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**Enlightenment Politeness and the Female Reader:  
The Role of Didactic Literature in Teaching Politeness to  
Women in Virginia and Scotland, 1750-1850**

**Megan Leah Ledford**

**Dissertation Submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
School of History, Classics and Archaeology  
The University of Edinburgh  
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## **Declaration**

I confirm that the following thesis has been composed by me, and is completely my own work. None of the information has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. None of the information has been submitted for publication.

Megan Leah Ledford

12 July 2012

## Thesis Abstract

This thesis explores the notion of gentility among wealthy women in Virginia from 1750 to 1850 by comparing it to Scottish Enlightenment-inspired codes of politeness practiced among the Scottish gentry residing in Edinburgh, the Highlands, and London in the same era. It analyzes how books that taught the codes of polite morality, here referred to as didactic literature, were read by genteel, young women in Scotland and Virginia and the ways in which this literature was applied to their education, courtship practices, and social behaviors. Scots and Virginians in this era were linked through migration patterns, correspondence between families, and a transatlantic book trade, but they were also linked through the interpretation of politeness. The polite manners of genteel individuals in Britain, instilled as a part of Scottish moral philosophy, were adopted by many who aspired to gentility in America, but original, archival research has indicated that this was especially true among the elites of Virginia society from the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth centuries. This comparison serves to emphasize the connection between Virginian and Scottish standards of politeness, indicating similarities in the interpretation of politeness, but also a divergence over time as a result of the influences of the American Revolution and evangelical religion. It has concluded that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, while the standards of didactic literature did not entirely disappear with regards to shaping Scottish manners, the codes taught in conduct books and instructive novels of an earlier era were more widely regarded in Virginia and came to form a uniquely Virginian interpretation of politeness.

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## List of Abbreviations

CW	John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Special Collections Department, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
ECL	Edinburgh Central Library
ECCO	<i>Eighteenth Century Collections Online</i> , Gale Group, <a href="http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO">http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO</a>
EUML	Edinburgh University Main Library, Center for Research Collections
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NRAS	National Register of the Archives for Scotland
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 60 Volumes, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, Online Edition
SBC	Duke University, Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture
UNCC	University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Special Collections Department, J. Murrey Atkins Library
VHS	Virginia Historical Society

## I. Introduction: Tracing Enlightenment Politeness in Scotland and Virginia, 1750-1850

### Part I: Introductory Remarks

Elizabeth Gordon Scott was a woman raised in Scotland who, upon her marriage, followed her husband to Virginia where he earned his living as a minister. Despite her new residence in a foreign land, Elizabeth Gordon Scott maintained a steady correspondence with her family, still in Scotland, throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In a letter dated from 1787, Scott's father, Thomas Gordon, a professor at King's College in Aberdeen, made reference to the work of a man called Dr. Gregory, a family friend, and wrote to his daughter that, "you know the value I put in every thing he said & did. His advices to...[you] as contained in his little book are inestimable."<sup>1</sup>

This was in reference to *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, a conduct book published in 1774 by Scottish moralist, Dr. John Gregory. Later, in 1800, Scott herself referred to Gregory and his teachings in a letter to her 17 year old daughter, Margaret. Margaret was about to be married, and Scott was recounting her own experience as a new wife, and cited Gregory as an expert in the ideal standards of morality for young women.<sup>2</sup> It can be inferred from these personal exchanges that in the Gordon Scott family in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, several generations of women in both Scotland and Virginia looked to Gregory and his famous conduct book for moral and practical guidance regarding their behavior.

Other evidence of such a connection comes from the diary of Frances Baylor Hill. Frances Baylor Hill was a young girl who lived in King and Queen County in Virginia in the years after the American Revolution. She kept a daily record of her life and her thoughts nearly every day for a year before her voice disappeared from historical record. As she wrote in her last entry, "I finished my Counterpain [sic] on Saturday which has been about 3 year; And now make a conclusion of my journal which has been rather more tedious than I supposed it would have been when first

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Thomas Gordon to Elizabeth Gordon Scott, June 27, 1787, Peyton family papers, Sections 5 and 29, available at the VHS, Mss1P4686c. All dates, unless directly quoted, will be presented in the American fashion, with the month first, and then the day and then the year due to the fact that they are inconsistently recorded in the sources.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Gordon Scott to Margaret Christian (Scott) Peyton, December 12, 1800, Ibid. Copied over in 1845 by Christian Blackwell Scott.

began. --- Sunday December 31, 1797 Frances Baylor Hill.”<sup>3</sup> This description of a year in her life provides a great deal of insight into the experiences of a young girl in early republican Virginia. She wrote about her daily activities and her endless supply of chores. She also made several references to slavery, as well as the various social customs of wealthy individuals in Virginia.

In what is of most relevance to this study, Frances Baylor Hill was an enthusiastic reader and she often recorded in her diary not only the books she was reading, but also her thoughts on those works. As she wrote on October 25, 1797, “Began a very clever novel – *Evelina* it was called.”<sup>4</sup> Aside from this reference to Frances Burney’s 1778 epistolary novel, *Evelina, or a the History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World*, Baylor Hill also read pieces from *The Spectator*, a periodical on manners and morality dating from 1711, and Dr. John Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters*, the same work referenced by Thomas Gordon and Elizabeth Gordon Scott. Of Gregory’s work, she wrote that it was, “a very good book.”<sup>5</sup> Baylor Hill was an admirer of what this study will refer to as didactic literature, books that offered instruction in moral, polite, behavior. Through her reference to Gregory, she was, more specifically, an admirer of Scottish didactic literature, indicating an intellectual link between Scottish moral philosophy and Virginia in the demand for the printed word.<sup>6</sup>

The role of politeness was closely tied to the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment, and was viewed as “a mutually improving sociability,” capable of uniting “*gentlemen* [*italics mine*]...in a sphere independent of economics and politics of a commercial society.”<sup>7</sup> It was a view of the age, however, that women were the true keepers of politeness. They were thought capable of improving the manners and the morals of men, and appropriately educated women were considered experts in

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<sup>3</sup> The Diary of Frances Baylor Hill, available in microfilm at CW, M-1988. There is also a transcribed copy of Baylor Hill’s diary published by Ohio University, William K. Bottorff and Roy C. Flannagan, eds., in 1967. Editors Bottorff and Flannagan imply that Baylor Hill died shortly after the completion of her diary, December 31, 1797.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., October 25, 1797.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., October 23, 1797.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the British-American book exchange, see Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Cathy N. Davidson, “Towards a History of Books and Readers,” *American Quarterly* 40, no 1 Special Issue: Reading America (Mar., 1988): 7-17.

<sup>7</sup> Robert P. Irvine, *Enlightenment and Romance: Gender and Agency in Smollett and Scott*, (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt, New York, Wein: Peter Lang, 2000), 19.

one of the most crucial aspects of sociability – polite conversation.<sup>8</sup> But how were such women appropriately educated to govern polite sociability? This study will present the argument that didactic literature, originally inspired by the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment, played a role in shaping the polite behavior and moral standards of young women in Virginia. This theory will be supported by comparing facets of Virginia women’s polite behavior, such as their reading habits, social interactions, and courtship practices, with their counterparts in Scotland.

This naturally raises the question: Why a comparison of Virginia to Scotland? In her exploration of Southern identity, one of the most prominent historians of the old South, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, argues that contemporaries viewed Southern manners as the epitome of politeness in America by the nineteenth century. As one Methodist minister from the North described, “Throughout the South...there is an attention paid to the proprieties and courtesies of life which I have failed to observe in some other parts of the Union.”<sup>9</sup> According to the same study, it was asserted that even among Southerners, Virginians were unique in their almost extreme levels of deference to courtesy and gentility and that they tried to recreate in Virginia an aristocratic planter class similar to that found, according to Fox-Genovese, in *England*.<sup>10</sup>

Virginians themselves, however, compared their patriarchal social structure to that of the Scottish lairds in the Highlands. Like many readers in the English-speaking world they read books on history and philosophy by David Hume and the novels of Sir Walter Scott, but Virginians tended to go further in connecting to Scotland with regards to education.<sup>11</sup> Many Virginia gentlemen seeking an education were sent to Scotland, most often to Edinburgh, the home of the Scottish

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23, for Irvine’s analysis of the writings of David Hume and publications of *The Spectator* regarding the role of polite women.

<sup>9</sup> Quote from a Methodist Minister in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 356, 114-5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 115, for evidence of Virginians comparing themselves to Scottish lairds. The reading of Hume is discussed on 125, and the reading of Scott is discussed on 134. See Chapter III of this thesis for an exploration of how Virginia linked to Scotland with regards to the education of gentlemen’s sons. For more information on readership of Scott in other parts of the United States, see Emily B. Todd, “Establishing Routes for Fiction in the United States: Walter Scott’s Novels and the Early Nineteenth-Century American Publishing Industry,” *Book History* 12 (2009): 100-28.”

Enlightenment and the origin of a strand of moral philosophy inspired by the Scottish Enlightenment known as politeness. Virginia gentlemen, or gentlemen-in-training, were clearly connected to Scotland with regards to the teaching of polite manners and belles lettres. But what about Virginia women? That question forms of the foundation of this study.

Virginia was linked to Scotland through the arrival and settlement of Scottish migrants, but many locations in early America could claim the same.<sup>12</sup> This study has concluded that these personal migratory connections were enhanced by the fact that genteel Virginians were concerned with emulating the moral politeness and civility originally instilled in Scotland. With regards to women, it has concluded that politeness was taught to them through the reading of conduct books and instructive novels. Original research has found that both Scotland and Virginia had receptive reading audiences for didactic texts.<sup>13</sup> These texts served as a teaching tool for politeness for young women aspiring to gentility in both Scotland and Virginia, and the moral theories presented within these conduct books and novels were part of Scottish Enlightenment-inspired codes of behavior. These codes continued to be a fixture in public consciousness, especially in Virginia, after the end of the long eighteenth century and long after conduct books and an instructional interest in courtesy had fallen out of fashion.<sup>14</sup>

It must be conceded that many of these morality guides and polite novels were some of the most popular of the age, and were read in many locations aside from Scotland or Virginia.<sup>15</sup> Although the authors of some of the most widely-read conduct books of this time, Dr. John Gregory and the Reverend James Fordyce,

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<sup>12</sup> See T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*, (London: The Penguin Group, 1999), for more information on the Scottish Diaspora. See also Alexander Murdoch, *Scotland and America, c.1600-c.1800*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter I of this thesis.

<sup>14</sup> See Michael Curtin, "A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy," *The Journal of Modern History* 57, no 3 (Sept., 1985): 395-423. Curtin traces the decline of courtesy manuals and the rise of etiquette books. He has defined etiquette as manners without the guiding morality of politeness.

<sup>15</sup> See Wilbur Cross, *Development of the English Novel*, (Originally published, 1900. Seventh edition published, New York: The MacMillan Company, London: MacMillan & Co, Ltd., 1937); Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). According to Mary Catherine Moran's article "Between the Savage and Civil," *Women, Gender and the Enlightenment*, Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, eds., (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), Gregory's *Legacy* sold 6000 copies within two years of first being published, and continued to be reprinted until 1877. Fordyce's *Sermons* was reprinted in at least 12 editions and was translated in several other languages. See "Fordyce, James (1720-1796)," Alan Ruston in *ODNB*.

author of *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), were Scottish moralists, not all of the authors of polite texts were Scottish. Samuel Richardson, credited with adding moral authority to the genre of the novel with the publication of *Pamela* in 1740, was English, and later some of the most well-known authors of the polite novels of manners of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen who were Anglo-Irish and English respectively. Scotland did not have the monopoly on didactic texts and these books were imported to many locations in America and purchased with equal enthusiasm throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Which reinforces the question, why compare Scotland and Virginia?

The rationale lies in the fact that both locations were unique in their interpretation of the codes of polite behavior. In Scotland, politeness was more than just manners or social graces. It formed the foundation of an entire moral philosophy based on civility, gentility and the improvement of society. Elite Virginia planters sought to emulate this polite lifestyle, originally, as this thesis argues, to overcome a sense of colonial inferiority. Eventually Virginians would interpret and internalize these polite codes in ways that shaped Southern identity and formed the idealized image of Southern, feminine morality leading up to the American Civil War.

In her study of masculine gentility, historian Michele Cohen has argued that eighteenth-century men's politeness in Britain came to be replaced in the nineteenth century by ideals of chivalry.<sup>17</sup> This thesis will present the argument that politeness for women was likewise adapted over time. In the time period in question, 1750 to 1850, genteel Virginians were attempting to emulate, and later reinterpret polite practices originally created in England with Shaftsburian politeness and publications like *The Spectator*, but heightened with the philosophy of the Scottish moralists in a

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<sup>16</sup> See Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, Chapter 2, for the reception of British books in America.

<sup>17</sup> Michele Cohen, "Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no 2 (April 2005): 312-29. See also Shawn Lisa Maurer, "The Politics of Masculinity in the 1790s Radical Novel: *Hugh Trevor, Caleb Williams* and the Romance of Sentimental Friendship," *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*, Miriam L. Wallace, ed., (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 87-110. For more information on standards of masculinity in America, see Anne S. Lombard, *Making Manhood: Growing Up Male in Colonial New England*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London England: Harvard University Press, 2003). For more on masculine sensibility in Britain, see Philip Carter, "Tears and the Man," *Women, Gender and the Enlightenment*, 156-73.

country trying to reformulate its cultural identity after losing its political autonomy with the 1707 Act of Union.<sup>18</sup> In Virginia, the majority of their guidance and instruction in these matters came from their didactic texts.

This is also not to suggest that the ideas of politeness were not practiced in the other American colonies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or that, in Britain, politeness was necessarily unique to Scotland. Many of the American colonies and newly formed American states aspired to attain politeness and many individuals relied on didactic texts for instruction in polite skills. “Where populations had little experience of the metropolis,” one study declares, “writing presented the ways of the court and town. In British America, imported books and periodicals portrayed the beau monde’s glories so compellingly that a cadre of writers dedicated themselves to creating similar worlds in Halifax, Boston, New York, Trenton, Philadelphia, Annapolis, Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah and Kingston.”<sup>19</sup>

This list includes primarily urban centers in, with the exception of Charleston and Savannah, Northern or Mid-Atlantic states, but historical analysis has also been conducted on the conceptions of gentility and courtesy derived from British manners and material culture for early nineteenth-century Delaware, a rural Chesapeake state.<sup>20</sup> What makes Virginia, another Chesapeake state, unique is the traditional role of manners and hospitality in rural, Southern culture. It can be argued that what would come to be the defining, iconic image of the Southern woman by the American Civil War had its roots in the eighteenth-century preoccupation among many Southerners, but especially among Virginians, with codes of polite gentility.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xvii; see also Peter France, “Primitivism and Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Scots,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 15, Anglo-French Literary Reflections Special Number (1985): 64.

<sup>19</sup> Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), see Chapters I and VII. For more information on the general culture of wealth and refinement in America, see Jessica Kross, “Mansions, Men, Women and the Creation of Multiple Publics in Eighteenth-Century British North America,” *Journal of Social History* 33, no 2 (Winter 1999): 385-408.

<sup>21</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, “Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies,” *The Journal of Southern History* 62, no 3 (Aug., 1996): 450. In *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters*, 142, Shields presents the argument that hospitality was different from sociability. This argument, however, applies primarily to Shields’ definition of male sociability, since he asserts that the presence of women stifled

Referring to men's social graces, Philip Vickers Fithian, a New Jersey native acting as tutor to the children of Robert Carter of Nominy Hall, Virginia instructed another tutor from New Jersey bound for Virginia, "any young Gentleman travelling through the Colony, as I said before, is presumed to be acquainted with Dancing, Boxing, playing the Fiddle, Small-Sword, and Cards."<sup>22</sup> The rest of the letter suggested that while young men of New Jersey (and presumably the young women as well) had some training in these polite, social skills, they were heightened to an extreme in Virginia. The fact that Virginians were linked with Scotland, where these polite codes became a part of moral philosophy, in terms of patterns of migration, transatlantic book trade, and educational trends makes the comparison relevant.<sup>23</sup> Despite the challenges of rivaling social, religious and cultural movements, such as evangelicalism and Romanticism, of the nineteenth century, Virginian women still looked to didactic literature as the measuring standard for polite behavior.

Politeness in Scotland was part of a larger movement towards British politeness, with many of the standards of politeness set in the fashionable center of London. Regarding the uniqueness of Scottish manners, however, "The Spectatorial ideals of Addisonian politeness associated metropolitan London made a profound impact on the manners of the North British [Scottish] elite, but there was pride in the Scottish nation as a moral community."<sup>24</sup> There was also, as will be explored later in the thesis, a distinct connection between Scotland and didactic works, particularly as a supplier of these works to Virginia. With the progression of the nineteenth century, genteel young ladies in Scotland were also swept up in the new movements of the era, like their elite Virginia cousins, and although they ceased to directly reference

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male conversations. With regards to women's sociability, however, it is closely linked with hospitality.

<sup>22</sup> Philip Vickers Fithian, letter to John Peck, August 12, 1774, in *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774*, Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1947). See also John Fea's analysis in "The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian's Rural Enlightenment," *The Journal of American History* 90, no 2 (Sep., 2003): 473.

<sup>23</sup> The educational links between Scotland and Virginia will be explored in Chapter III, the transatlantic book connection will be explored in Chapter I, while the correspondence between families in Scotland and Virginia is a continual theme in the primary documents used in this study.

<sup>24</sup> Colin Kidd, "North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotism," *The Historical Journal* 39, no 2 (Jun., 1996): 366.



didactic texts after 1820, much of their social life was still shaped by Enlightenment-inspired polite culture.

This thesis also addresses the question of how politeness was linked to the Enlightenment. Any study of Scotland, and pre-Revolutionary America, during the eighteenth century would be incomplete without mention of the intellectual movement that historians have termed the Age of Enlightenment, which has long been defined first and foremost as an intellectual movement centered in France. For the past several decades, however, the historiography of the Enlightenment has become more inclusive, branching away from the idea of a single, French Enlightenment and moving towards the acceptance of various, regional, Enlightenments.<sup>25</sup> The ideals inspired by the Enlightenment texts of Voltaire, Lock and Montesquieu have been directly linked to the foundations of the American Revolutionary movements in Boston and Philadelphia, culminating in what can be considered part of an American Enlightenment.<sup>26</sup> Several prominent historians in the fields of social history and intellectual history have also identified a thriving Scottish Enlightenment, centered on moral philosophy and sociability, in the writings of men like David Hume and William Robertson.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For works on the various Enlightenments, see: Alexander Murdoch, "A Crucible for Change: Enlightenment in Britain," *The Enlightenment World*, Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf and Ian McCalman, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 104-16; J. G. A. Pocock, "Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no 1 and 2, Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe 1650-1850 (1997): 7-28; John Robertson, *The Case of the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Arthur Strum, "What Enlightenment Is," *New German Critique* 79, Special Issue of Eighteenth-Century Literature and Thought (Winter 2000): 106-136. Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth Century Britain, Ireland and America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Linda Kirk, "The Matter of Enlightenment," *The Historical Journal* 43, no 4 (Dec 2000): 1129-43.

<sup>26</sup> Martin E. Marty, "The American Revolution and Religion," *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815*, Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 497-8. For other works on religion and the Enlightenment see, Stewart J. Brown, "Movements of Christian Awakening in Revolutionary Europe, 1790-1815," 575-95, Margaret C. Jacob, "The Enlightenment Critique of Christianity," 265-82, Helen Rosenblatt, "The Christian Enlightenment," 283-301, also in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII*.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2001); Robert Darnton, *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century*, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003); John Robertson, "The Scottish Contribution," 37-62, Charles W. J. Withers, "Towards a Historical Geography of Enlightenment in Scotland," 63-97, Richard B. Sher, "Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Lessons of Book History," 99-112, in *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation*, Paul Wood, ed. (Rochester, New York: Rochester University Press, 2000).

