also an example of a tyrant who does not hesitate to destroy his tenants' lives, and like Holcroft's Coke Clifton, he symbolises a patriarchy that commodifies and subjugates wives and daughters.

However Hays's insistence on Mary's rejection of patriarchy and the complications in the rapist's character do not entirely explain the hero's obsession with the heroine. I would argue that Hays not only intended to alter the rape narrative through her portrayal of unusual characters but also to enhance the image of the fictional heroine. Hence, the patriarchal Squire is obsessed with a woman who possesses 'the strong mind only, that, firmly resting on its own powers, can sustain and recover itself amidst the world's scorn and injustice'.[185]

Mary Raymond's rejection of marriage, death or prostitution and her attempt to support herself after rape is a refusal to enter into the patriarchal circle of honour, publication and masculine desire that Breitenberg describes. Her refusal is based on her sense that such codes are detrimental to women. *The Victim of Prejudice* illustrates that in spite of the aristocrat's good intentions, his application of 'time-honoured traditions' and 'social and sentimental structures' includes sexual and legal coercion. The exercising of landowning patriarchal force threatens Mary's rights and freedoms. In spite of himself, Osborne admires a woman who is brave, passionate, rational and fit to take her place in a Radical 'new' world that he could not possibly understand. When Hays's heroine refuses to be part of his system, Osborne the baronet cannot possibly approve, but Osborne the man cannot resist such independence and strength.

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184 Miles, 'The 1790s: the effulgence of Gothic', pp 49 - 50
185 Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p 182

However, at the end of the novel Mary Raymond remains defiant:

> Let him learn, that, while the slave of sensuality, inconsistent as assuming, he pours, by his conduct, contempt upon chastity, in fain will he impose on woman barbarous penalties, or seek to multiply restriction; his seductions and example, yet more powerful, will defeat his precepts, of which *hypocrisy*, not virtue, is the genuine fruit. Ignorance and despotism, combating frailty with cruelty may go on to propose *partial* reform in one invariable, melancholy, round; reason derides the weak effort; while the fabric of superstition and crime, extending its broad base, mocks the toil of the visionary projector.[186]

But the heroine requires a political solution to injustices. As her creator does in the *Appeal,* Mary Raymond demands change:

> *I have lived in vain*! Unless the story of my sorrows should kindle in the heart of man, in behalf of my oppressed sex, the sacred claims of humanity and justice.

As things are, Mary's refusal to 'align' her soul with her rapist not only questions his role as patriarchal governor in the home it also exposes and destabilises the myth of the benevolent patriarch.

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[186] Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice*, p 174

AFTER WORD

Let's forget the rape, shall we?

In 2001 Germaine Greer launched the English National Opera's new version of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* with an article on depictions of rape and their function. Greer argued that although the spectacle of a man humiliating a woman is one that masculine culture never seems to tire of, actual depictions of rape are rare since:

> Rape has no duration and no narrative content. It is a catastrophe, and as such can only function as the end of one story and the beginning of another. Of itself it has no motivation and no psychology.[1]

Because writers from Ovid to Shakespeare use the rape scene to make a political statement, they routinely avoid the plight of the female rape victim herself. For example, Ovid's account of Lucrece's rape takes no more than a single line after which her personal trauma becomes subsumed in the politics surrounding the event. That is, Lucius Junius Brutus transforms into a heroic defender of civil liberties, and the rapist prince Tarquin is identifiable with any arbitrary ruler. On the other hand, since Shakespeare wrote for mixed audiences he moralises as well as politicises. In his account, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), Tarquin is oppressed by his own lust. Yet, Shakespeare's world *is* a patriarchal world. The Bard never questions the idea that because she is his wife, Lucretia is Collatinus's property. Furthermore, since she is depicted as being on the point of death rather than sex, there is little eroticism in his and the hundreds of other portrayals of Lucretia. The main event of the raped Lucretia's story is her suicide, and the fact that she chooses death rather than family

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1 Germaine Greer, Let's Forget the Rape Shall We? *The Guardian*. Friday 1 June 2001

dishonour. Lucretia herself is never the issue, and the mental and physical harm done to the rape victim is never the point because the rapist offended not against her, but against the body politic.

The thesis examined a number of texts written after Shakespeare in which men describe all kinds of weaknesses in women that suggest a fixed, and sometimes (to male readers) a delightful, vulnerability to rape. These texts tend to celebrate the superiority of men and the view that a woman's body is at a male's disposal because of a 'natural' inequality. Hays's readers had long been groomed to believe that nature intended women to comfort not to reason, and that their 'natural' role is to be 'soft and soothing' and to 'grace and embellish men's lives'.[2] Yet, there are a variety of views of women in the Long Eighteenth Century ranging from woman as 'angel' to woman as 'whore'.

Texts written by men tend to draw characters in keeping with changes in the philosophy of what it is to be a Man and continue to present themes that define women as 'property'. Sometimes these texts trivialise women's 'romances' in an attempt to claw-back lost ground in textual power struggles, or relegate women to the margins of a plot. At best a woman's body has been presented as the prize in a bargain between men.

Because seventeenth and eighteenth-century women are deprived of a place in politics, some women's narratives not only engage in criticism of patriarchy they also experiment with masculine notions of 'femininity', 'masculinity' and 'Sensibility'. As we have seen, some early eighteenth-century women writers even seek to establish what it is to be a Woman at the point of rape rather than rape being

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[2] James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 3rd edn. 2 vols. I (London, 1766) pp 272 - 272

the point at which masculine politics emerge. Reluctant to 'forget the rape', these women writers use the theme to give shape to feelings of 'thingness'. As such, these fictions express something more than a dissatisfaction with the way feminine 'nature' is described, and, since they reveal deep suspicion of the way women's bodies are viewed both philosophically and materially, they suggest that the view is illogical and inequitable.