It is possible to expand the definition of Enlightenment further by arguing for the existence of a Scottish Enlightenment-inspired standard of gentility based on the ideals of politeness, sociability, and moral improvement. These behavioral theories extended down to London and across the Atlantic to America. It can also be argued that these ideas lingered in Scotland and Virginia after the end of the long eighteenth century, lasting into the middle of the nineteenth century as evidenced by the personal letters and diaries of genteel women. These ideas were so firmly entrenched that they remained present in society as essential, social graces, even as a conservative backlash against the Age of Revolutions led to a fear of the so-called radicals and free-thinkers who developed these social ideas in the first place.

Politeness, in its eighteenth century connotations, referred to a complex combination of manners and behavior. All of these things were designed to elevate those who mastered them to the level of gentility, if not necessarily aristocracy. Aside from simply representing manners, British politeness in its purest form was designed to be a social equalizer between respectable, genteel individuals of society. While this certainly did not refer to the lowest social levels or the working poor, politeness added refinement to those respectable persons who were well above the common masses but somewhere below the aristocracy on the social scale. Equally important was the fact that true politeness could be reinforced by the principles instilled by a polite education. It was not something, like nobility, that could only be attained by birth.<sup>28</sup> Instead, British politeness of this era was considered to be “a complex of values that expressed the eighteenth-century’s faith in the altruism of human beings liberated from irrational beliefs.”<sup>29</sup>

It was this emphasis on reason, continual self-improvement and civility that linked the social ideals of politeness to the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>30</sup> According to Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, such as David

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<sup>28</sup>Anand C. Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History*, (London and New Jersey: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1976), 6.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Langford, “British Politeness and the Progress of Western Manners,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series* 7 (1997): 54. For more information on the display of politeness in public settings, see Helen Berry, “Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series*, 12 (2002): 375-94; see also, Nicholas Cooper, “Rank, Manners and Display: The Gentlemanly House, 1500-1750,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series*, 12 (2002): 291-310.

<sup>30</sup> Roy Porter and Leslie Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 17.

Hume, politeness was a part of sociability which was, most importantly, a civilizing factor in society. The state of society could only be improved by individuals who were polite, sympathetic to their fellow human beings, and actively invested in the commercial, intellectual, and social interactions taking place in the world around them.<sup>31</sup> Politeness, therefore, was linked to the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment, but its application was practical and accessible to a wider element of British society that was educated and genteel, but not necessarily limited to members of the aristocracy or the intellectuals typically associated with Enlightenment thought.

In the evolution of politeness and the culture of sociability, the development of these social trends in Britain, and particularly in Scotland, was distinct from the code of manners fashionable on the European continent. By the eighteenth century, Scots and other Britons had established their own code of manners that was centered on urban sociability and the genteel culture of life in town, rather than in aristocratic courts.<sup>32</sup> These manners, when compared to the manners of the continental royal culture, were considered to be egalitarian and less deferential in one's addresses to others.<sup>33</sup>

As the eighteenth century progressed, there began to be an attitude shared by Britons and even by foreigners that the British mode of civility was inherently linked to the changing ideas about the place of man in society and an emerging middle level of men and women who contributed to the new, commercial age. The manners of Britons were not shaped by obsequious courtiers attempting to mimic an absolute monarch like those in France. Instead, British manners reflected the relative liberty of the people.<sup>34</sup> The social significance of politeness culminated with the moral philosophy of Scottish thinkers. This association between manners, shaped by the ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment, and liberty indicates that not only were

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<sup>31</sup> Alexander Broadie, ed., *The Scottish Enlightenment: An Anthology*, (Edinburgh: Cannongate Classics, 1997), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Langford, "British Politeness," 55; See also R.H. Sweet, "Topographies of Politeness," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series* 12 (2002): 355.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Langford, "British Politeness," 56; see also Lawrence E. Klein, "Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *The History Journal* 32, no 3 (Sep 1989): 583-605. John Gillingham, "From Civilitas to Civility: Codes of Manners in Medieval and Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series*, 12 (2002): 267-89.

<sup>34</sup> Langford, "British Politeness," 55-6, 58.

manners, politeness and sociability considered part of Enlightenment thought, but also a distinct association between Scottish politeness and Enlightenment thought.

This interpretation of politeness in the eighteenth century was not necessarily limited to Great Britain. There was an obvious exchange of ideas between London, the cultural epicenter which defined fashionable manners, and Edinburgh, home of the Scottish Enlightenment, which elevated manners beyond fashion and used the codes of politeness for the improvement of society. There was also a triangular exchange between Scotland, London and America regarding a code of genteel civility. The connection between Enlightenment thought in Boston and Philadelphia has been studied in regards to the intellectual origins of the American Revolution.<sup>35</sup> A different interpretation is a comparison of the rules of genteel politeness as expressed in the sociability, courtship and reading habits of women in Virginia and how that compared to the lives of genteel women in Scotland, the home of polite, moral philosophy.

## Part II: Defining Didacticism

Didactic literature was a genre of fictional and nonfictional works that provided instruction in moral and polite behavior. By the eighteenth-century, although there was a long tradition of didactic titles available for men, the primary readers – and increasingly, the primary authors – of such works were women. Originally, it was non-fiction, instructional manuals which contained the most valuable basis for moral behavior, but with the publication and success of Samuel Richardson’s novel *Pamela* in 1740,<sup>36</sup> it began to be acknowledged that fictional works – previously regarded as scandalous and prone to inspiring fits of passion and romance in impressionable young readers – could offer moral instruction regarding conduct in genteel society.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See works by Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) and Jack P. Greene, *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution*, (New Histories of American Law Series. Cambridge University Press. 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Katherine Sobba Green in *The Courtship Novel: A Feminized Genre*, (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 25, asserts that while Richardson was one of the first major novelists to write a conduct novel, the genre had existed before the publication of *Pamela*.

<sup>37</sup> See Cynthia A. Kierner, “Introduction,” *The Contrast: Manners, Morals and Authority in the Early American Republic*, Cynthia A. Kierner, ed., (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 9. For more information about the popularity of *Pamela* and the consumerism associated with

With the end of the long eighteenth-century, and the emergence of authors such as Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen and Susan Ferrier, traditional conduct books had fallen out of fashion, and polite instruction was primarily provided by fictional examples.<sup>38</sup> Conduct books and didactic novels did not offer instruction in etiquette, such as detailed advice on table manners or the appropriate customs for taking tea. Didactic literature was more theoretical – it dealt with inner morality and virtues which would then cultivate an outer appearance of grace, gentility, and *politeness*.

Politeness is best defined by conduct book author Mrs. Hester Chapone in her work *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady* (1773). As Mrs. Chapone advises her young, female readers, polite individuals must always, “exert your own endeavours to please and to amuse, but not to outshine... In short; it is an universal duty in society to consider others more than yourself.”<sup>39</sup> The polite lady and the polite gentleman must take an active interest in society and engage in social practices which brought them into frequent conversation and public interaction with other genteel men and women. While politeness required a level of material wealth and display which meant that the lowest social orders were excluded, it was not only limited to the aristocracy. The growing, urban, middling orders of British society and their American, landowning – but not title-holding – cousins could also participate in polite displays.

Some of the greatest thinkers of the eighteenth century, men such as David Hume and Adam Smith, were concerned with the creation of the ideal, moral

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the success of this novel, see Jennie Batchelor, “Reinstating the ‘Pamela Vogue,’” *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, eds., (Palgrave, 2007), 163-75.

<sup>38</sup> For the trajectory of popular literature throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see the following works: Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Furthermore, Chapter I will be an exploration of the reading habits of Scottish and Virginian women from 1750-1850, as well as an examination of the genres and titles most commonly offered to and purchased by eighteenth and nineteenth-century readers by libraries and bookshops. For secondary analysis of the feminist agenda of these authors, see Audrey Bilger, *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen*, (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1998. Paperback edition published in 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*, by Mrs. Chapone, (Originally published, 1773, this version published, London, 1793, currently available through ECCO), 160-1. *Letters* was Chapone’s most famous work, going through several editions and translations. See “Chapone, Hester (1727–1801),” Rhoda Zuk in *ODNB*.

individual and the regulating role of politeness in creating a refined, urban society.<sup>40</sup> This project will expand upon this idea by examining the practical application of Scottish Enlightenment theory by exploring the ways in which polite, theoretical codes were taught in didactic literature. It will trace how frequently these books were read by young women, and analyze how these teachings were applied in the lives of genteel, or at least leisured, individuals in Virginia. It will then compare these reading habits and behavioral ideals to social practice in Scotland. This study is in part a continuation of the arguments of historians who advocated not only for a social and cultural historical interpretation of Enlightenment thought, but also the studies focused on elite, primarily male, Virginians who were familiar with the theories of the Scottish Enlightenment and interested in the practical application of these ideals.<sup>41</sup>

This comparison of Scotland and Virginia with regards to practical interpretation of popular literature fills a gap in the transatlantic historiography. This study has been shaped by works relating to the transatlantic book trade, comparisons of British and American evangelical movements, the Enlightenment philosophy of the North Atlantic World and transatlantic manners.<sup>42</sup> Aside from Sarah Knott's

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<sup>40</sup> See David Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, (A new edition, London, 1758), 83 for his views on the role of women in teaching polite manners in society; See also Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments...* (Originally published London, 1759, this edition published in London, and Edinburgh, 1781), for his views on the importance of sympathy in society. Both works currently available in ECCO <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>. For secondary works, see Anand C. Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 6; Robert Darnton, *George Washington's False Teeth*; Katharine Glover, "Polite Society and the Rural Resort: The Meanings of the Moffat Spa in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34, Issue I (March 2011): 65-80, see specifically Section III; John Robertson, "The Scottish Contribution," 37-62, and Richard B. Sher, "Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Lessons of Book History," 99-112, in *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation*.

<sup>41</sup> See Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets: Death and Desire at Monticello*, (New York: Basic Books, A Member of Perseus Books Group, 2005); Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1978). See also, John Fea, "The Way of Improvement Leads Home."

<sup>42</sup> Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, (Published for the Omohundro Institute by the University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2009). Some of the transatlantic studies consulted for this project include: Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865*, (Westport, Connecticut; London, England: Greenwood Press, 1978); Vivian C. Fox, and Martin H. Quitt, *Loving, Parenting and Dying: The Family Cycle in England and America, Past and Present*, (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1980). For transatlantic Enlightenment thought and book history, see Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth Century Britain, Ireland and America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*; Peter S. Onuf, "Introduction," *Old World, New World: America and Europe in the age of Jefferson*, Leonard J. Sadosky, Peter

work on the ideals of sensibility in revolutionary America, the work on transatlantic politeness most relevant to this study is C. Dallett Hemphill's comparison of manners and conduct books between England and the United States. In this article, Hemphill emphasizes the instructive role of conduct literature with regards to the polite manners of the emerging, primarily male, middle orders of the eighteenth-century Northeast, and compares this to English, rather than Scottish, standards of gentility. Hemphill asserts that the Northern region of the early United States is the most appropriate location for this type of comparison due to the emergence of an urban elite who were more directly comparable to their counterparts in England.<sup>43</sup>

While it is true that the South had no similar urban bourgeoisie, this divergence was viewed with pride by many Southerners. As one study declares, "Southerners particularly enjoyed the contrasts drawn by foreigners and sympathetic Northerners between Southern gentlemen and vulgar upper-class Northerners. The Marques of Lothian called planters America's closest approximation to genuine aristocracy, as distinct from the North's more powerful and unattractive aristocracy-of-sorts in stockjobbers, low-minded capitalists, and political wire pullers."<sup>44</sup> This study will also show that Virginians were especially attracted to didactic literature. Original research reveals not only that reading audiences were receptive to instructive texts, but also that Virginia women viewed their own skill in politeness and familiarity with didactic forms to be strong enough to author their own conduct books and polite novels.<sup>45</sup> Even as wealthy landowners, their status as rural colonials – or former colonials – led many Virginians to rely on conduct books and novels of manners to learn and practice the polite codes prominent in Scotland and distinguish themselves as what would come to be considered a uniquely Virginian, planter aristocracy.

Many historians of the American Revolution have noted the influence of British, and specifically Scottish, philosophy on the aims of the founding fathers,

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Nicolaisen, Peter S. Onuf, and Andrew O'Shaughnessey, eds., (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 1-14.

<sup>43</sup> C. Dallett Hemphill, "Manners and Class in the Revolutionary Era: A Transatlantic Comparison," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 63, no 2 (April 2006): 345-72.

<sup>44</sup> Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*, 89. In this section of the book, however, the authors also describe Southern responses to less-than-flattering accounts of Southern manners and hospitality.

<sup>45</sup> See the analysis presented in Chapter I of this thesis.

many of whom hailed from Virginia.<sup>46</sup> Also, Rhys Isaac, among others, has explored the mentality of colonial, Virginia elites, who sought to emulate the lifestyle of the landed British gentry and educated their children accordingly.<sup>47</sup> Although many of these historians have simply linked these polite behaviors to British, not necessarily Scottish, codes of manners and gentility, they frequently cite Scottish philosophers such as Hume, Smith, Robertson and Kames as the measuring standard for genteel behavior.<sup>48</sup> Finally, original archival research has uncovered a wealth of communication between Scotland and Virginia in regards to the migration of families, the exchange of correspondence and patterns of education. It was not uncommon for wealthy, planter families in Virginia to send their children to Scotland, specifically Edinburgh, for their education, or to have their children educated at home by Scots.<sup>49</sup>

Any comparison of cities in Virginia, such as Richmond, Williamsburg and Yorktown, with the established cities in Scotland, such as Edinburgh and Aberdeen, will involve a comparison of long-developed urban centers with developing townships. Furthermore, the gentility in Edinburgh, while still removed from the cultural core of London, were less peripheral than their Virginian counterparts. The landed gentry of Williamsburg, defined as “white, well-to-do and educated,”<sup>50</sup> would not have had the same social experience as the elites in Edinburgh or the gentry of the

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<sup>46</sup> See Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets*, 44 for Jefferson's reading of Hume. See also, Garry Wills, *Inventing America* for the influence of Scottish philosophy on Jefferson's writing of the Declaration of Independence. Catherine Kerrison also mentions Scottish notions of morality in Virginia in *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); See also, Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book*; John Fea, *The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian and the Rural Enlightenment in Early America*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective.” *American Quarterly* 28, no 2 Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (Summer, 1976): 187-205. Kerber focuses on the impact of Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Condorcet on the new republic's ideology regarding women.

<sup>47</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina, 1982); this argument is also presented in the introduction to *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian*, by Hunter Dickenson Farish, ed.

<sup>48</sup> See Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). Wilson uses Hume and Smith to define English manners, but neglects to mention a connection to Scotland. See also Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 45-6. This work is primarily focused on England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but Bryson mentions how Scottish moral philosophy shaped the practice of British manners.

<sup>49</sup> This connection will be explored in Chapter III of this thesis.

<sup>50</sup> Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 8.



Scottish Highlands, who often spent a large portion of their time in Edinburgh or London.<sup>51</sup> One of the linking factors between the two locations, therefore, is that the women whose lives are explored in this study possessed the wealth and leisure time to engage in reading and keep an active correspondence about their reading habits.

Another major difference, which is probably the most important, between these two locations was the role of slavery in the American South during the time period in question. Britain was also involved in slavery. Despite the fact that the slave trade was abolished in 1807, the fortunes of many wealthy Britons were closely tied to slavery through dependence on Southern-produced cotton, and holdings in the West Indies into the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> It is most likely for these reasons that, although the British population was aware of American slave-holding practices, there was minimal moral outcry until after the American Revolution.<sup>53</sup> In Virginia and the rest of the South, however, slavery was directly related to daily life and much of the historiography of the antebellum South presents a culture of violence resulting from slavery that might seem at odds with the notions of politeness.

In this respect, it is important to consider not only the paradox of the ideal versus the reality, but also the power of self-rationalization. If Virginia gentlemen were able to uphold contemporary notions of honor and morality and still be slaveholders, so were Virginia ladies able to be polite.<sup>54</sup> The ideal image of the genteel, virtuous – meaning chaste – Southern lady was only possible with direct contrast to the racist perceptions of the lack of morality and inherent sexual impurity among slave women and part of a Southern gentlewoman's instruction involved

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<sup>51</sup> For an example of this see Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. *Memoirs of a Highland Lady, Volumes One and Two*, with an Introduction by Andrew Tod, ed., (First published 1898 by John Murray. First published Canongate Classics in 1988 by Canongate Publishing Ltd. This edition published in 1992 by Canongate Press: Edinburgh). The family moved frequently between the Highlands, Edinburgh and London.

<sup>52</sup> For more information on the impact of slavery on the British economy, see Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); for Scottish attitudes on slavery and the slave trade, see Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> Julie Flavell, "Decadents Aboard: Reconstructing the Typical Colonial American in London in the Late Colonial Period," *Old World, New World*, 50. For more on English, specifically London, attitudes towards the Confederacy in the American Civil War, see Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, Studies in History, New Series, (New York and Suffolk: The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2003).

<sup>54</sup> For more information on the culture of violence and male honor in the South, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, (Oxford University Press, 1982).

learning to preside over slave labor.<sup>55</sup> It is also possible to compare the messages received about slavery in Virginia to the messages given to polite women about servants in Scotland. Although paid servitude and slavery are certainly not directly comparable, and while the inherent brutality of slavery might have gone against the ideals of politeness, the realities of politeness in practice, and the necessary wealth and leisure required to participate, further separated the elites from the servant class.<sup>56</sup>

It is also impossible to overlook the fact that for several years of the period in question not only were Virginia and Scotland both engaged in a war, but they were at war with each other as part of the larger conflict between Britain and the American colonies. The actual revolutionary qualities of the American Revolution are being continually debated, particularly regarding its influence on the lives of American women.<sup>57</sup> A historian of Southern women, Cynthia Kierner, asserts that the Revolution “undermined the patriarchal politics and class relations of the colonial era.”<sup>58</sup> She also argues that many of the Virginia elites, through a combination of overspending, poor crop yields and the devastating effects of war, saw their way of life deteriorate and they eventually came to be replaced by a new planter elite by the time of the American Civil War, although both the old eighteenth and new nineteenth-century planter elites were concerned with the implementation of polite

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<sup>55</sup> This thesis will explore the ways that women were educated about servants and slaves in Chapter III, and the role of slave women, miscegenation, and the chastity of white women in Chapter V.

<sup>56</sup> For more on women as slave owners, see Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>57</sup> See Jack P. Greene, *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution*, (New Histories of American Law Series. Cambridge University Press. 2011); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); for work specifically on the impact of the Revolution on the lives of women, see, Rosemarie Zagari, “Morals, Manners and the Republican Mother.” *American Quarterly* 44, no 2 (Jun, 1992): 192-215; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, (Williamsburg, Virginia: University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*, (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980). For a British perspective of the Revolution, see Leonard J. Sadosky, “Reimagining the British Empire in America: The Case of William Eden,” *Old World, New World*, 131-54. For the role of women in greater Enlightenment thought, see Sylvana Tomaselli, “The Enlightenment Debate on Women,” *History Workshop* 20 (Autumn, 1985): 101-24; Mary Catherine Moran, “L’Essai sur les femmes/Essay on Women: an Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Journey,” *History Workshop Journal* 59, (Spring, 2005): 17-32; Katherine B. Clinton, “Femme et Philosophe: Enlightenment Origins of Feminism,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8, no 3 (Spring, 1975): 283-99.

<sup>58</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, “‘The Dark and Dense Cloud Perpetually Lowering over Us’: Gender and the Decline of Gentry in Postrevolutionary Virginia,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no 2 (Summer, 2000): 187.

manners.<sup>59</sup> The impact of the American Revolution on women's courtship and women's education will be addressed later in this thesis. This project will argue that political conflicts and violence did not completely sever family ties between Scotland and Virginia, and codes of manners continued to be shared during and after the Revolution, particularly among women.<sup>60</sup>

Thus far, this study has outlined the role of didactic literature in teaching polite behaviors to women, but it will also explore the ways in which women's formal education was shaped by the polite codes instilled in didactic literature. Chapter III serves as an exploration of women's institutional instruction and how the curriculum offered in girls' schools and ladies' academies reinforced the standards of feminine politeness. A young girl's instruction in both Scotland and Virginia in the time period in question was focused as much on her moral development and the acquirement of polite graces as on the development of her intellect. Young women in Scotland and Virginia received instruction in reading and grammar, but also in music, dance, painting, and embroidery. Equally important, the proprietor of one Virginia school for young gentlemen and ladies promised to "exert his principal Endeavours to improve their Morals, in Proportion to their Progress in Learning, that no Parent may repent his Choice in trusting him with the Education of his Children." This schoolmaster also emphasized his connection to the cultural center of London, suggesting that his educational methods would be similar to those taught in the metropolitan core of polite manners and graces.<sup>61</sup>

The curriculum taught in many schools reinforced the messages offered to young women in their conduct books and instructive novels, particularly with regards to what made for acceptable pursuits for polite young ladies, such as an interest in music and dancing and the reading of devotional works. Furthermore, some educational institutions used these texts as instructional tools within the schools. It is

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 190-1, 212-3. See also Edward A. Chappell and Julie Richter, "Wealth and Houses in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 7, Exploring Everyday Landscapes (1997): 3. Chappell and Richter assert that an archeological examination of the houses in Virginia in this era suggests that there was a large number of middling-level planters.

<sup>60</sup> For more information on the connections between female friends and family members separated by the American Revolution and other conflicts between America and Britain, see Sarah M. Pearsall, "Citizens of the World': Men, Women, and Country in the Age of Revolution," *Old World, New World*, 61-82.

<sup>61</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Hunter), November 17, 1752, 2: 2. Copies of original *Virginia Gazettes* are available at CW. For more information on women's instruction in Scotland and Virginia, see Chapter III of this thesis.

important to note, however, that the authors of didactic literature were not necessarily supportive of women's formalized instruction, and most of the authors of conduct books were critical of institutions which focused only on ornamental graces and neglected the development of a young girl's character or morality. Scottish didactic author Susan Ferrier described detrimental effect of education on the unfortunate character of Lady Juliana in her 1818 novel, *Marriage*. "Educated for the sole purpose of forming a brilliant establishment," she writes, "of catching the eye, and captivating the senses, the cultivation of her [Lady Juliana's] mind or the correction of her temper had formed no part of the system by which that aim was to be accomplished."<sup>62</sup> Equally important, however, was the warning that women's academies were not meant to turn women into intellectuals. As the Reverend James Fordyce writes in his *Sermons to Young Women*, (1766), "For my part, I could heartily wish to see the female world more accomplished than it is; but I do not wish to see it abound with metaphysicians, historians, speculative philosophers, or Learned Ladies of any kind. I should be afraid, lest the sex should lose in softness what they gained in force; and lest the pursuit of such elevation should interfere a little with the plain duties and humble virtues of life."<sup>63</sup>

This study will explore the similarities and differences regarding women's genteel education between Virginia and Scotland, as well as the ways that didactic messages were reinforced in the formal education of women. It will also trace the influence of the American Revolution on popular attitudes towards the instruction of women, and will investigate the ways in which women supplemented their formal instruction through their reading of didactic texts and question if these practices varied between Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Finally, the main objective of this study is to examine the role of polite literature in teaching particular codes of morality and behavior to genteel young women, but it would be unwise to assume that all women adhered to this ideal or that such standards were necessarily a realistic indication of the ways in which these

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<sup>62</sup> Susan Ferrier, *Marriage*, (First Published in 1818 by William Blackwood and John Murray. Reprinted with an introduction by James E. M. Irvine in Bampton, Oxfordshire: Three Rivers Books, Ltd., 1984), 5. Page number refers to the 1984 edition.

<sup>63</sup> James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women. Two Volumes in One*, (Originally published, London, 1766. Published by M. Carey, Philadelphia: and I. Riley, New York. 1809), VI, 102-3, available at CW.

women actually lived their lives. This study will also explore the ways in which women deviated from standards of polite morality and the consequences, if any, which resulted from these actions. In the cases where women directly referenced their reading of didactic texts, recommended these books to others or mentioned the messages gained from them, it must be kept in mind that this might not have been an accurate reflection of life.

In her work *Within the Plantation Household*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese asserts that the diaries of Southern matrons were often shared with their husbands and children as a means to demonstrate their morality, which suggests that these documents should not necessarily be seen as reflective of the private, inner thoughts of these women.<sup>64</sup> Fox-Genovese described the journal of one married Southern lady as “Something more than a personal confession, something less than an autobiography or novel, the pages embodied the self-representation of a woman who trusted her heart [through the journal] to the scrutiny of the immediate circle that constituted her identity, and whose sense of self included the ability to represent personal experience in a crafted idiom.”<sup>65</sup> While still an intimate document, journals nevertheless could be seen as indicative of the ideals that Southern women – and undoubtedly British women as well – believed they must uphold.

There is evidence to suggest that the women whose lives are profiled in this study did believe their documents would remain private. A young Virginia woman named Elizabeth Lavalette, writing her journal in 1836 and 1837, confessed to romantic attachments and desires for male attention that would not have made for appropriate displays of her morality, and the 1837 journal of the unmarried plantation mistress Sarah Frew Davidson from North Carolina was also believed to have been reflective of her private thoughts.<sup>66</sup>

To acknowledge that diaries and journals might have been presented in a certain way is not to say that these women were being dishonest. It must be

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<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>66</sup> Eliza Lavalette Barksdale Diary – 1836-1837, available at the VHS, Mss5:1B2475:1. See also the foreword by Mary Kratt to the 2005 publication of the 1837 journal of Sarah Frew Davidson, *Life in Antebellum Charlotte: The Private Journal of Sarah F. Davidson, 1837*, Janet S. Dyer, Karen M. McConnell, eds., (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2005), 7. All other references to this journal are to the original document, available at UNCC, Inventory of the Caldwell and Davidson Family Papers, 1779-1997, Box 1, Folder 9.

considered that there might have been an element of deliberate self-fashioning in their personal writings, particularly in letters which were often shared among many readers or in documents written for the benefit of younger relatives. What is significant is the fact that women would have attempted self-fashioning in the first place. If such social codes were not important in Scottish and Virginian society, there would be no need to pretend that one was adhering to them. Furthermore, in several instances, women were honest about situations in their courtships and social interactions when they did not follow didactic, polite standards. From such accounts, it can be assumed that when these same women described occasions in which they did, in fact, live up to the conduct-book ideal, they would have had no reason to lie.<sup>67</sup>

One of the areas in which this study differs from the existing scholarship is in its inclusion of women – specifically Southern American women – in exploring the impact of Enlightenment-inspired gentility through the reading of conduct books and didactic novels. It was a common thought during the Enlightenment era that there was “public value in providing citizens with books that help them improve themselves intellectually and spiritually and to add to humanities stores of knowledge and culture.”<sup>68</sup> In this same vein, this project will present the argument that texts such as Reverend Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women*, John Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters*, and Frances Burney’s *Evelina*<sup>69</sup> were inspired by Enlightenment ideas of sociability, urbane manners, and theoretical politeness, yet were written in such a way as to appeal to the essentially conservative, moralistic reading public.<sup>70</sup> By an examination of the reading habits of women in Scotland and Virginia, particularly their reading of conduct books and didactic novels – genres typically dismissed for centuries as women’s books, and therefore possessing little

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<sup>67</sup> This will be explored in greater detail in Chapter V.

<sup>68</sup> Susan Staves, “‘Books without which I cannot write’: How Did Eighteenth-century Women Writers Get the Books They Read?” *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, eds., (Palgrave, 2007), 192-212.

<sup>69</sup> Burney’s *Evelina* went through 4 editions. For an analysis of the American popularity of Gregory and Fordyce, see Kevin J. Hayes, *A Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf*, (Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 75-9.

<sup>70</sup> This idea is supported by the work of Mary Catherine Moran, “Between the Savage and the Civil: Dr. John Gregory’s Natural History of Femininity,” and Barbara Taylor’s “Feminists versus Gallants: Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain,” in *Women, Gender and the Enlightenment*, 30-52.

intellectual or literary merit<sup>71</sup> – this study is a more inclusive examination of the intellectual activities of groups often excluded from intellectual histories.

Many of the women included in this study were enthusiastic readers, although only some were familiar with the great philosophical texts of the day and fewer still had anything resembling a classical education.<sup>72</sup> This study will examine the polite education of these women – both the instruction that was formal and that which was informal and reliant upon self-teaching – as well as their social interactions, and their courtship practices in an attempt to determine to what extent these behaviors were shaped by the reading of didactic literature.

Another detail that makes this particular study unique to the existing historiography is that it extends beyond the end of the long eighteenth century. Original archival research, conducted at repositories in Britain and America led to the conclusion that some of the codes of politeness continued to linger in Virginian society into the 1830's and 1840's – thus reinforcing the connection of the defining standards of Southern gentility back to eighteenth-century roots. Writing in Richmond, Virginia in 1831, for instance, twenty-year-old Hannah Philippa Ludwell Hopkins wrote to her sister Mary Anna Hopkins, “Since I last wrote, my time has been entirely engrossed visiting & receiving visits...I have already paid upwards of 40 & I have yet 10 or 12 to make and these are merely the first and introductory calls for there are many who have returned my first visits, & to whom consequently I am

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<sup>71</sup> Jane West's *A Gossip Story* (published in London, 1796) for instance, is criticized as being moral but with “middling poetry” and “indifferent prose” by Ralph Griffiths in *The Monthly Review*, 22, Article 20, 92. Originally published in 1797, available on Google Books. For more on the trajectory of women as authors, see Nancy Armstrong, “The Rise of Feminine Authority in the Novel,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 15, no 2 (Winter, 1982): 127-45. For more analysis of Jane West, see Daniel Schierenbeck, “Reason and Romance: Rethinking Romantic-Era Fiction Through Jane West's *The Advantages of Education*,” *Enlightening Romanticism*, 69-85.

<sup>72</sup> Only Margaret and Mary Fletcher of Scotland in the 1760s and 1770s, Hannah Hope Vere of London in the 1840s, appear to have read intellectual works. Most of the other women in this study read novels, improvement texts, and religious works. The Fletcher Documents are available at the NLS, Fletcher of Saltoun Papers, MS 16688 f. 78. For secondary analysis of the education of Margaret and Mary Fletcher see, Katharine Glover, “The Female Mind: Scottish Enlightenment Femininity and the World of Letters. A Case Study of the Women of the Fletcher of Saltoun Family in the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 25, no 1 (2005): 1-20; See also, *Journal Kept by Hannah Hope Vere, Later Wife of Keith Stewart MacKenzie of Seaforth* – contained within the Papers of the MacKenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth (Seaforth Papers). Available at the NRAS, GD46/15/286.

indebted...indeed the society here is delightful...there is so little of form & ceremony & so much of genuine politeness and hospitality.”<sup>73</sup>

Of course, tastes for politeness and good manners did not disappear in Britain at this time. Hannah Hope Vere, a young woman of Scottish descent, living in London (and who would eventually marry into the powerful Stuart Mackenzie clan in Scotland)<sup>74</sup> wrote in her journal in August of 1841 after attending a party, “found nothing but ten men all lolling on sofa’s[sic] or chairs Jane and I sat mum a while the party discussed property taxes etc Jane I agreed in a whisper a game...would be rather more enlivening which confidential remark Lord [illegible] overhearing we all three at last got up a laugh.”<sup>75</sup>

In both of these instances, these women were referencing, at least to varying degrees, eighteenth-century codes of politeness. Hopkins referred to a sociable and hospitable society, in which “genuine politeness” was the most important feature, ideals similar to that advocated by Fordyce in his *Sermons to Young Women* nearly eighty years before. He also called for a genuine politeness which was an “offspring of the heart...much preferable to that specious but hollow complaisance, studied by the fashionable and the false.”<sup>76</sup> In her journal, Hope Vere indirectly referred to the belief that women were the directors of polite society. She described a dull party of men and it was not until she and her sister took charge, by organizing a polite, social amusement that the party improved. This is similar to advice written by Mrs. Hester Chapone. In describing the polite duties of women in social settings, Chapone advised learning to cultivate conversation and other social graces which “may conduce to the improvement or innocent entertainment of each other.”<sup>77</sup>

It is difficult to directly compare the trajectory of polite codes in these examples given that Hope Vere, despite her heritage, considered London her primary

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<sup>73</sup> Letter dated May 6, 1831 from Hannah Philippa Ludwell Hopkins to Mary Anna Hopkins, Hopkins Family Papers, 1732-1834, available at the VHS, Mss1H7779a.

<sup>74</sup> See “Hannah Charlotte Hope-Vere.” *The Peerage*, accessed online. Person Page 3664. Compiler, Daryl Lundy. Site last updated July 9, 2012. <http://thepeerage.com/p3664.htm#i36638>.

<sup>75</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, August 28, 1841.

<sup>76</sup> Fordyce, *Sermons*, VII, 127.

<sup>77</sup> Hester Chapone, “Letter on the Government of the Temper,” contained in *The Lady's Pocket Library*, (Published in New York, by L. and F. Lockwood, no. 110 Chatham-Street, J&J. Harper, Fifth American Edition, 1818), 229. This was originally published as a part of Chapone’s 1773 publication of *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*.



residence – at least at the time of writing her journal.<sup>78</sup> While still useful, her writings regarding polite morality must always been seen through the filter of London manners and customs. What these writings do indicate is that while politeness in some form was still clearly valued in both British and American society into the nineteenth century, the eighteenth century definition of polite gentility was more readily embraced in Virginia than in Britain. This is evidenced by the fact that Hannah Hopkins directly referenced politeness, in its eighteenth-century connotations, in her letter and described a society which revolved around polite sociability, while Hope Vere's references were indirect. She was not necessarily aspiring to practice politeness, but she had been trained well enough in polite graces to know that she and her sister would be encouraged, and even expected, to take a prominent role in directing the social discourse of the party.

Part of the reason for these changing interpretations of politeness between Britain and Virginia has to do with the role of religion. It is evident from her writings that Hope Vere was a devout Christian. Her morality was a blending of eighteenth-century rationality and polite sociability, as well as the emotionalism of evangelical faith.<sup>79</sup> These two examples are indicative of the fact that although Scottish, didactic moralism was practiced in both Britain and America, it was in nineteenth century Virginia that such codes continued to have a prominent role in defining polite society. In Scotland and England, by comparison, while polite theory had not entirely disappeared, it was moderated by several other influences.

Politeness was shaped by many factors as the age of Enlightenment came to an end and was replaced by the Romantic era: the end of the French and American Revolutions and the Napoleonic Wars, the conservative backlash against the rationality and skepticism of Enlightenment thought, the Romantic influence of emotion rather than reason, and the rise of a second evangelical movement.<sup>80</sup> This project will argue that rather than completely replacing the politeness of the

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<sup>78</sup> Hope Vere's mother was Lady Elizabeth Hay, who lived for a time in Edinburgh. See "Hannah Charlotte Hope-Vere." *The Peerage*, accessed online.

<sup>79</sup> See Chapter IV for a more in-depth analysis of Hope Vere's religious views.

<sup>80</sup> For more information on the society and literature of the Victorian and Romantic era, see Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, (First Published in Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books. Printed and bound in Great Britain by Redwood Burn Limited, Trowbridge & Esher, 1980); Miriam L. Wallace, ed., *Enlightening Romanticism*.

eighteenth-century, Romanticism and evangelicalism came to be combined in Scotland and Virginia with engrained codes of Enlightenment-inspired gentility.

### Part III: Original Research

It is in the exploration of this era that the letters, diaries, and records of women in the decades between the end of the Enlightenment and the beginning of the Victorian age become so essential as well as the book-buying and reading habits, and the intellectual interests of the women in question in both Scotland and Virginia. This project uses original research from archives located in Edinburgh as well as Williamsburg and Richmond, Virginia and Charlotte, and Durham, North Carolina and includes an examination of the personal letters, diaries, journals and commonplace books of over twenty different women, and over a dozen different families in locations ranging from London, Edinburgh and Aberdeen to Richmond, Lynchburg, Williamsburg and Yorktown, Virginia.<sup>81</sup>

This study has made use of the correspondence and personal writings of these women, gaining insight about their family lives and household responsibilities, their attitudes towards servants in Scotland and slaves in Virginia, as well as their opinions on what constituted moral and upstanding behavior among young women. These women frequently wrote about their reading habits, sometimes listing specific books that they had read, or reflecting on the lessons gained from such reading.

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<sup>81</sup> The major collections consulted regarding women's lives are as follows: in Virginia, at CW, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers – 1780-1832 – DMS 54.5, Blair, Banister, Braxton, Horner, and Whiting Papers, 1765-1890, 108 items, PH 25 (photocopies of original documents, which are stored at Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Virginia), hereafter referred to as the Anne Blair Papers, Frances Baylor Hill Diary; at the VHS, Margaret Maria Martini DiRieux, Commonplace Books – 1806-1823, Mss5:5D4454:1, Nancy Johns Turner Hall – *The Imaginist* – 1844, Mss5:9H1405:1, Eliza Lavalette Barksdale Diary – 1836-1837, Hopkins Family Papers – 1732-1844, Peyton Family Papers – Correspondence of Elizabeth (Gordon) Scott; in Scotland; NRAS, Personal Correspondence, Mainly of Jane Innes of Picardy Place – contained within Papers of the Innes Family of Stow, Peeblesshire, available at the NRAS, GD113/5/498, GD113/5/46, and GD113/5/84, Journal of Hannah Hope Vere; the NLS, Fletcher of Saltoun Papers – Correspondence – GB233/MS.16501-16754, Families and Individuals - GB233/MS.17606-17744, Educational Documents – MS 16864 f. 166; MS 16865 ff. 160, 161, 164, 165; MS 16866 ff. 164-5; MS 16868 ff. 175-9, MS 16688 f. 78; EURL, *Memoirs of the Fletchers of Saltoun* – E. Halkett, 1785, La III 364.

They also wrote about their education, and as they aged, they sought to educate the younger, presumably female members of their family through their reflective letters, memoirs and sometimes through fictionalized accounts of their own lives.

Library and bookselling records of Scotland and Virginia throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have also been explored in an attempt to determine which books were offered to, and purchased by, female readers. In Scotland, the inventories of several circulating and subscription libraries in the city of Edinburgh from 1786 to 1865 have been examined in order to determine the gender divide of their patrons and subscribers, as well as the proportion of their catalogues which were devoted to didactic works. The daily sales from 1814 to 1815 of W. Wilson, an Edinburgh bookseller and stationer, have been analyzed to determine the gendered clientele and book buying habits of genteel urbanites in Regency-era Scotland.<sup>82</sup> The personal libraries of such prominent families as the Fletchers of Saltoun have also been explored to determine book ownership within elite families and how notions of possession and material culture were separated by gender. The purpose of this vein of research is to establish the role of Scotland, specifically Edinburgh, as a center of print culture for moral philosophy and polite literature and trace the way this literature spread throughout the English-speaking, and reading, world, particularly to Virginia. Obviously London was the major hub of print activity, but this thesis will present the connections between Edinburgh and Williamsburg in the diffusion of didactic tracts.