The difficulty for women writers was that unless language changed from the language of 'property' to one that accommodated the idea of the female 'self', there was no way of describing 'natural' relations between the sexes. As far as Radical women writers were concerned the picture of the feminine 'ideal' promoted in Sentimental literature presented women as weak, quivering, sexless puppets at best, but at worst, it actually exposed them to sexual exploitation. The notion of passive, submissive female 'Sensibility' designed by men for men seemed at odds with the Radical notion of female sexual desire, rationality, and 'selfhood'.

In this thesis I have argued that since the rape trope predominantly focused readers on patriarchal anxieties such as the loss of power and property, rape narratives familiar to Hays's readers seemed to ignore the rape and its consequences to women. On the other hand, Hays's novels examine women's experience as silenced and vulnerable objectified playthings in a man's world. For example, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* defies the 'ideal' that suppresses the female voice in sexual relations, and *The Victim of Prejudice* demonstrates how quickly and efficiently that newly-found voice can be snuffed out by male aggression.

Hays's re-fashioning of the stock rape narrative stresses the reality of rape by drawing the heroine as an ordinary woman (rather than a fictional stereotype) who engages with a hero who is powerful and influential, yet also has his strengths and

weaknesses. What Hays's fiction does not accommodate is the kind of female coquetry that feeds on male fantasy and leads to rape. Furthermore, for Hays conventional rape narrative solutions are flawed because the victim's death, marriage to the rapist or a reduction to prostitution serve no-one. In her fiction, the psychological and physical event that promises nothing but disaster to the woman involved has to be addressed as a discreet and important issue in its own right.

Hays's novels take rape seriously by demonstrating that male sexual aggression denies women basic rights. As things are in the 1790s men have rights (to women's bodies, as possessions), yet women bear responsibility (for the protection of their bodies and for male sexual aggression). Yet Hays suggests that for both men and women rights come with responsibility. In *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney,* Hays's heroine has the right to choose. She demands the right to desire Harley, but when required she is also capable of taking responsibility for his child and the maid servant that her husband seduces. In *The Victim of Prejudice* Mary Raymond has the right not to choose a sexual partner, and the right to accuse her rapist, but at the same time she takes responsibility for her own fate. Whatever way you look at it, Hays's heroines are unusual and her treatment of rape unconventional.

At the same time Hays's patriarchal hero is as unconventional as the heroine. Unconventionally, Peter Osborne is a sexually aggressive but sincere, honourable male who is fatally attracted to the independent, intelligent and passionate Mary Raymond. Most unusually, Hays's rapist wants to marry his victim. Unusually, she refuses. But ultimately Mary Raymond's rejection of Squire Osborne stands for the rejection of patriarchal systems that subjugate women, the constructions of femininity that underlie such systems, and unjust laws that ensure that raped and prostituted women are ruined. Hence, Hays's re-construction of female sensibility,

her scrutiny of patriarchy and the revision of the rape narrative are both radical, and Radical.

One of the ways she deals with the effects of rape is to imbue her heroines with a developed sense of independence and Selfhood, and to show ways in which things as they are work to undermine female strengths. For example, because Hays's first novel argued the existence of a female sensibility that combines 'feeling' with 'intellect', the rape in the second novel highlights the notion that a sexual assault on the heroine's body must also be an assault on her mind. As far as the psychological impact of rape is concerned, Hays's narrative demonstrates that a culture in which sexual pleasure is denied or at least frowned upon leads to the distorted expression of pleasure which is often violent in nature. The Romance novels in which corrupt and cynical men force innocent girls to do their bidding, or handsome rakes carry them away to 'save' them from dreary oppressed lives, represent a sub-set of pornography and a cultural distortion of sexual expression.

But whilst the proliferation of this kind of pornography could have indicated sexual liberation it actually suggested repression, since prurience is the opposite face of Puritanism. When an avenue of self-expression is closed a distorted form of self-expression can open in an effort to resolve some kind of balance. Hays's re-working of the rape trope demonstrates that constructions of what is 'natural' male and female behaviour are dishonest fictional representations of relations between men and women. In its more familiar form the fictional representation of rape has nothing to do with sexual pleasure and everything to do with the deprivation of sensory stimulus, with repression, and the desexualising of the victim.

Hays's novels assert that attitudes and prejudices are inextricably bound to society's agendas, and that although the patriarchal propaganda fed through fiction

and conduct literature is titillating it is also restricting. But she suggests that in an 'enlightened' culture that rejects religion yet adheres to the eighteenth-century premise that human nature is essentially evil, attitudes to sexual pleasure have become confused, and misogyny one of the results. On this view, rape narratives are simply formal devices designed to create a feeling of 'normality'. Hays's novels represent an unswerving insistence on rights for women whatever price the heroine has to pay, but they are also an optimistic and positive approach to an individual's experience.

After Hays, fictional depictions of marriage negotiations continue. However, a much more confident and self-possessed heroine emerges who expects to discuss her future destiny with her family and voice her preferences when a man offers his title and fortune. After Hays, the aristocratic rake figure is replaced by a stronger, more cultured, more mysterious, and more thinking hero who is engaged in intellectual and economic pursuits. It is interesting that with these changes there also appears to be a reduction in the numbers of rape narratives produced in the Romantic period. Reasons for the decline may reside in the heightened interest in education and the commercial and religious values that seeped into fictions concerning family life, courtship and marriage. I would suggest that arguments for women's rights and the assertion of Selfhood advanced by Hays play a part. Hays's development and revision of narrative structures and characterisations that elevated the image of the sexually aggressive male and insisted on a chaste and virtuous female left a legacy that changed the shape of nineteenth-century fictional representations of relationships between men and women.

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