In Virginia, a deeper analysis of personal and family libraries was required, given that the lack of urban development meant that public libraries and book shops were fewer in number. Although some of these libraries had already been analyzed in secondary sources,<sup>83</sup> the majority were transcribed versions of the original documents. This study has explored the private libraries of: the Prentis family,

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<sup>82</sup> W. Wilson & Co., Bookseller and Stationer, 44 George Street Edinburgh. Information from his Scroll Day Book, July 1814 to September 1815. From the Collection of James Brown & Co., Ltd., Papermakers, Esk Mills, Penicuik, Miscellaneous small collections of family, business and other papers. Available at the NRAS, GD1/575/11.

<sup>83</sup> See the study by Mildred K. Abraham, "The Library of Lady Jean Skipwith. A Book Collection from the Age of Jefferson," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 91, no 3 (July, 1983), Published Quarterly by the Virginia Historical Society; See also, Caroline Julia Richter, *The Prentis Family and their Library: A Thesis Presented to The Faculty of American Studies Program, The College of William and Mary in Virginia*, In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts. 1985.

shopkeepers in Williamsburg; Lady Jean Skipwith, a wealthy Scottish migrant who spent her life in Edinburgh and Virginia; Peyton Randolph, a Virginia elected official; the Baron de Botetourt, Governor of Virginia; and the recommendations of Thomas Jefferson to his brother-in-law Robert Skipwith, detailing the titles that should be found in every gentleman's library. Regarding the original research of book inventories in personal and public venues, this study has made use of the unpublished commonplace book of Maria Martini DeRieux, who kept detailed records of her reading for almost twenty years, the inventory of Ross and Douglas, booksellers in Petersburg, Virginia from 1800, as well as the copies of advertisements from the Williamsburg print shop, contained in publications of the *Virginia Gazette* ranging from 1770 to 1777.<sup>84</sup> In each of these studies, these collections were analyzed for the proportion of the catalogue that was devoted the didactic literature.

It is impossible to determine the gender of the purchasers or borrowers of the books from these libraries or bookshops, and in the case of private libraries – with the exception of the Fletcher Library which was divided by gender, or the Lady Jean Skipwith Library which was clearly owned and collected by a woman – it is difficult to know which books were being read, if they were read at all, by which members of the family. It is also difficult to assess the reception that these books received from their readers. It is for this reason that the private letters, diaries and journals of the Scottish and Virginian women in question have been so invaluable in determining to what extent their reading of didactic texts shaped their perceptions of morality, virtue, and social obligation.

Through an analysis of the reading and book buying habits of women, this project will assert that while there were evident changes in moral and religious views among genteel women as the nineteenth century progressed, the teachings of Enlightenment-inspired politeness continued to linger in society, and the standards of genteel behavior were still shaped by seemingly forgotten eighteenth-century values. This was the case to a certain extent in Scotland, but it was more evident in Virginia,

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<sup>84</sup>A *Catalogue of Books, &c. Now Selling By Ross & Douglas, Booksellers and Stationers, Petersburg*. Petersburg, Jan. 1800. Available online at CW. Photocopies of the *Virginia Gazette* are also available at CW.

where women referenced their didactic novels and conduct books – and sought to author their own didactic texts – more directly than their Scottish counterparts. As a result, the polite codes that played a prominent role in dictating the behavior of Virginia’s gentility were connected to Scotland and the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment.

#### **Part IV: Historiography**

This study serves as a needed addition to the existing historiography of this era in several different ways. One of the most important contributions to existing historical study that this thesis makes is to the secondary works on the broader British Atlantic world, presenting a hypothesis for the cultural development of Virginia as a part of provincial British culture and continuing in the vein of arguments originally presented in the work of Michael Kraus. Kraus explores the social and economic impacts of British culture on the American colonies, but also the ways in which eighteenth-century colonial and early republican American attitudes manifested in the greater culture of Great Britain, including the transatlantic implications of Enlightenment thought.<sup>85</sup>

More specifically, this project is most closely linked to Ned Landsman’s analysis of colonial identity and the paradoxical mentalities of early British Americans who strove to emulate the cultural developments of the metropolis while still being profoundly, and proudly, shaped by their provincial position. Going beyond the core/periphery model and from dismissing colonial Americans as only aspiring to mimic the gentrification of British, specifically London, culture, Landsman argues that members of provincial British society – like Scots and Virginians – would have been linked by that distinctly provincial point of view that was often considered superior to and more vigorous than that of the metropolis.<sup>86</sup>

Much of Landsman’s work is focused on role of Scotland, particularly the role of Scottish religion, in shaping the culture of the British Atlantic World.

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Kraus, *The Atlantic Civilization: Eighteenth-Century Origins*, (Originally published in 1949 by the American Historical Association, this edition published in New York by Russell & Russell, Inc., 1961).

<sup>86</sup> Ned C. Landsman, *From Provincials to Colonials: American Thought and Culture 1680-1760*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Specifically, he has examined the role of American Presbyterians and Scottish Moderate Presbyterian thinkers in helping to instill a rational, Enlightenment-inspired morality in the middle colonies of America, such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries.<sup>87</sup>

It is in his book, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680-1860*, however, that Landsmen explores the notion of improvement in the British provinces and draws connections between the improvement discourse and practical, distinctly Scottish Enlightenment thought. It is here that his work becomes most closely related to the information presented in this study. “Nowhere was improvement more apparent than in the provinces,” he writes, “as provincial citizens attending to their place in an expansive but increasingly interconnected empire looked for ways to catch up to, or at least narrow the gap between themselves and, their metropolitan neighbors.”<sup>88</sup> This was present, according to Landsmen, in both Scotland and the American colonies. In particular, Scottish moral philosophy was “well suited to the needs of emerging provincial societies,” with the “transfer of moral authority from traditional institutional forces of church and state to the collective and common sense of an informed citizenry.”<sup>89</sup>

Landsmen briefly highlights both the role of polite publications in the education of colonial American women and the theory that politeness and refinement reflected the overall elevation of society. He further explores the practice of women monitoring their own politeness in journals and correspondence as part of a wider Enlightenment discussion, as well as the role of conversation in the importance of Enlightenment-inspired improvement.<sup>90</sup> While not neglecting the Southern colonies, Landsman continues to focus primarily on the middle states of New Jersey and

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<sup>87</sup> See Ned Landsman, “Presbyterians, Evangelicals and the Educational Culture of the Middle Colonies,” *Pennsylvania History* 64, Empire, Society, and Labor: Essays in Honor of Richard S. Dunn, (Summer, 1997): 168-82; see also Landsman, “Revivalism and Nativism in the Middle Colonies: The Great Awakening and the Scots Community in East New Jersey,” *American Quarterly* 34, no 2 (Summer, 1982): 149-64; Landsman, “Evangelists and their Hearers: Popular Interpretation of Revivalist Preaching in Eighteenth-Century Scotland,” *Journal of British Studies* 48, no 2 (Apr., 1989): 120-49; Landsman, “Nation, Migration, and the Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no 2 (Apr., 1999): 463-75; Landsman, “Border Cultures, the Backcountry, and ‘North British’ Emigration to America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 48, no 2 (Apr., 1991): 253-9.

<sup>88</sup> Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials*, 52.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-41.

Pennsylvania, and concludes that Philadelphia was the “most Enlightened city” in colonial America.<sup>91</sup> This thesis, therefore, serves as a more specific cross section of British American historiography than Landsman’s work, and furthers the arguments of Jack Greene in purposing that eighteenth-century Virginia and the greater Chesapeake culture played a unique role in expansion of British Atlantic values.

In *Pursuits of Happiness*, Greene argues that the traditional historical perspective, which assumes that the colonial experience of New England reflected the British colonial experience in general, is inaccurate and that the development of Virginia was more reflective of general development in the British Atlantic world.<sup>92</sup> While not focused on Scotland specifically, Greene compared several facets of the Virginia way of life to British culture and asserts that the number of highly wealthy individuals was greater in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Virginia than in many of the other American, specifically northern, colonies and that this resulted in a unique focus on gentrification in Virginia.<sup>93</sup> While pointing out that many of the wealthiest colonials in continental America resided in Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina, Greene asserts that these elites were also associated with a lazy indolence and a lack of interest in improvement, further emphasizing – albeit indirectly – this study’s specific focus on the moral philosophy of improvement prevalent in Virginia and originating in Scotland.<sup>94</sup>

Finally, in addressing one of the major discrepancies between the British and Southern American ways of life, Greene asserts that attitudes towards servants and servitude were comparable, although certainly not identical, to attitudes and practices regarding slavery in Virginia.<sup>95</sup> Greene’s work, however, is primarily focused on the seventeenth-century history of colonial America, and as such, he makes a distinction between the Chesapeake region of Virginia, Maryland and even North Carolina, and the lower Southern colonies of South Carolina and Georgia. While certainly not ignoring the variations of culture in the development of the upper and lower regions of the American South, this thesis, unlike Greene’s work, extends into the middle of

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>92</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 147-8.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 100. This argument is further explored in Chapters IV and V of this thesis.

the nineteenth century. As such, it includes Virginia as part of a more general Southern identity that served as a cohesive factor in the years leading up to the American Civil War.

Further regarding the development of the British Atlantic world, this study is also a contribution to the historiography of how provincials – the term in this instance referencing Scots and Virginians before and even after the American Revolution – viewed their cultural development when compared to the London metropolis. This study is a continuation of arguments presented by Greene, Landsman, and others, asserting that the genteel families of Virginia and other colonial locations both aspired to emulate and yet at the same time relished in their deviation from the cultural core.<sup>96</sup>

Landsman has determined that provincial society originally set out to mimic many aspects of metropolitan life, and Greene has highlighted the ways in which British elites in Virginia, New England, Barbados and Ireland tried to recreate as best they could in their new home the societies that they left behind.<sup>97</sup> The manners and rules of civility and politeness which are the focus of this project reflected, according to Greene and Landsman, the levels of civilization that distinguished British colonials from the supposed savagery of the native population, and more tightly bound them to their counterparts in Great Britain. And yet, this cultural development throughout the eighteenth century, particularly as colonial society became more cohesive and developed, led to new interpretations and even levels of pride in

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<sup>96</sup> See Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*; Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials*. See also, Jack P. Greene, "Early Modern Southeastern North America and the Broader Atlantic and American Worlds," *The Journal of Southern History* 73, no 3 (Aug., 2007): 525-38; Greene, "Social and Cultural Capital in Colonial British America: A Case Study," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no 3 Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Comparative Perspectives: Part I (Winter, 1999): 491-509; Greene, "Transplanting Moments: Inheritance in the Formation of Early American Culture," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 48, no 2 (Apr., 1991): 224-30; Ned C. Landsman, "The Provinces and the Empire: Scotland, the American Colonies and the Development of British Provincial Identity," in Lawrence Stone, ed., *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1685-1815* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 258-87; see also, John H. Elliot, "Introduction: Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World," 3-13, Michael Zuckerman, "Identity in British America: Unrest in Eden," 115-57, and Anthony Pagden and Nicholas Canny, "Afterword: From Identity to Independence," in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds., *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 267-78.

<sup>97</sup> See Ned C. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials*, 179; Landsman, "The Provinces and the Empire," 278; Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*; Jack P. Greene, "Changing Identity in the British Caribbean: Barbados as a Case Study," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, 213-66.



provincial civility and this project explores this theory through specific examples of Virginia society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In Jack Greene's *Pursuits of Happiness*, furthermore, the author compares the developmental experience of the American colonies, the West Indies and Ireland as British peripheries, finding that each was unique in their own right, but they were also closely connected in the shared experience of creating an identity that was both British and yet also shaped by the perspectives and realities of life which could only develop outside of the cultural core.<sup>98</sup> This study extends this developmental model to Scotland and similarly concludes that the genteel elites in both Scotland and Virginia were well aware of the polite codes of the British Enlightenment world and strove to emulate the outward displays of civil society, and yet also felt that their own experience as provincials removed them from all that was negative about the metropolis. Virginia belles and Scottish ladies aspiring to gentility would have been well versed in polite London manners and the rules of morality, but they would have also felt that by being a society apart that they had retained a more genuine practice of polite civility that had not been corrupted by the metropolitan fashion, vice, or immorality.

Moving beyond the British Atlantic world and focusing on gender histories, the works of Mary Beth Norton and particularly Linda Kerber have shaped the way the academic community regards the lives of colonial and early republican American women, but their work is mostly focused on the New England states.<sup>99</sup> It is also impossible to ignore Kerber's theory of Republican Motherhood, and the changing attitudes towards women's role in the home and women's education. This study will take Kerber's model further and apply it to the Southern states. This project will also

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<sup>98</sup> Green, *Pursuits of Happiness*, see the conclusion of the argument in Chapter 8.

<sup>99</sup> See Linda K. Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*. For other works on women in the republican era, see Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel, Jr., *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America*, (New York: Norton, 1984), this work is focused on Connecticut, reemphasizing the point that most early-republican material is focused on the Northern states. See also, Elaine F. Crane, "Dependence in the Era of Independence: The Role of Women in Republican Society," in Jack P. Greene, ed., *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits*, (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 253-75; Carole Shammas, "Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 52, no 1 (Jan, 1995): 104-44. For a general overview of the American Revolution, see Francis D. Cogliano, *Revolutionary America, 1763-1815: A Political History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (New York: Routledge, first published in 2000, this edition published in 2009).

support the arguments of Rosemarie Zagari which links ideology about the role of women's morality in a republic to earlier, Scottish philosophy, specifically of David Hume, which dictated the importance of the moral mother in the creation of an ideal, civil society.<sup>100</sup> Although the notions of Republican Motherhood were not entirely unique to the early American republic, the belief that the moral, civilizing influence of the mother was crucial for the success of society became uniquely politicized in the newly-formed United States.

Cynthia Kierner's *Beyond the Household* is one of the few secondary works that studies of the lives of Southern women and includes material from the colonial and early republican period.<sup>101</sup> Regarding the historiography of the American South, it is Kierner's work that is most closely related to this project in its exploration of elite, Virginia women's behavior. Kierner refers specifically to the polite sociability of the colonial South and the "genteel culture of public balls, polite manners and conspicuous consumption that complemented and reinforced the authority of... [the planter elite] before the Revolution."<sup>102</sup> She asserts that domestic hospitality could have a public significance regarding an individual's or a family's social reputation.<sup>103</sup> Kierner also frequently mentions Fordyce and Gregory as key texts to define Southern standards of manners and ideal femininity, and has emphasized the changing mentalities of the eighteenth century that put women as the ambiguous moral center of polite, Southern society.<sup>104</sup>

Kierner's work differs from that presented in this project due to the fact that she only uses the examples of ideal feminine morality from the didactic texts to highlight the general attitudes of the era. She does not engage with the idea that these works were instructional or that the ideals did not necessarily represent the

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<sup>100</sup> Rosemarie Zagari, "Morals, Manners and the Republican Mother." A similar argument about the role of the moral mother in British society is also presented by Dana Harrington, in "Gender, Commerce and the Transformation of Virtue in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no 3 (Summer, 2001): 33-52. A similar argument is also presented in Cynthia Kierner, ed., "Introduction," *The Contrast*, 6.

<sup>101</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998); for more information on women's lives in colonial and early republican Virginia, see Ruth H. Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America." *Signs* 13, no 1 Women and the Political Process in the United States (Autumn, 1987): 37-58.

<sup>102</sup> Kierner, "The Dark and Dense Cloud," 187.

<sup>103</sup> Kierner, "Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies," 449.

<sup>104</sup> See Kierner's "The Dark and Dense Cloud," 214, and "Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies," 455.

reality, nor does she examine individual readership of these works among the women featured in her studies.

The majority of work on Southern women, such as pieces by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Anne Firor Scott, Catherine Clinton, and Anya Jabour focus on the lives of women leading up to the American Civil War and center on notions of gender as related to slavery.<sup>105</sup> For instance, Anya Jabour's examination of young women's lives in the antebellum South, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, explores women of the same approximate age and social position as the women profiled in this study, but her study is focused just prior to and during the American Civil War rather than the colonial and early republican eras.<sup>106</sup>

In each of these studies, it is mentioned that genteel Southern ladies were given instruction on how a lady managed her people (the word slaves was rarely used in the contemporary literature or the personal documents)<sup>107</sup> and mothers were often warned about the impact of exposure to slaves on the morality of children. Similar advice was also given to wealthy young ladies in Britain about their servants.<sup>108</sup> This study will not ignore the realities of slavery or servitude because of the role that such institutions played in supporting the aspirations of gentility attained by women in Virginia and Scotland. But this is, first and foremost, a study of the reading trends of elite young women and an exploration of their private lives through their letters and journals. This means that evidence is limited to the writings and book-buying habits of wealthy, white women in both Scotland and Virginia prior to the American Civil War.

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<sup>105</sup> See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*; Catherine Clinton, *Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); See also, Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Kirsten E. Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>106</sup> Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, "Introduction."

<sup>107</sup> In her journal, plantation mistress Sarah Frew Davidson referred to her slaves as "servants" – see entries from February 9, and July 18, 1837. Anne Blair refers to "negroes," but never explicitly states that they are slaves in a letter written August 21, 1769, Anne Blair Papers.

<sup>108</sup> Fordyce makes reference to servants in his work *Sermons*, VII, 136. American author Virginia Cary wrote about treatment of slaves in her conduct book, *Letters on Female Character, addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother*, available at CW, (Published by A. Works, Richmond, Virginia, 1828), 172.

In his work, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, Kevin J. Hayes conducts an exploration of women's general reading habits in America prior to the American Revolution. This book presents a similar definition of didactic literature to the one used in this study, particularly regarding the idea that many of the novels of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century were similar to conduct books with regards to their messages about politeness and morality, but Hayes' study is not specifically focused on Southern women and does not extend into the early republican era.<sup>109</sup> One of the few historians to conduct an intellectual history of Southern women, particularly one which includes didactic texts, is Catherine Kerrison. She connects the use of conduct books and novels of manners with the informal, self-education of women but also concludes that Scottish Enlightenment thought about the civilizing influence of women had come to dictate many aspects of Southern behavior.<sup>110</sup>

Kerrison also claims that the lack of urbanity in the South meant that gentility had to be displayed in the home rather than in public places, representing a distinction between the sociability of the city with the hospitality of developing towns. Although public, social institutions did exist in Southern towns, the majority of interaction in those locations was reserved for men and women often stayed mostly isolated on rural farms and plantations.<sup>111</sup> This study asserts that hospitality

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<sup>109</sup> Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*. Hemphill's comparative study, "Manners and Class in the Revolutionary Era," in which he traces the decline of conduct books, does not include moralistic novels as a strand of didactic literature.

<sup>110</sup> Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen*; Catherine Kerrison, "By the Book: Eliza Ambler Brent Carrington and Conduct Literature in Late Eighteenth-Century Virginia." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. Vol 105, no 1 (Winter 1997); Catherine Kerrison, "The Novel as Education: Learning to be Female in the Eighteenth-Century South." *Journal of Southern History* Vol 69, no 3 (Aug 2003): 514-48. For other studies related to women's reading and intellectualism in colonial America see, Cathy N. Davidson, "The Novel as Subversive Activity: Women Reading, Women Writing," *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, Alfred F. Young, ed., (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 283-316; Mary Kelley, "Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America," *The Journal of American History* 83, no 2 (Sept 1996): 401-24; Jennifer E. Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," *American Quarterly* 40, no 1 Special Issue: Reading America (Mar., 1988): 18-41.

<sup>111</sup> See Rhys Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*; for more information on social and cultural life in the colonial, republican and antebellum South, see Lorri Glover, *All Our Relations: Blood ties and Emotional Bonds among the Early South Carolina Gentry*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Alan Daniel B. Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society*, (Ithaca, NY, 1980); Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life*, (New York: The Free Press, 1988); Ruth Bloch, "Changing Conceptions of Sexuality and Romance in Eighteenth-Century America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 60, no 1 Sexuality in Early America (Jan, 2003): 13-42; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Department of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-*

of the home and public sociability of the city were two different versions of the same polite ideal, but also that much of Scottish politeness was also centered in the home and in the idea of paying polite, domestic visits.<sup>112</sup> Politeness did develop differently in Virginia as compared to Scotland, however, and the reading of didactic texts took on a different meaning when the possibilities for polite display became less frequent and less easily practiced since urban, social settings were not readily available. While Scottish women were given the opportunity to hone polite manners and social graces from their public interactions, many Virginian women had to rely on didactic literature for their knowledge of polite expectations. As a result, the conduct book and the novel of manners was read differently in Virginia than in Scotland, and took on a new position of social authority.

Finally, historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown has explored notions of honor and gentility among antebellum Southerners.<sup>113</sup> He has examined the role of shame and reputation in shaping the foundation of the Southern social structure, as well as the rationale behind Southern hospitality, and most importantly, he explores how these concepts could be reconciled with, and supported by, the owning of slaves in the minds of Southern planters. Despite a primary focus on men, Wyatt-Brown does explore the ideas of courtesy and hospitality among women, as well as the standards for women's sexual conduct. He states these ideas, however, as major social constructs of Southern life. He does not explore how these codes were taught nor does he define what gentility meant to women to the same extent that he does with men. Although Wyatt-Brown connects many of the social institutions found in the antebellum South back to old world Europe, like Cynthia Kierner and her work on women, he never stresses the fact that many Southerners were trying to emulate the aristocratic elements of this world on their plantations.

Regarding the secondary literature related to Britain, that which is most relevant to this study is the research of Katharine Glover regarding the education of

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1800, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Stephanie Grauman Wolfe, *As Various as Their Land: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth-Century Americans*, (New York, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993).

<sup>112</sup> For evidence of this see, Grant, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, VII, 15.

<sup>113</sup> Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*. For the paradox of the ideal of Southern women's gentility while also acting as slave owners, see Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*. See also, Cynthia A. Kierner, "Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies" 451.

elite women in Scotland from roughly 1720-1760. Glover explores many similar themes, such as the role of women in polite sociability and the influences of Enlightenment thought. Her work does not include the spread of such ideas to America, and although several of the same individuals and families are explored such as the Fletcher of Saltoun family and Jane Innes of Edinburgh, Glover's material is focused approximately fifty to one hundred years before the women highlighted in this study. Finally, while acknowledging that women most likely read didactic texts, Glover's elite, female subjects made no reference to their reading of instructive novels or conduct books.<sup>114</sup>

Of equal importance are the works on British social, cultural, and intellectual life in the long eighteenth-century.<sup>115</sup> This research has been shaped by the perspective of historians such as Robert Darnton, and Anand C. Chitnis who have advocated for a cultural interpretation of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>116</sup> This thesis is not claiming that there was a "popular" Enlightenment, given that such a term indicates that the key theories of Enlightenment thought would have trickled down through the masses and impacted the lives of everyone from the elites to the working poor. It is beyond the scope of this study to make such a claim due to the fact that it is limited, on both sides of the Atlantic, to leisured, wealthy white women. By exploring the indirect impact of Enlightenment thought on women, however, it is possible to assert that there was a distinction between the high Enlightenment, which

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<sup>114</sup> Katharine Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2011), 61. See also, Katharine Glover, "The Female Mind," Katharine Glover, "Polite Society and the Rural Resort."

<sup>115</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998); For works on the Scottish and British Enlightenment see: Alexander Murdoch, "A Crucible for Change: Enlightenment in Britain," 104-16; Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation*; Anand C. Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment*; Mary Catherine Moran, *From Rudeness to Refinement: Gender, Genre, and Scottish Enlightenment Discourse*, A Dissertation submitted to the John Hopkins University, 1999, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, Proquest, 2003); Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1997); Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>116</sup> For an intellectual interpretation of Enlightenment philosophy, see Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); for a social and cultural interpretation, see Robert Darnton, *George Washington's Teeth*; Robert Darnton, "In Search of the Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas," *The Journal of Modern History* 43, no 1 (March 1971): 113-32.

was practiced primarily by elite men of letters, and codes of Enlightenment-inspired gentility that came to be a staple of Scottish, and Virginian, female culture.

Many historians tend to remove women from the intellectual life of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>117</sup> They did not host salons, like their counterparts in Paris, and they were not contributing to the intellectual culture as the producers of philosophical works. Even England had Mary Wollstonecraft and Catherine Macaulay.<sup>118</sup> The work of Mark Towsey, however, has considered women in Scotland as active consumers, if not necessarily producers, of the popular by-products of Enlightenment thought. His research has traced the spread of Enlightenment ideology in the book buying and reading habits among non-elites in provincial Scotland.<sup>119</sup> Original, archival research also indicates that several elite Scottish women corresponded frequently with thinkers like David Hume and William Robertson,<sup>120</sup> although it must be conceded that these women were perhaps exceptional in their educational opportunities and their social connections.

The philosophical ideas regarding the place of women in civilized society were then embraced by the authors of some of the most popular conduct books of the age, Gregory's *Legacy* and Fordyce's *Sermons*, while a new genre of novel also emerged that placed virtuous, young women as the moral standard for the rest of society, such as Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela*, and later novels of manners, like Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* (1818). *Pamela* is the story of a servant girl who successfully reforms her employer through her moral example, while Mary Douglas,

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<sup>117</sup> Both John Robertson in "The Scottish Contribution," 43-4, and Richard B. Sher in "Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment," 101, explain that women played little role in the world of Scottish intellectual life.

<sup>118</sup> Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism*, (UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women: 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Bluestockings*, (Great Britain: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2008); Anna Miegon, "Biographical Sketches of Principal Bluestocking Women," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 65, no 1/2 "Reconsidering the Bluestockings" (2002): 25-37; JoEllen DeLucia, "'Far Other Times are These': The Bluestockings in the Time of Ossian," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 27, no 1 (Spring, 2008): 39-62.

<sup>119</sup> Mark Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750-1820*, (Leiden, the Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2010); Mark Towsey, "All the Partners may be Enlightened and Improved by Reading Them: The Distribution of Enlightenment Books in Scottish Subscription Library Catalogues, 1750-c.1820," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 11 (2008): 20-43; Mark Towsey, "Patrons of Infidelity: Scottish Readers Respond to David Hume, c.1750-c.1820," *Book History* 11 (2008): 89-123; Mark Towsey, "'Philosophically Playing the Devil': Recovering Readers' Responses to David Hume and the Scottish Enlightenment," *Historical Research* 83, issue 220 (2010): 301-20.

<sup>120</sup> See Elizabeth Halkett, *Memoirs of the Fletcher of Saltoun*, 104.

the heroine of *Marriage*, is the moral center of the story and resists the corrupting vices of her mother, sister and city life. Such literature was written for and often by women, and corresponded with an increase of literacy, book-buying and readership that ensured that some of these works were also the most popular of the age in both Britain and in the American colonies. Through their readership of these texts which embraced the codes of politeness, women can be considered indirectly connected to the spread of Enlightenment sociability.

This work also has been shaped by studies on the writings of the bluestockings like Hannah More and Elizabeth Montagu, as well as works on eighteenth-century readers and women writers.<sup>121</sup> Studies conducting textual analysis of some of the most popular conduct books and novels of manners of the age, such as Gregory's *Legacy*, Fordyce's *Sermons*, Richardson's *Pamela*, and Burney's *Evelina*, have also been examined, as well as works examining the rise and impact of the novel on popular British and American culture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>122</sup> This research has been supplemented by transatlantic pieces regarding the British book trade and the reception of British works in America, specifically British novels. It has explored secondary examinations of the private libraries of

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<sup>121</sup> Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, *Women's Lives and the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Novel*, (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991); Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women: 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Bluestockings*; Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History*, (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1965); Jacquelin Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Rab Houston, "The Literacy Myth?: Illiteracy in Scotland, 1630-1760," *Past and Present* 96 (Aug, 1982): 81-102.

<sup>122</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Learning How to Behave: A Historical Study of American Etiquette Books*, (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1968); Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, (Chatto and Windus, Ltd.: London, 1957); Eve Tavor Bannet, "Printed Epistolary Manuals and the Transatlantic Rescripting of Manuscript Culture," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 36 (2007): 13-32; Eve Tavor Bannet, *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000); Nancy L. Paxton, "Subversive Feminism: A Reassessment of Susan Ferrier's *Marriage*," *Women and Literature* 4, no 1 (Spring, 1976): 18-29; Cathy N. Davidson, "The Novel as Subversive Activity," 283-316; Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel*. For more information on the analysis of politeness in literature, see Christina Davidson, "Conversations as Signifiers: Characters on the Margins of Morality in the First Three Novels of Frances Burney," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 8, no 2 (June, 2010): 277-304; Patricia L. Hamilton, "Monkey Business: Lord Orville and the Limits of Politeness in Frances Burney's *Evelina*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19, no 4 (Summer 2007): 415-40; Bridget Hill, *Eighteenth Century Women: An Anthology*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984); Joyce Hemlow, "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books," *PMLA* 65, no 5 (1950): 732-6.



prominent families, including a study on the marginalia found in books in the Prentis family library in Virginia.<sup>123</sup>

This project has consulted works about the role of women in British family life to explore the position of women within the household, and the role of childhood in shaping the social lives of British and American women in the long eighteenth-century.<sup>124</sup> Of equal importance are works on British and American courtship practices,<sup>125</sup> as well as the many secondary studies on the phenomenon of eighteenth-century British politeness, with notable works by Paul Langford and Lawrence Klein.<sup>126</sup> Finally, the trajectory of the religious movements in both Britain and America, and the rise of eighteenth-century evangelicalism have further been explored by religious scholars such as Jon Butler and Callum G. Brown.<sup>127</sup>

### Part V: Thesis Outline

The conclusions drawn by this study will be explored through an examination of the reading habits, educational trends, and finally the courtship practices of leisured, white women in Virginia and Scotland in the time period ranging from 1750 to 1850. Chapter I will set the foundations for the popularity and public presence of certain didactic texts in Scotland and Virginia by exploring the records of public and private libraries and book shops, and examining the personal documents of women to note

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<sup>123</sup> Edward H. Jacobs, "Buying into Classes: The Practice of Book Selection in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no 1 (Fall 1999): 43-64; Caroline Julia Richter, "The Prentis Family and their Library."

<sup>124</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1750-1850*, (This edition published in London and New York by Routledge, 2002); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); for work son children in America, see: Steven Mintz, ed., *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 2004). See also, Anna-Christina Gioganopoulos, "The Legal Status of Children in Eighteenth-Century England," *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, Anja Muller, ed., (Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 43-52.

<sup>125</sup> Ellen K. Rothman, *Hearts and Hands: A History of Courtship in America*, (New York: Basics Books, Inc., Publishers, 1984); John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>126</sup> Paul Langford, "The Uses of Eighteenth Century Politeness," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Sixth Series 12 (2002): 311-32; Lawrence E. Klein, "Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *The History Journal* 32, no 3 (Sep 1989): 583-605.

<sup>127</sup> Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990).

their references to their reading material. It will establish that didactic literature, in the form of conduct books and novels of manners, made up a steady proportion of available books in both Scotland and Virginia from 1750 to 1850, thus reinforcing the connection between Scottish moral philosophy, instructional literature and Virginian codes of politeness. It will examine the personal libraries of prominent Virginia families and the contents of the Williamsburg print shop, as well as the various circulating libraries around Edinburgh to determine what percentage of their catalogue was consistently reserved for didactic texts. Although it is impossible to determine reception or specific details regarding readership from such data, it can be inferred that book shops and libraries would not stock books for which there was no demand.

This chapter will also compare the book purchases of male and female readers in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Scotland and Virginia, drawing conclusions about the perceptions of didactic texts by individual readers by investigating the personal writings of women regarding their reading habits and their thoughts on that reading. Finally, it will analyze the ways in which women in Virginia continued to directly reference their reading of didactic texts into the middle decades of the nineteenth-century, while women in Scotland ceased to make such references, supporting the assertion that didactic literature in the form of conduct books and novels of manners had fallen out of fashion by the nineteenth-century. Yet the writings of Scottish women nevertheless indicate a familiarity with the teachings and principles of such works, suggesting they had long been fixtures in public consciousness, even if they were not available at bookshops or circulating libraries.

Chapters II and III will establish the role of didactic literature in shaping the curriculum for women's education, providing a direct comparison between Scotland and Virginia and exploring the ways in which the two locations were connected regarding educational trends. Chapter II will conduct an analysis of what constituted a polite education, as dictated by the authors of didactic texts, and will reconcile the numerous ideas presented to female readers regarding their education through conduct books and novels of manners but also in their personal writings. Chapter III will be an exploration of the ways that such ideas were then interpreted in Virginia

and in Scotland. It will also conduct a comparison over time of how education for women changed after the end of the Enlightenment, the Age of Revolutions, and the rise of the Romantic, evangelical era. Not only did the American Revolution and new theories about the role of women in the republic shape the instruction offered to women through formalized institutions, but because such institutions often lagged in the Southern states, many women in Virginia continued to look to their didactic literature as a valuable, if informal, teaching tool. Scottish women, at least in their formal instruction, continued to receive the primarily ornamental education originally offered in the eighteenth-century. In their informal instruction, many Scottish women also took their learning into their own hands and shaped a curriculum around their reading of scholastic, if gender-appropriate, books – but they did not necessarily rely on conduct books or instructive novels to shape this self-directed education.

Chapter IV examines the social context of didactic politeness and moral philosophy of both Scotland and Virginia. It examines the increasingly popular evangelical movements which began in the eighteenth-century and continued throughout the nineteenth-century not only as a religious influence, but also as a factor which rivaled eighteenth-century codes of politeness in dictating moral behavior. This chapter will also explain the various interpretations of Enlightenment thought in Scotland and Virginia as well as the role of conduct books and novels of manners in offering instruction in polite codes of Enlightenment-inspired morality. Chapter IV will also explore the conservative backlash against the skepticism and radicalism of the Enlightenment, and the rejection of the supposed falseness of polite behavior. It will argue that despite the public rejection of Enlightenment thought, Enlightenment-inspired politeness and codes of morality continued to shape ideas of behavior in Scotland but especially in Virginia after the end of the Enlightenment.

Finally, Chapter V will analyze didactic teachings regarding women's polite courtship and sexual morality. It will then contrast these ideals with the real-life practices of women in Virginia and Scotland throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this particular facet of this study, it is possible to measure the credence given to didactic texts by individual women and to determine the influence of didactic teachings in shaping women's sexual and romantic behavior.

This chapter will also explore the impact of the American Revolution on attitudes towards women's polite courtship and women's role in their romantic relationships by comparing Scottish and Virginian courtship letters, as well as the accounts of various romances, in an attempt to determine if notions of love and virtue for women altered between Scotland and Virginia with the progression of the nineteenth century.

In each of these chapters, the specific conduct books and novels selected for the purposes of exploring their messages about women's morality and education, like Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* and Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, were among the most popular conduct books and novels of the age. This study is also making use of texts that were either directly referenced by readers or were available to readers in Virginia or in Scotland. Frances Baylor Hill of Virginia, for instance, referenced Gregory's work in her journal, as did several members of the Gordon Scott family writing between Virginia and Scotland. Conduct books by Mrs. Hester Chapone, John Gregory, and Reverend Fordyce, and novels of manners by Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen and Susan Ferrier were available to readers in libraries in Edinburgh in the time period in question. While in Virginia, works by Gregory, Fordyce, moralist Lord Halifax and Samuel Richardson make appearances in the print shop advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette*, as well as in the personal libraries of prominent Virginia families.

Evidence of readership has also been taken from editions of these works themselves. An edition of Fordyce's *Sermons*, published in New York and Philadelphia in 1809, contains the signature of Susan Bowdoin of Montgomery County, Virginia from 1811, suggesting the work was owned by a woman. Although an inscription is not necessarily indicative of readership, such a signature does reflect gendered notions of appropriate reading.<sup>128</sup> A copy of Mrs. Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* from 1815 contains a list of subscribers in Maryland and northern Virginia, indicating that the book was read in these locations more than forty years after its original 1773 publication.<sup>129</sup>

Other works are less well known, but were selected due to their regional uniqueness. Mrs. Virginia Cary's *Letters on Female Character* has been highlighted not only because its publication date, 1828, means that it was published after most

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<sup>128</sup> This work can be found at CW.

<sup>129</sup> This is available at the VHS.

British conduct books had fallen out of fashion, but it is also one of the few works by a female, Southern author and published in the South. This study, therefore, is making use of some of the most popular conduct books of the day based on their sales and publication history, but more importantly, the works selected in this study were likely to have been directly available to young female readers in both Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>130</sup>

The chronological time frame of this study, ranging from 1750 to 1850, means that this project encompasses one of most turbulent eras in history for rapid social, cultural and religious change. It allows for this thesis to compare and contrast not only the lives of women in Scotland and Virginia, but also the lives of women over time. It provides an opportunity to directly explore the ways in which instructional works, designed to teach specific manners and moral codes to young women readers, shaped behavior in terms of courtship and education. By analyzing the Virginian interpretation of the polite codes of didactic literature, this study traces the roots of the idealized image of Southern gentility and links them to similar behaviors in Scotland, inspired by the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment.

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<sup>130</sup> See Chapter I of this thesis for more direct evidence about the readership of these works among specific individuals, and the availability of didactic texts in Scottish and Virginia bookshops and libraries.

## II. Chapter I: Polite Literature in the Public Sphere: The Popularity of Didactic Literature in Libraries and Bookshops in Scotland and Virginia

### Introduction

This thesis presents the argument that the standards of politeness and gentility for Virginia women from 1750 to 1850, as well as the culture of sociability and hospitality that shaped elite, Virginian identity, were closely related to the moral philosophy of politeness and to the practical application of Scottish Enlightenment theory. It will assert that this theory can be seen to have reached an audience of young, genteel women in both Virginia and Scotland in the form of widely-read conduct books and novels of manners, influencing their thoughts about their daily behaviors and social interactions.

The popular impact of didactic literature on the religious, educational and courtship practices of genteel young women in Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be fully assessed without first determining the social prevalence of conduct books and novels of manners. How popular was this genre of literature? How frequently was it purchased at the bookseller's shop, or selected at the subscription or circulating library? This chapter will analyze the popularity of didactic literature among other types of reading material through an examination of public library catalogues, private family libraries, bookselling records, as well as personal documents such as letters, and diaries from specific locations across Scotland and Virginia from 1750 to 1850.

It is impossible to generalize about the reading and book buying habits of all women across these regions. Instead, each of these locations will present a cross section of the book trade across Scotland and Virginia, focusing specifically on shops and libraries in and around Edinburgh and Williamsburg. This study is also limited to the book buying and lending trends among genteel women. The standards of gentility would have been different when comparing the urbanites of Edinburgh to the mostly rural elites of developing, colonial towns such as Williamsburg or Yorktown, Virginia. Regardless of these discrepancies, the common theme linking these women was that they were leisured; they had the luxury of buying not only books, but also the supplies, such as paper and ink, to record their thoughts about these books, as well as the leisure time to read and then reflect on that reading.

Even among women at this social level, who did possess the means to invest in subscription libraries or frequent book shops and could sign for their own accounts, there is some level of speculation regarding women's actual reading habits, and the access that these women had to books that would have been borrowed or purchased under their husband's, father's, or brother's account at the local shops. The reading habits of women who were lower along the social scale, such as servants or the working poor, would involve more speculation due to the fact that there is less data available on the subject.<sup>131</sup> Likewise, the topic of the reading habits of slaves in the American South carries with it an entirely separate set of research challenges, as well as political and social connotations beyond the limits of this study. It is for this reason that this chapter is limited to the book buying trends of genteel, white, women.

This chapter will first explore the gendered notions of readership and the presence of female readers in the public arena in Edinburgh and Williamsburg. Then, the chapter will be divided by date, with one section extending from the mid-eighteenth century to 1820, and the next section extending from 1820 to 1850. The reason for this divide relates to the changing definition of didactic literature throughout the long eighteenth century, and into the mid-nineteenth century. The early examples of conduct books and novels of manners provided direct instruction about how the polite, civil individual was to conduct herself, or himself, in society. This chapter, therefore, will determine the prevalence of didactic literature by examining records related to the purchase of this genre from book shops and circulating or subscription libraries in Edinburgh and Williamsburg, based on records dating from roughly 1750 to 1820. This section will also demonstrate a clear link between Virginia and Scotland in regards to the publication and importation of instructional novels and conduct books. Although almost all American books at this period were imported, and the majority came from London, statistical data will

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<sup>131</sup> For secondary analysis of the reception of books and literacy among the lower orders in Britain, see Carolyn Steedman, "Poetical Maids and Cooks Who Wrote," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no 1 (Fall 2005): 1-27; Jan Fergus, "Provincial Servants' Reading in the Late Eighteenth Century," *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor, eds., (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 202-25.

reveal that a large proportion of the books guiding Virginians in the rules of polite conduct came from Scotland, specifically from Edinburgh.<sup>132</sup>

After 1820, as is explored in documents dated from 1820 to 1850, with the rise of the evangelical religious movement, didactic works became entrenched with religious ideas.<sup>133</sup> Although religion and didactic literature had never been entirely separate – James Fordyce, author of *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), for instance, was also a Scottish Presbyterian Minister – the religious direction of didactic literature changed by the end of the long eighteenth century. While still providing instruction to impressionable young readers, didactic literature in the nineteenth century became concerned with the creation of the ideal Christian rather than the genteel, urban citizen.<sup>134</sup>

It is also possible to directly compare the popular taste for didactic literature and infer its lingering impact in Edinburgh and Williamsburg if reading habits after the end of the long eighteenth century are taken into account. This chapter will present the argument that Virginia readers between 1820 and 1850 remained an active reading audience for didactic texts after they had fallen out of fashion in Britain, indicating a lingering preoccupation with politeness and polite codes that became increasingly unique to Virginia and Virginia identity as the nineteenth century progressed. The evidence for this is derived from the personal documents of genteel women in Virginia from the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly, women of the older generation continued to recommend the prescriptive literature from their childhood to younger readers, and several sought to record their life experiences in the manner of an instructive, yet semi-

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<sup>132</sup> For more information on William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), which is considered the first American novel, see, Robert H. Elias, "The First American Novel," *American Literature* 12, no 4 (Jan, 1941): 419-34; "The Author of the First American Novel," *American Literature* 4, no 4 (Jan, 1933): 359-68; James Chandler, "Placing *The Power of Sympathy*: Transatlantic Sentiments and the 'First American Novel,'" *The Atlantic Enlightenment*, Susan Manning and Francis D. Cogliano, eds., (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 131-48.

<sup>133</sup> For the trajectory of literature throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see the following works: Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Wilbur Cross, *Development of the English Novel*, (Originally published, 1900. Seventh edition published, New York: The MacMillan Company, London: MacMillan & Co, Ltd., 1937). See also, J. Paul Hunter, "The Novel and Social/Cultural History," *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, John Richetti, ed., (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9-34.

<sup>134</sup> This transition will be explored in-depth in Chapter II, Part III of this thesis.



autobiographical, novel, but even women of the younger generation still relied directly upon didactic texts rather than viewing them as old-fashioned and out of date.<sup>135</sup> Didactic literature also continued to be embraced in Virginia – in both reprints of famous works as well as original publications – into the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>136</sup>

In Scotland, by comparison, not only had traditional didactic literature become out of date, but some of the most famous didactic texts, such as Fordyce's *Sermons*, were openly mocked by nineteenth century authors of moralistic fiction.<sup>137</sup> Finally, this chapter will use women's personal writings and individual book selection to determine the extent to which book buying and lending practices reflected the actual reading habits of genteel young women in the cities and regions in question.

## Part I: Gendered Differences in Polite Reading

In order to examine the nuances of women's reading of didactic literature in Edinburgh and Williamsburg, it is first essential to explore the gendered differences of general reading practices in these specific locations. Evidence of the gendered divide of book ownership has been gathered from an examination of the personal libraries of several individuals from prominent families within Scotland. The detailed library catalogue of the wealthy and powerful Fletcher of Saltoun family from the early eighteenth century allows for a direct comparison of men and

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<sup>135</sup> The writings of Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler, available at CW, DMS 54.5, and Nancy Johns Turner Hall, Mss5:9H1405:1, will be explored in greater detail later in the chapter, as well as the correspondence of Hannah Hopkins, a young woman, and her father regarding her reading habits, Hopkins Family Papers, 1732–1844, Mss1H7779a. Both are available at the VHS,

<sup>136</sup> CW contains an 1809, American edition of Fordyce's *Sermons*, as well as a work called *The Lady's Pocket Library*, an edition which bound together the works of John Gregory, Hannah More and Hester Chapone in 1818. A uniquely American didactic work was Virginia Cary's *Letters on Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother*, (Published by A. Works, Richmond, VA, 1828). Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

<sup>137</sup> Susan Ferrier, *Marriage*, (First Published in 1818 by William Blackwood and John Murray. Reprinted with an introduction by James E. M. Irvine in Bampton, Oxfordshire: Three Rivers Books, Ltd., 1984), 256. All page numbers refer to the 1984 edition. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

women's libraries.<sup>138</sup> Although this material contains information from before the time period in question, such records serve to reinforce the notion that by 1750 there was a long-standing ideal of the books that were to be bought and read by women, and those bought and read by men.

The inventory of books kept by Andrew Fletcher in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century contained works on philosophy, the classics, plays, comedies, and religion. The library of Fletcher's wife Katharine Bruce, who married into the Fletcher family in the early eighteenth century, was a more limited collection. Her reading materials were restricted to collections of sermons and interpretations of the Bible. The contents of Bruce's library support the idea that women were encouraged to read religious interpretations rather than reading directly from the Bible. Although the Bible was certainly not unfit reading for women in this era, it was believed that certain passages were beyond the understanding of the female brain, and were dangerous to the uninformed (female) reader, leading them to question their religious views, rather than reinforcing them.<sup>139</sup>

The library of Katharine Bruce also contained multiple examples of seventeenth-century didactic literature. She possessed several conduct books written by clergyman Richard Allestree, a popular author of didactic literature.<sup>140</sup> Of his works, Bruce's library contained *The Ladye's [sic] Calling* (1673), *The Gentleman's [Calling]* (1660), *The Art of Contentedness [Contentment]* (1677), and *The Government of the Tongue* (1676). It was not just in Bruce's library where the Fletchers recorded evidence of didactic literature. Andrew Fletcher's library catalogue shows that he possessed several editions of *The Spectator* (1711-12), a publication concerned with the social interactions of men and women, and the impact of those interactions on society. Aside from this example, the libraries of both Katharine Bruce and Andrew Fletcher fell for the most part along gendered lines. Bruce's book possessions were limited to devotional works and collections of sermons, as well as a few popular pieces of didactic literature. Fletcher's catalogue

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<sup>138</sup> See the Fletcher of Saltoun Papers – Books – 17<sup>th</sup> c. – 19<sup>th</sup> c., available at the NLS, GB233/MS.17861-17866, specifically ff 39 for the library of Katharine Bruce and ff 56 for the library of Andrew Fletcher.

<sup>139</sup> Jacquelin Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1999), 45.

<sup>140</sup> Allestree authored several best-selling devotional and instructive works, beginning with *The Whole Duty of Man* in 1657. See "Allestree, Richard (1621/2–1681)," John Spurr in *ODNB*.

of books reflected a masculine collection containing a wide variety of works on many subjects, ranging from intellectual works in Greek and Latin, to histories, to plays, and agricultural manuals.

Other evidence of gendered book buying or borrowing habits comes from the evidence provided by the Edinburgh Subscription Library by examining the list of subscribers from dates ranging from 1794 to 1866.<sup>141</sup> Although this list of subscribers does not indicate the specific selections made by male and female readers, it does provide evidence of the presence of women as part of the city's literary culture. In the records of the catalogue ranging from 1794 to 1833, for instance, the subscription library had only nine female subscribers out of a total of 328. Although the records from Edinburgh's Subscription Library indicate an increasing number of female subscribers between 1833 and 1866, women, only ever made up at most 13% of library subscribers during the time period in question.<sup>142</sup> The field of public reading was still predominantly male after the end of the long eighteenth century. Although women had long been viewed as a reading audience for certain types of literature, especially fiction,<sup>143</sup> the role of women in the public, literary sphere was significantly smaller than that of men.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> A Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1794-1833. Available at the NRAS, TE29/8. For information on the female subscribers to the Edinburgh Subscription Library after 1833, see Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1845-1865...List of members, (Edinburgh: Printed for the Library, 1866), available at ECL, YZ921E23SU.

<sup>142</sup> Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1845-1865. For more on libraries in Britain, see Edward H. Jacobs, "Eighteenth-Century British Circulating Libraries and Cultural Book History," *Book History* 6 (2003): 1-22; Paul Kaufman, The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* New Series 57, no 7 (1967): 1-67; See also, James Raven, "From Promotion to Proscription: Arrangements for Reading and Eighteenth-Century Libraries," 175-201, and James Raven, et al., "Introduction: The Practice and Representation of Reading in England," 1-21, both in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor, eds., (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>143</sup> For the gendered divides in women's reading material see Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, *Women's Lives and the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, (Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida Press, 1991); Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.); Cathy N. Davidson, "The Novel as Subversive Activity," *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, Alfred F. Young, ed. (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 283-316.

<sup>144</sup> Similar evidence for the Gray Library in Haddington is presented in Vivienne Dunstan's article, "Glimpses of a Town's Reading Habits in Enlightenment Scotland," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 26, (2006): 42-59. Dunstan has found that although many young, female readers borrowed from the Gray Library, the majority of borrowers were still professional males. For secondary sources on literacy and reading habits in England, see R. A. Houston, "The Development of Literacy: Northern England, 1640-1750," *The Economic History Review* New Series 35, no 2 (May, 1982): 199-216; Ian Jackson, "Approaches to the History of Readers and Reading in Eighteenth-Century

It is also possible to see evidence of gendered reading in the personal libraries of families in Virginia. One of the most prominent libraries collected in Virginia was that of Lady Jean Skipwith (1748-1826) from Mecklenburg County.<sup>145</sup> Lady Skipwith, throughout her lifetime, amassed a total of 384 works, “the largest collection gathered by a woman in Virginia,” according to historian Mildred K. Abraham, who has studied her collection extensively.<sup>146</sup> Lady Jean Skipwith, born in Virginia, was the daughter of a wealthy Scottish migrant called Hugh Miller and she returned to Scotland in 1760. It was in Edinburgh that she first began compiling what was to become her impressive personal library, undoubtedly taking advantage of the “period of intellectual ferment” that was the Scottish Enlightenment. She returned, with the foundations of her library, to Virginia in approximately 1786. Out of the nearly 400 works that she accumulated, 156 were “novels or tales; 33 poetry; 27 essays and periodicals; 8 dramas; and 4 miscellaneous literature, totaling 228 belletristic titles. In addition, there [were] 40 titles devoted to travel and geography; 36 to history and biography; 31 to children's literature; 17 to ‘how to’ books or practical works; 12 to reference; and 6 to religion and theology.”<sup>147</sup>

This breakdown of the specific titles in the catalogue reveals several details about Lady Jean Skipwith and gendered reading. As demonstrated, she did own a large number of novels. Furthermore, the 31 titles of children’s literature in her collection were also in keeping with gendered ideas about what books women should be purchasing, not necessarily for their own enjoyment, but for their role as mothers and educators. This role had an especially important significance in America after the American Revolution with the rise of Republican Motherhood, although the moral significance of the mother had long been present in Scottish moral philosophy and in the writings of men such as David Hume.<sup>148</sup> Lady Skipwith’s library catalogue

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Britain,” *The Historical Journal* 47, no 4 (Dec 2004): 1041-54; Michael Sanderson, “Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England,” *Past and Present* 56 (Aug, 1972): 75-104; James Raven, “New Reading Histories and Change: The Case of Eighteenth-Century England,” *Social History* 23, no 3 (Oct, 1998): 268-87.

<sup>145</sup> For analysis of her library, see Mildred K. Abraham, “The Library of Lady Jean Skipwith. A Book Collection from the Age of Jefferson,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol 91, no 3 (July, 1983) Published Quarterly by the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, 300.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-9.

<sup>148</sup> For more on Republican Motherhood, see Linda K. Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* 28, no 2 Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (Summer, 1976): 187-205; For the role of the moral mother in the Scottish

did contain a notable deviation from the typical gendered reading habits expected of eighteenth-century women in that only 6 of the 384 books that she collected were in any way related to religion or theology. Although Skipwith was perhaps influenced in her reading selections by the Scottish Enlightenment, given the fact that the Enlightenment – especially in Scotland – was not incompatible with religious thought, it is somewhat surprising that an eighteenth-century woman would include so few religious works in her personal collection.<sup>149</sup>

Lady Jean Skipwith also had a taste, through her reading of novels, children's books, periodicals, and conduct manuals, for didactic literature, which made up 22% of her library. It is also important to note that 33% of her eighty-three total didactic titles were published in Edinburgh.<sup>150</sup> In this respect, Lady Skipwith's library upheld the gendered expectations for the readers of fictional works and didactic literature, particularly when compared to the other libraries in Virginia.<sup>151</sup> Most of the libraries, collected at the great houses of Virginia's planter elite, were compiled by men and consisted of book genres that would have been considered masculine. The library of Daniel Parke Custis, for instance – a library that would partially, through marriage, come into the possession of George Washington – contained only 16 didactic works out of 329 total titles, making up only 5%. This pattern was repeated in the other,

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Enlightenment and in the works of Hume, see Rosemarie Zagari, "Morals, Manners and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44, no 2 (Jun, 1992): 192-215. This will also be discussed in greater detail in Chapters II and III.

<sup>149</sup> In the case of Scotland, Mark Towsey has argued that even if readers did not indicate a preference for religious texts from book shops or libraries, it can be assumed that they had access to the Bible and other religious works from other sources. See Mark Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750-1820*, (Leiden, the Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2010), 77. While this might indeed have been the case in Virginia as well, Skipwith had a smaller collection of religious works than another contemporary Virginia family, the Prentis family, whose library is detailed later in this chapter.

<sup>150</sup> These figures are my own interpretation of the catalogue. In her study, Abraham does not specifically focus on didactic literature, or define it in the same terms as this study, and she does not analyze Edinburgh as a place of publication.

<sup>151</sup> For transcripts of the original library catalogues consulted for this study, see the following: "Catalogue of the Library of Daniel Parke Custis," From a Manuscript in the Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Reprinted in *The Virginia Historical Magazine*, Vol 17, no 4 (Oct, 1909): 404-412, Photocopy; Bennie Brown, Jr. *Key to the Mercer Library Inventory*; Bennie Brown, Jr., *The Library of John Mercer*; B. R. Carter, *Library at Shirley Plantation in the 19th Century - Catalogue of Books*; *Catalogue of a Private Library, Hon Peyton Randolph's of Virginia, Comprising Many Valuable Classical and Theological Works; Rare and Highly Esteemed Editions...1852*, photocopy; *Inventory of John Herbert. Contains his Library*. Typed from the Records at Chesterfield County, Virginia; *Inventory of Tucker's Estate [St. George Tucker Library]*. Typed from the original manuscript, available at Swem Library, College of William and Mary, not dated. All of these transcripts are available at CW.

predominantly male, libraries of Virginia. The library of Baron de Botetourt, Governor of Virginia from 1768-1770, contained 103 titles, about 10% of which were considered literature, with only one didactic title, Henry Brooke's *Fool of Quality* (1769), while the private library of the Honorable Peyton Randolph, an elected Virginia official before the American Revolution and resident of Williamsburg, consisted of over 300 mostly classical works. His library did not contain a single popular novel or piece of didactic literature.

In another instance, however, when proposing for his brother-in-law the ideal contents necessary for every gentleman's library in 1771, Thomas Jefferson recommended 14 didactic titles out of 148, making up 9%. Those titles included: *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1748), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) all by Richardson, as well as *The Vicar of Wakefield* by Oliver Goldsmith (1766), and the periodicals *Tatler* (1709) and *The Spectator* (1711). In terms of non-didactic novels, Jefferson recommended Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (the first volume and appeared in 1759) and *Sentimental Journey* (1768). Although Jefferson liberally recommended didactic works and other novels as fit reading material for men, his list was not as broad as Lady Jean Skipwith's in her taste for popular fiction and moralistic advice literature for women. Furthermore, Jefferson's own library contained only a few didactic pieces, suggesting perhaps that Jefferson recommended these titles to someone aspiring to the status of gentlemen – something he himself had already achieved and therefore had no need to read instructive works.<sup>152</sup>

Finally, evidence of the prevalence of didactic literature and gendered reading tastes of the eighteenth century comes from the library catalogue of the Prentis family of Williamsburg, Virginia. The Prentis family library is one of the oldest and most comprehensive in the American South, collected over a span of almost two hundred years from 1683 to 1859. According to Caroline Julia Richter, an expert on the collection, the Prentis library is "the largest surviving eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Williamsburg library," with large numbers of books owned by men as well

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<sup>152</sup> Robert Skipwith was Jefferson's brother-in-law. See *Thomas Jefferson's Library: A Catalogue with the Entries in his Own Order*, James Gilreath and Douglas L. Wilson, eds., Library of Congress, 1998, reproduced 2001, available online. See also *A Virginia Gentleman's Library. As proposed by Thomas Jefferson to Robert Skipwith in 1771 and now assembled in the Brush-Everard House, Williamsburg, Virginia*, Printed for Colonial Williamsburg, 1967, available at CW; "A Gentleman's Library, to Robert Skipwith a List of Books, Monticello, Aug. 3 1771," Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. Available online.

as women.<sup>153</sup> The family's library boasted of 367 works, 30 of which can be considered didactic literature. In other words, roughly 8% of the library's collection consisted of didactic, instructive material which included: conduct books, such as multiple copies of Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* (1774) and Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*; fictional pieces, such as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678); and instructional periodicals such as Addison and Steele's *Spectator* (1711).<sup>154</sup> This library also included works by some of the most famous female moralists and behavioral theorists of the age. The family library contained a copy of Maria Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant* (1796), and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799).

More revealing than the percentage of didactic literature in the entire collection is the percentage of didactic literature owned by women. Richter examined the original bookplates, marginalia, and inscriptions found within many of the books from the library's catalogue. Based on these findings, it can be inferred that 71 titles out of the total 367 were at some point owned by women. This means that 19% of the library's collection was either bought by or given to the female members of the Prentis family. Furthermore of the 71 titles owned by women, 13 fall under the genre of instructive, didactic literature. While this makes up only 3% of the entire catalogue, didactic pieces made up 18% of the books owned by women.<sup>155</sup> Of the 29 didactic titles in the family's library, women owned just less than half (43%). Thirteen didactic titles were also owned by men. The remaining four titles of instructive literature are unsigned, or have no revealing marginalia to indicate possession. It could be inferred that at least two of the four remaining works – Edgeworth's *Parent's Assistant*, and *The New York Mirror, Ladies Literary Magazine* – were owned by women, but that is by no means certain. Joseph Prentis, Sr., for

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<sup>153</sup> Caroline Julia Richter, *The Prentis Family and their Library: A Thesis Presented to The Faculty of American Studies Program, The College of William and Mary in Virginia*, In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, 1985, v.

<sup>154</sup> For secondary analysis of Chesterfield, see Charles Pullen, "Lord Chesterfield and Eighteenth-Century Appearance and Reality," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 8, no 3 (Summer 1968): 501-15; for secondary analysis of Addison and Steele, see Anthony Pollock, "Neutering Addison and Steele: Aesthetic Failure and the Spectatorial Public Sphere," *EHL* 74 (2007): 707-34.

<sup>155</sup> This is my own interpretation of the data. Didactic literature as a genre or the ownership of it is not included in Richter's study.

instance, owned a copy of *Domestic Cookery*, traditionally thought of as a text for women.<sup>156</sup>

Also, one of the unclaimed didactic works is Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son*. Normally it might be assumed that this work would be owned by a man. The family library, however, contained another copy of this book in which the inscriptions suggest it was owned by both Joseph Prentis and Mary A. Prentis. In another instance, Susan Bowdoin indicated ownership of a copy of William Dodd's *Sermons for Young Men*. In the Prentis family, it appears that gender lines were blurred on several occasions with women owning books originally written for men and vice versa. In most cases, however, the declared ownership of books from the Prentis family library tended to fall along with traditional, gendered expectations.

Despite several exceptions, it can be concluded that the gendered standards for reading material in both Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth century were fairly rigid. Although the examination of several personal libraries reflects that there was some evidence of reading habits which went against expectations, didactic literature, novels, and biblical interpretations were primarily considered to be feminine literature.

## **Part II: Library and Bookselling Records, 1750-1820**

Having established that didactic books were mostly feminine possessions, it is now essential to determine the prevalence of didactic literature among the library catalogues and bookselling records of Edinburgh and Williamsburg in an attempt to determine the popularity but also the public perception of such literature. The earliest records of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, dating from 1794 to 1833, indicate the popularity of didactic literature, specifically conduct books written in the late eighteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Although this particular catalogue was compiled in 1833, it contained works such as Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773) and a collection of works by Dr. John Gregory, including *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774) under the heading of "Miscellaneous Literature."

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<sup>156</sup> Richter, *The Prentis Family and their Library*, 50.

<sup>157</sup> Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1833.



Although such a title only vaguely indicates the types of literature that could be found in this section of the catalogue, there were several other titles contained under this heading that indicate the perception of morality guides among readers in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century society. This section contained a total of 621 items, 30 of which could be classified as didactic literature, making up only 5%. More revealing than the percentage of this type of literature are the titles of the other works that are also classified as “Miscellaneous Literature.” This grouping contains several works on moral philosophy, such as Thomas Gisborne’s *Principles of Moral Philosophy* (1789), and another work by Dr. John Gregory, *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World* (1766). Also included were Scottish Enlightenment figure Francis Hutcheson’s *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755) and *Inquiry into Beauty and Virtue* (1725).

This grouping of conduct books with works of moral philosophy indicates how these books were perceived. Although the earliest examples of conduct books did contain religious themes, they were not necessarily considered to be religious works. In fact, this library catalogue contained a separate heading entitled “Theology and Ecclesiastical History,” which listed didactic works by Hannah More and James Fordyce. The majority of didactic works was under the heading of Miscellaneous Literature, and tended to be grouped under an implied subgenre of Moral Philosophy. Furthermore, several of the authors of moral philosophy also wrote books that could be considered conduct guides. Aside from Dr. John Gregory, who wrote *A Comparative View* as well as *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), Thomas Gisborne also wrote a work entitled *Duties of the Female Sex* (1797), an instructional manual about women’s domestic responsibilities and education. This indicates that it was not uncommon for writers of religion, philosophy or scientific works to also write pieces about the moral behavior of individuals, specifically the moral behavior of women, in eighteenth-century society.

A similar connection between moral philosophy and conduct books can be seen in the 1786 catalogue of the circulating library of Alexander Brown, located on North Bridge in Edinburgh.<sup>158</sup> Under the heading of “Poetry, Plays, Letters, Essays, Natural History and Philosophy, Metaphysics, Trade, Husbandry, &c. &c,” Brown

<sup>158</sup>Alexander Brown, Bookseller of Edinburgh, Catalogue of Books for a Circulating Library, North-Bridge Street. Available at the NRAS, CS96/1573.

had a total of 618 works, 58 of which – or 9% – could have been considered didactic in the form of conduct books or morality guides. Brown’s circulating library contained some of the most famous conduct books of the age, such as works by Fordyce, Gregory, and Mrs. Hester Chapone, author of *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1774), but also works such *The Governess; or, Female Academy for the Entertainment and Instruction of Young Ladies* by Sarah Fielding (1749) as well as Mrs. Griffith’s *Essays to Young Married Women* (1782).<sup>159</sup> Aside from the morality guides, this particular subheading also contained several texts from the Enlightenment, including works by Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire and Hume. Similar to the Edinburgh Subscription Library, Brown’s inclusion of conduct books in a section that also contained Enlightenment texts indicates that this particular type of didactic literature was viewed as part of a genre of philosophical works which addressed human nature and behavior.

Didactic literature was further present in the catalogues of the Edinburgh Subscription Library and the Alexander Brown Circulating Library in the form of novels of manners – works which blended the principles of conduct books with entertaining plots. Both library catalogues included these works under the heading of “Novels and Romances.” The Edinburgh Subscription Library from 1833 contained a total of 375 novels and romances. Of that 375, 43 could be considered didactic and made up 11% of this section of the catalogue. This catalogue contained several famous didactic novels from the eighteenth century, such as those of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Samuel Richardson, as well as several early examples of nineteenth century comic novels of manners, such as those by Jane Austen and Susan Ferrier. Other early nineteenth-century morality novels appeared in the catalogue, such as *Discipline* by Mrs. Brunton (1814), as well as several novels by Amelia Opie. Many of these works were popular in their day and indicate that the novel of manners was widely written and widely read throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> For secondary analysis of Sarah Fielding, see Emily C. Friedman, “Remarks on Richardson: Sarah Fielding and the Rational Reader,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 22, no 2 (Winter, 2009-10): 309-26.

<sup>160</sup> *Discipline* was Mrs. Brunton’s second successful novel, after *Self-Control* (1811), and went through three editions in two years. See, “Brunton, Mary (1778–1818),” Isabelle Bour, in *ODNB*. For an analysis of Opie’s work, as well as remarks on its neglect by later scholars, see Shelley King’s “The ‘Double Sense’ of Honor: Revising Gendered Social Codes in Amelia Opie’s *Adeline*

Alexander Brown's circulating library contained a larger number of didactic novels. Out of a total of 732 novels, 121 of those could be considered didactic, making up 17% of this section of the catalogue. Famous titles included Burney's *Evelina* (1778), and Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), although the majority of the titles in the catalogue were works whose fame did not extend long past the eighteenth century, such as a work entitled *Distressed Virtue, or the History of Miss Harriet Nelson*, which the 52<sup>nd</sup> volume of *The Critical Review* of 1781 dismissed by stating, "Virtue in distress is an interesting object; but its affects are totally frustrated by the incapacity of this writer."<sup>161</sup> Because the catalogue was published in 1786, it contained none of the novels of manners which emerged in the early nineteenth century. Conduct books and novels of manners made up approximately 10% of Brown's entire catalogue, which contained over 1700 titles in total. Although this figure might not be considered a large proportion of the catalogue, for 10% of Brown's inventory to be taken up by instructive texts primarily aimed to, and in some cases written by, women is significant.

Finally, evidence for the popularity of didactic literature in Edinburgh in the period in question can be explored through an examination of the 1814-1815 day book of W. Wilson, a bookseller and stationer on George Street.<sup>162</sup> This sales book will be examined in greater detail in a case study later in this chapter, but Wilson's records indicate that women made up nearly half of the book buying transactions of the shop from July 1, 1814 to August 31, 1815. Of the 669 book-related transactions made by women, 79 transactions involved the purchase of didactic literature,

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Mowbray," *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*, Miriam L. Wallace, ed., (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 111-30.

<sup>161</sup> Tobias George Smollett, ed., "Review of *Distressed Virtue*," *The Critical Review: or, Annals of Literature*, 52, 155. Originally published in 1781, available in Google Books. For more on female writers of the eighteenth century, see Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Pam Perkins, *Women Writers and the Edinburgh Enlightenment*, (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010).

<sup>162</sup> W. Wilson & Co., Bookseller and Stationer, 44 George Street Edinburgh. Information from his Scroll Day Book, July 1814 to September 1815. From the Collection of James Brown & Co., Ltd., Papermakers, Esk Mills, Penicuik, Miscellaneous small collections of family, business and other papers. Available at the NRAS, GD1/575/11.

meaning that 12% of the total book purchases made by women involved either novels of manners or conduct books.

This percentage of purchases of didactic literature by women varied depending upon the month of the year. At the lowest point, October of 1814, only 5% of women's purchases of books involved didactic literature, while at the highest point, August of 1815, 8 out of the 33 book-related purchases made by women involved didactic literature, making up 24% of the total purchases. Another time of high frequency for the purchase of didactic literature for women came in December of 1814 when the purchase of conduct books and novels of manners made up 15% of the total book purchases. The time of the highest frequency for the purchase of didactic literature came in the spring and summer of 1815, in the months of May, June, July and August and ranged from 15-24% of total purchases.

Records from Williamsburg reveal a similar trend in popularity for didactic literature in the records of Virginia bookshops. Some of richest information for book-buying trends from Williamsburg comes from the listings in the *Virginia Gazette* newspaper. The print shop in Williamsburg responsible for the publication of the *Virginia Gazette* also served as the local bookshop for the community, and regularly advertised the catalogues of books available for sale in the pages of the periodical. Continuing the methodology used in a detailed study from 1977, conducted by George and Cynthia Stiverson, it is possible to determine the number of didactic titles bought and sold and the Williamsburg print shop over a set amount of time.<sup>163</sup> This can be deduced from the fact that the print shop advertisements listed their entire catalogue of books for sale. Sometimes, certain books would disappear from the list of available titles, indicating that they had been sold since the time of the previous advertisement. From this data, Stiverson and Stiverson were able to infer which titles were eventually sold in the Williamsburg print shop, and which were not.

This study reveals that a total of 997 titles were available between 1750-52 and 1764-66. Original calculations, involving a broader definition of didactic

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<sup>163</sup> Gregory A. Stiverson and Cynthia Z. Stiverson, *Books both Useful and Entertaining: A Study of Book Purchases and Reading Habits of Virginians in the Mid-Eighteenth Century*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series, (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Distributed by The University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1977).

literature than that used by Stiverson/Stiverson, has concluded that of those nearly one thousand works, only 63 (6%), in the form of conduct books, instructional novels, periodicals and religious pieces, were didactic. More important was the role that Edinburgh printers played in the distribution of didactic texts to Virginia. The majority of books in America, even in the decades after independence, generally came from London.<sup>164</sup> In the case of the Williamsburg print shop, while the largest supplier of books was indeed London, the second largest supplier was Edinburgh.<sup>165</sup> A total of 42 titles offered in the print shop in the time in question were at some point printed in Edinburgh, making up 4% of the catalogue. Of the entire collection of didactic literature offered at the Williamsburg print shop, 15% came from Edinburgh, including titles such as Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (the edition in the Williamsburg print shop was originally printed in London in 1714, and reprinted Edinburgh in 1755 before importation to Virginia) and an anonymous work entitled *Instructions for a Young Lady, in Every Sphere and Period of Life* (first printed in Edinburgh, 1762). This demonstrates a definitive link between Williamsburg and Edinburgh regarding the public consumption didactic literature.

The Stiverson/Stiverson examination of the Williamsburg print shop stops after 1766. It is possible to continue their work through the 1770's, using the same research methodology to explore the continuing sales pattern of didactic literature in Williamsburg in the era before and during the fight for American independence. Once again, certain limitations must be acknowledged. By this era, there were four different editions of the *Virginia Gazette* available to readers, and the advertisements for books were not consistently printed every week, so a continuous study of book purchasing is difficult to conduct. It is also impossible to determine the gender of the purchasers or readers of books from the Williamsburg print shop, and finally, the physical structure of the surviving *Virginia Gazettes* makes it difficult – at least in

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<sup>164</sup> Publication data is included in the Stiverson/Stiverson study. For more information on the American printing industry during and after American Revolution and the role of Britain in supplying books to America, see Michael Kraus, "Literary Relations between Europe and America in the Eighteenth Century," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 1, no 3 (July, 1944): 210-34; Sheila McVey, "Nineteenth-Century America: Publishing in a Developing Country," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 421, Perspectives on Publishing (Sep., 1975): 67-80.

<sup>165</sup> According to the Stiverson/Stiverson study, Williamsburg made up the third largest supplier for books offered in the Williamsburg print shop but these were historical, legal and political works specifically about Virginia. These figures are my original calculation. The study included place of publication, but did not emphasize the role of imported books in Virginia.

certain cases – to read the entirety of the titles offered in the catalogue, based on tears, and other flaws in the sources. Despite these challenges, the relative popularity of didactic pieces in Williamsburg throughout the 1770's can still be determined.

An edition of the *Virginia Gazette* printed by Purdie & Dixon from December 13, 1770 offered a total of 263 titles for sale in the print shop, of which 17 titles (6%) were didactic literature. This was the same number of didactic titles offered in total in the previous advertisement, from November 29, 1770, although a close examination of the specific titles offered indicates that two titles were sold, a French edition of *Pamela* as well as a work called *Sentiments of Pamela* (undoubtedly one of the many works which tried to capitalize on the popularity and moral lessons of the original *Pamela*) and replaced by two other titles in the two week period between advertisements. The next complete, legible advertisement comes in Purdie & Dixon's issue on January 17, 1771. This advertisement included a total of 229 works for sale, 15 of which (7%) were didactic literature. From the previous advertisements, 2 works had been sold.<sup>166</sup>

A similar pattern of small but consistent sales continued in the Purdie & Dixon *Virginia Gazettes* from January and February of 1771. Didactic titles were regularly purchased and replaced, suggesting that – although they were never bought or sold in large numbers – the works nevertheless made up a continual staple of the Williamsburg print shop sales. The sales came to a halt from early March to early April of 1771. The number of book advertisements in the *Gazette* decreased sharply and became less regular; however, it is still possible to determine the percentage of the catalogue that was devoted to didactic literature. Between August 29, 1771 (Purdie & Dixon) and November 25, 1775 (Dixon & Hunter), didactic literature made up as little as 6% of the total catalogue, to as much as 14%,<sup>167</sup> indicating that, as the years progressed, instructive manuals and moralistic fiction maintained a steady presence in the offerings of the Williamsburg print shop.

Starting on March 2 of 1776, the record of advertisements became more regular. This particular issue advertised that didactic texts made up approximately 8% of the total catalogue available for purchase, and it is evident from the

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<sup>166</sup> Photocopies of original *Virginia Gazettes* are available at CW.

<sup>167</sup> This came on June 10, 1773 (Purdie & Dixon), when there were 397 books in the catalogue, and 55 of which were didactic pieces.

catalogue's inventory that 8 didactic titles had sold since the previous November. Although this might seem like a small amount to sell in such a length of time, the Williamsburg buying population was small and rural. It is also important to point out that the total number of books for sale only fluctuated by 78 titles in an approximately four month period. When considered from this perspective, the sale of 8 titles (roughly 10% of the total number of sales) looks more meaningful.

The figures for the rest of 1776 and 1777 remain constant, with didactic works constituting between 8 and 9% of the total catalogue, at least until July 4, 1777, when the total offerings dropped below 50 titles and all of the didactic books that had been previously offered had been sold. Overall, with a few notable fluctuations, the percentage of didactic texts offered by the Williamsburg print shop in the 1770's ranged between 6 and 9% of the total catalogue. More important than this relatively small percentage is the fact that the print shop nevertheless maintained mostly steady sales and replacements of didactic texts, indicating that demand for such works was consistent, if not necessarily high.

Similar statistical data is also available in the catalogue offerings of Ross and Douglas, booksellers and stationers from Petersburg, Virginia in 1800.<sup>168</sup> Their sales advertisements offered a collection of approximately 900 works, of which as few as 67 and as many as 82 could be considered conduct books, instructive novels, or other moralistic or didactic pieces. The exact number is difficult to determine because Ross and Douglas categorized their works alphabetically by long title but also by short title, possibly to make it easier for readers to find their desired books. The result is that several works were repeated and it is difficult to get an exact figure for the total number of works in the catalogue, or for the percentage of didactic works. In general, however, the percentage ranged from roughly 7-10%, which is mostly in keeping not only with other percentages in the print shop in Williamsburg from the previous decades, but also from the data reflected in Scottish shops and libraries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Taken together, these records reveal that readers in both Edinburgh and Williamsburg had similar tastes regarding didactic literature in relation to their other book buying activities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although

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<sup>168</sup> *A Catalogue of Books, &c. Now Selling By Ross & Douglas, Booksellers and Stationers, Petersburg.* Petersburg, Jan. 1800. Available online at CW.

it is nearly impossible to determine any significant information regarding readership from such material, and in certain cases it is difficult to know if these works ever sold, it is also safe to assume that booksellers and stationers would not dedicate as much as ten percent of their regular inventory to a genre of literature for which there was no demand. Furthermore, evidence suggests that shops and libraries in both Edinburgh and Williamsburg from 1750 to 1820 stocked a steady percentage of didactic literature, approximately 6 to 10% of the catalogue.

The next section of this chapter will compare the public tastes for instructional, moralistic literature in Virginia and Scotland in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, continuing to use the statistical data available from libraries and bookshops, but also the references to women's reading contained in the letters and diaries of Scottish and Virginian women from the nineteenth century.

### **Part III: Library Records, Bookselling Records, and Personal Documents, 1820-1850**

With the end of the long eighteenth century, social changes and the influence of evangelical religion and the Romantic era meant that reading tastes of both men and women changed as the nineteenth century progressed. To what extent, therefore, were conduct books and novels of manners replaced by other types of reading material, such as Romantic novels or evangelical tracts? It is commonly accepted that the didactic genre fell out of fashion by the middle of the nineteenth century, but was this necessarily the case?<sup>169</sup> And was this equally true for readers in both Edinburgh and Williamsburg, given continued preoccupation with gentility and hospitality among Virginians? This section will compare and contrast the bookselling and library records, as well as the personal documents of women living in Scotland, London, and Virginia in an effort to determine the extent to which didactic literature remained a part of popular reading tastes after the end of the long eighteenth century.

The catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library compiled in 1833 revealed that there were still a large number of didactic works in the form of conduct

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<sup>169</sup> Michael Curtin, "A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy," *The Journal of Modern History* 57, no 3 (Sept., 1985): 396. Curtin argues that courtesy manuals came to be viewed as representative of an outdated mode of behavior and were replaced by etiquette manuals.



books and novels of manners available to subscribers. As the decade progressed, different types of books were added to the library's catalogue, such as Maria Edgeworth's novel *Helene*, added in 1834.<sup>170</sup> Although Edgeworth was known throughout the eighteenth century as an author of instructional fiction and non-fiction works, *Helen* was representative of the new novel. It was instructional in the fact that the character's moral choices had consequences for her reputation and overall happiness, but it was apparent that a new genre of fiction was coming of age. As one study describes, "Jane Austen's novels, along with those by Maria Edgeworth, Mary Brunton, and Susan Ferrier, were the last grand flourish of the courtship novel, sounded at the beginning of a century that was to modulate domestic themes with public ones."<sup>171</sup> This new breed of novels, the domestic novel and the Romantic novel (not to be confused with the novel of romance) often dealt with issues related to women and contained moral messages, and for those reasons could not be clearly divorced from the didactic vein of fictional authors like Richardson.<sup>172</sup> While the novel continued to remain a staple of popular reading for women, the era of the didactic novel which was presented to young ladies for their direct instruction was coming to an end.

Edgeworth's *Moral Tales* (1805) was added to the catalogue in 1835, but the other additions to the catalogue until 1840 indicated the prominence of this new type

<sup>170</sup> A Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library – "Additions to the Catalogue," available at the NRAS, TE29/8.

<sup>171</sup> Katherine Sobba Green, *The Courtship Novel: A Feminized Genre*, (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 153. For more on the female novelists and books for women in the nineteenth century, see Vineta Colby, *The Singular Anomaly: Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: New York University Press. London: University of London Press, Ltd., 1970); Vineta Colby, *Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

<sup>172</sup> For more information on works which straddled both the Romantic and didactic eras, see, JoEllen DeLucia, "From the Female Gothic to a Feminist Theory of History: Ann Radcliffe and the Scottish Enlightenment," *The Eighteenth Century* 50, no 1 (Spring 2009): 101-15; Sharon Smith Palo, "The Good Effects of a Whimsical Study: Romance and Women's Learning in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18, no 2 (Winter 2005-6): 203-28; Angela Rehbein, "Dutiful Daughters and Colonial Discourse in Jane West's *A Gossip's Story*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 23, no 3 (Spring 2011): 519-40; Amit Yahov-Brown, "Reasonableness and Domestic Fiction," *EHL* 73, no 3 (Fall 2006): 805-30; See also, Stephen C. Behrendt, "Cultural Transitions, Literary Judgments and the Romantic-Era British Novel," 189-205, Patricia M. Spacks, "How We See: The 1790s," 179-88 and Miriam L. Wallace, "Introduction: Enlightened Romanticism or Romantic Enlightenment?" 1-19, in *Enlightening Romanticism*. See also Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Theater of Politeness in Charlotte Lennox's British-American Novels," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 33, no 1 (Autumn, 1999): 73-92.

of novel.<sup>173</sup> The catalogue soon included works such as *Trials of the Heart* (1839) by Anna Eliza Bray, an author of the Romantic era, and moral and domestic stories such as Anna Maria Hall's *Marion, or a Young Maid's Fortunes* (1840) and Lady Charlotte Bury's *The Divorced Lady* (1838). This new genre of fiction was a combination of the moral and sentimental stories of the eighteenth century combined with new strands of religious enthusiasm. These works were both linked to and yet separate from the prescriptive literature of the eighteenth century. When the catalogue was compiled again, for the years 1845-1865, nearly all of the didactic titles present in the 1833 catalogue had been replaced.<sup>174</sup> Although novels were still a popular genre, not a single eighteenth-century conduct book was available in the 1845-1865 catalogue and the instructional fiction of Richardson, Burney and Ferrier had also been eliminated from the list of available titles. Only Jane Austen's novels remained as a representative of the long eighteenth's century's taste for the novel of manners.<sup>175</sup>

Similar evidence can be derived from the circulating library catalogue of Thomas C. Jack, located on Princes Street in Edinburgh and compiled in March of 1854.<sup>176</sup> Jack's catalogue demonstrated the continued popularity of fiction – particularly the popularity of domestic fiction and sentimental stories aimed primarily at female reading audiences, and contained works such as *Adventures of a Beauty* (1852) by Catherine Crowe and *Destiny: The Chief's Daughter* (1831) by Susan Ferrier. Ferrier's first novel *Marriage* (1818), although heavily influenced by her religious beliefs, was nevertheless an archetype of the didactic novel which focused on manners, matrimony and education. While her second work, *The Inheritance* (1824), could still be considered an instructional novel, it began leaning towards the Romantic style with its themes and content and by the publication of her

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<sup>173</sup> A Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library – “Additions to the Catalogue.”

<sup>174</sup> Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1845-1865.

<sup>175</sup> For secondary analysis of the morality portrayed in Austen's works, see Martin Price, “Manners, Morals and Jane Austen,” *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 30, no 3 (Dec. 1975): 261-80. See also, Peter Sabor, “Fashioning the Child Author: Reading Jane Austen's Juvenilia,” *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, Anja Muller, ed., (Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 199-210.

<sup>176</sup> Catalogue of Books Thomas C. Jack's Select Circulating Library, Edinburgh: Thomas C Jack, 92 Princes Street, March 1854, Papers of the Hamilton-Bruce family of Grange Hill and Falkland, Available at the NRAS, GD152/80.

third novel, *Destiny*, Ferrier's writing was almost entirely shaped by Romantic tendencies and her religious evangelicalism.<sup>177</sup>

There were eighty such Romantic and domestic novels in Jack's collection of over 1100 titles, consisting of roughly 7% of the catalogue. These works further indicate the changing reading trends in Edinburgh by the mid-nineteenth century, which shifted away from instructional novels of manners and conduct books providing advice on gentility and polite behavior, towards domestic novels which stressed religious morality over civic sociability. Although not entirely absent from the catalogue, traditional didactic works such as those by Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth consisted of 26 titles, making up only 2% of the total catalogue.

Returning to the Prentis Library in Williamsburg, Virginia which was compiled over the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, the library's later acquisitions reflect the changing trends in book readership.<sup>178</sup> By the nineteenth century, the most common genre of books owned by the women in the Prentis family were books on religious morality, as opposed to morality inspired by codes of gentility and politeness. Twenty-nine of the 71 titles owned by women were religious works. In keeping with the advice of Fordyce that works on "Religious Controversy" were to be avoided, the Prentis women did not own books related to religious philosophy, or to academic religious study.<sup>179</sup> More common were books of sermons, such as those by John Blair, and books of prayers and hymns. Despite the fact that, due to the large collection of conduct books acquired in the eighteenth century, didactic works constituted the second largest category of books owned by women in the Prentis

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<sup>177</sup> For more information on Ferrier's life and writings see: Mary Cullinan, *Susan Ferrier*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984); Aline Grant, *Susan Ferrier of Edinburgh: A Biography*, (Denver, Colorado: Alan Swallow, 1957); Jennifer Evans, "Jane Austen's Contemporaries: Mary Brunton and Susan Ferrier," *Sensibilities*, 12 (June, 1996): 65-71; Nancy L. Paxton, "Subversive Feminism: A Reassessment of Susan Ferrier's *Marriage*," *Women and Literature* 4, no 1 (Spring, 1976): 18-29; James E. M. Irvine, "A Glimpse of Susan Ferrier," *Susan Ferrier, 1782-1854*, (Published for the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh: Buccleuch Printers, Ltd., 1982); Merryn Williams, *Women and the English Novel, 1800-1900*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1984). See also "Ferrier, Susan Edmonstone (1782-1854)," Elspeth Yeo in *ODNB*.

<sup>178</sup> Richter, *The Prentis Family and their Library*. The marginalia that suggested ownership was determined by Richter, but the interpretation of the percentage of genres owned by women is original analysis.

<sup>179</sup> See the advice offered in James Fordyce. D. D. *Sermons to Young Women. Two Volumes in One*, (Originally published, London, 1766. Published by M. Carey, Philadelphia: and I. Riley, New York. 1809), available at CW , VII, 80. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

family, by the nineteenth century this genre was surpassed by religious works, which made up 40% of the women's book possessions.

Women's personal writings from the mid-nineteenth century provide direct evidence of individual reading tastes from Virginia, Edinburgh and London from 1820 to 1850. Although it is risky to generalize about the overall reading habits of many based on the writings of a select few, most of the reading material directly mentioned by these women in their private writings and personal correspondence was reflective of the changes in library and bookselling catalogues from the same era. In her correspondence with her acquaintance Alan Cunningham on April 15, 1820, Eliza Fletcher, the wife of a prominent Edinburgh attorney and an avid reader and supporter of literature, described novelist Walter Scott as "a man of genius" and similarly praised him in another letter dated November 2 from the same year.

Of Scott, Fletcher also wrote that he was, "an excellent private character," but felt that he was, "a writer in support of public principles which we think injurious to the purity, dignity and elevation of the National Character." Also in the letter from November 2, she described herself an admirer of the work of Lord Byron, stating that she believed him to be a brilliant author and poet as well. Despite this admiration, she refused to support him or his work because she disagreed so strongly with his morals. As she wrote to Cunningham, Byron had "has trampled on private morals, and shamefully violates the [illegible] of private life, and not all his powerful genius can redeem him from dishonor"<sup>180</sup> Fletcher's reading habits were reflective of her taste for contemporary Romantic literature.

A range of wider, although not dissimilar, reading tastes were reflected over two decades later in the journal of Hannah Hope Vere, a young, wealthy Scottish woman living in London.<sup>181</sup> Hope Vere was also the daughter of Lady Elizabeth Hay, a native Scot and a frequent patroness of Edinburgh bookseller and stationer W.

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<sup>180</sup> Letters of Eliza Fletcher – part of Presented Manuscripts: Single Manuscripts and Small Collections, available at the NLS, GB233/MS.2617. Letters date from 1810-1838, and the primary recipient is Alan Cunningham. This criticism and praise of both Byron and Scott comes from the letter dated November 2, 1820.

<sup>181</sup> Journal Kept by Hannah Hope Vere, Later Wife of Keith Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth – contained within the Papers of the Mackenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth (Seaforth Papers). Available at the NRAS, GD46/15/286.

Wilson.<sup>182</sup> In her journal, kept over three years, Hannah Hope Vere demonstrated a preference for intellectual works, but she was also moved by her reading of Romantic authors. Several entries recorded her familiarity with the novels of Sir Walter Scott,<sup>183</sup> and she wrote on August 19, 1841, “Read part of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* I am certain Sir W Scott felt an untiring interest in all he wrote when with the entire want of any other wish save that of conveying the same feelings to his readers renders his writing so superior.”

Equally important in Hannah Hope Vere’s frequent mention of her reading practices was the fact that she made no direct reference to any type of didactic works, at least none that were not also religious in nature, suggesting that these works were out of fashion in London by this time. As she described of one piece, “Read a good deal of the *School for Wives*, much pleased with the tone of it the Character of Susan the Heroine beautiful and truly sublime as she goes on tho’ her trials with her beautiful Christian Spirit of endurance lightening the burden’s of all around and burying her own griefs [sic] under a charity of word deed and manner to all around her.”<sup>184</sup> This probably refers to Caroline Leigh Gascoigne’s 1842 publication. Although the character of Susan might have also been a didactic heroine, her most important attribute in Vere’s opinion was that of her faith

In March of 1844, however, Hope Vere wrote that she was introduced to the didactic author Maria Edgeworth, with whom she eventually became well-acquainted.<sup>185</sup> Hope Vere described Edgeworth by recording, “Miss Edgeworth is...sharp, witty and keenly observing like her writings.”<sup>186</sup> This comment indicates that although she did not directly express in her journal that she had recently read any of Edgeworth’s works, she was nevertheless familiar with their contents and with Maria Edgeworth’s style of writing. Finally, as she wrote, “When I came home I found a parcel directed to me which on opening proved to be a present from Miss Edgeworth being her last work *Helen* [sic] with a few lines her own hand writing to

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<sup>182</sup> See the Part IV of this chapter for the case study on W. Wilson’s shop and the book purchases of Lady Elizabeth Hay. See also “Lady Elizabeth Hay,” *The Peerage*, accessed online. Person Page 3670. Compiler, Daryl Lundy. Site last updated July 9, 2012. <http://thepeerage.com/p3670.htm#i36693>.

<sup>183</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, one such entry was recorded on July 18, 1841.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., February 14, 1842.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. The first of their meetings occurred on March 18 and then she recorded meeting again on March 20, 1844.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., March 24, 1844.

say she had given it me. This I confess has pleased me very much and my Lady Mother also.”<sup>187</sup>

It is evident that Hannah Hope Vere was an admirer of both the character and the writing style of Maria Edgeworth, and it can be inferred that she had read her works at some point in her life. These details lead to the question of the engrained and far-reaching influence of didactic texts. It can be assumed that the teachings of certain conduct books and novels of manners from the long eighteenth century were so entrenched in genteel, British society that young women living in the mid-nineteenth century, like Hannah Hope Vere, were still well versed in their polite messages of morality and manners. Despite this lingering influence, polite texts as available objects in libraries, bookshops and women’s personal writings had fallen out of fashion among readers in Edinburgh and in London, the center of fashion and the popular print culture.

An exception to this pattern is the memoir of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus (1797-1885), which was first published in 1898. Throughout the early nineteenth century, Grant recorded her reading of several didactic texts, such as *Evenings at Home* by Anna Barbauld (published in volumes between 1792-6), and *Elegant Extracts* by Vicesimus Knox (1790). She further wrote that most of her education consisted of, “some good novels, all Miss Edgeworth's fashionable tales,” and later read Edgeworth’s *Parent’s Assistant* (1796) to her younger siblings.<sup>188</sup>

Much of this reading was recorded to have taken place when Grant was still an adolescent or a young woman, from approximately 1804 to 1813, when many of these works were still in fashion. Grant’s memoirs were written in the 1840s and 1850s and, more importantly, were written for the benefit of her young niece. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, Grant was recommending these works as still being morally useful and entertaining to young, female readers. It must be acknowledged, however, that like the spinster aunts in Susan Ferrier’s novel *Marriage* who gave their niece a copy of Fordyce, and therefore indicated their

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<sup>187</sup>Ibid., March 27, 1844.

<sup>188</sup> Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. *Memoirs of a Highland Lady, Volumes One and Two*, with an Introduction by Andrew Tod, ed., (First published 1898 by John Murray. First published Canongate Classics in 1988 by Canongate Publishing Ltd. This edition published in 1992 by Canongate Press: Edinburgh), VI, 40, 68, 177, 284. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

outdated moral codes [256], it was possible that Grant's niece viewed these eighteenth century didactic works as silly and out of date.

The trends in popular reading culture for women in Virginia following the culmination of the long eighteenth century took a different trajectory in regards to the role of didactic literature and its impact on nineteenth-century, female readers. An examination of private libraries and personal documents suggests that while domestic fiction and Romantic novels were available to and popular among the Virginia reading public, such literature did not render moralistic and instructional works entirely obsolete. Instead, didactic texts continued to shape the reading and writing trends of several Virginian women. There is evidence to suggest that some readers continued to purchase eighteenth-century British conduct books, which were printed in America into the nineteenth century. There were also nineteenth-century publications of uniquely American, uniquely *Southern* conduct books which were written in the same format and with the same messages regarding morality and polite, genteel behavior as their eighteenth-century counterparts.

The daybook of Maria Martini DeRieux, a native of Virginia, revealed the lists of books read by DeRieux every year between 1806 and 1823.<sup>189</sup> Her obituary in 1826 stated that she was admired for her "extensive literary acquirements," and she read at least 1095 books in this period, most of which were fiction. Her reading tastes over nearly two decades reflected the trends of the long eighteenth century for didactic fiction, as well as the changing tastes as the nineteenth century progressed for domestic and Romantic novels.

Given the fact that DeRieux recorded only the short titles of these works in her daybook, it is nearly impossible – and beyond the scope of this study – to determine the long title, author and publication date of the books mentioned in her extensive reading list, although certain titles are obviously identifiable didactic literature. In 1806, for instance, DeRieux read Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), Susannah Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (British edition 1791, American edition 1794), Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1798), and Maria Edgeworth's *Popular Tales* (1804). By the time DeRieux completed her list in 1823, her reading records were reflective of the current trends in nineteenth century

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<sup>189</sup> Maria Margaret Martini DeRieux, *Commonplace Book, 1806-1823*. Available at the VHS, Mss5:5D4454:1.

literature, such as Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermore* (1819) and *Ivanhoe* (1819).

DeRieux recorded reading Amelia Opie's *Tales of the Heart* (1820) in 1821 or 1822, and in that same time frame, she also recorded reading *Manners, a Novel* (1817) by Frances Brooke. Amelia Opie – whose writing career spanned from the 1790's to the 1840's – and was acquainted with both Mary Wollstonecraft and Sir Walter Scott. Her works spanned both the didactic and Romantic era, while Frances Brooke was an author of didactic fiction whose works, which were composed in the eighteenth century and published later, commented on the role of women's marriage and education in contemporary society. The presence of these works in DeRieux's daybook indicated that while she had shared the contemporary tastes for Sir Walter Scott and the Romantics, she had not abandoned the didactic fiction of the long eighteenth century. And yet, like Elizabeth Grant, DeRieux (1762-1826) was an elderly lady by the time of her death and it is to be expected she would retain some of the reading tastes and moralistic values from her youth.

There is other evidence to suggest that eighteenth century works continued to be popular with young readers in Virginia.<sup>190</sup> A letter written on December 10 and 15, 1825 from J. Hopkins to his daughter Hannah Philippa Ludwell Hopkins, of a prominent Virginia family,<sup>191</sup> reflected not only the vigorous intellectual discussions conducted between father and daughter, but also the fact that there was still a young reading audience for works of eighteenth-century philosophy. Hannah Hopkins (1811-1844), at this time, was only fourteen years old. "I have no particular fondness or solicitude for your reading Hume Gibbon & tho' they are consummate [sic] Historians & very proper to be read," J. Hopkins advised, "but if you prefer any of those Histories you mention, tho' I have never read them myself, I shall be perfectly satisfied. They are authors of great celebrity and no one I believe can do wrong in their perusal, & you can read those I have mentioned when you find convenient."<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> See also Anya Jabour's argument that Southern women received information about ladylike behavior from instructional texts in the nineteenth century in *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 35-6.

<sup>191</sup> J. Hopkins to Hannah Philippa Ludwell Hopkins, Hopkins Family Papers.

<sup>192</sup> It is never mentioned in this particular letter to which books Hannah Ludwell Hopkins Lee was specifically referring.



In the letter from December of 1825, Hopkins also expressed his opinions on novels and novel reading. “You know I am not fond of Novels yet I will not inhibit you,” he wrote, “but I would warn you to be cautious in the Selection of those you do read. There are Some, as I am told historical novels, which are not only interesting but instructive & I would recommend such alone to your consideration.” While the specific novels are not mentioned in the letter, this argument is almost identical to those presented by eighteenth-century moralists such as Fordyce who objected to most novel reading save for that which was assured to teach appropriate moral lessons. It can be inferred that Hopkins preferred the genre of historical novels because they presented accounts of true events rather than only imagined narrative, and passed these views onto his young daughter. This was a return to the eighteenth century arguments against the rise in popularity of novels, dismissing purely fictional works as more potentially dangerous reading material than those stories based on true accounts.<sup>193</sup> It can be concluded that Hannah Hopkins’ reading habits included works of eighteenth-century philosophy and that her lessons were regarding appropriate reading materials were shaped by eighteenth-century morality.

### **Part III.I: Women Writing Politeness in the Nineteenth Century**

Another piece of evidence suggesting that didactic literature remained more prominent in the American South, particularly in Virginia, than in Britain is the fact that *original* conduct books focused on morality and behavior, as well as new editions of eighteenth-century texts, continued to be written and printed in the United States for several decades into the nineteenth century. Works on etiquette became popular in both Britain and America with the progression of the nineteenth century, but etiquette was not synonymous with politeness. Etiquette manuals were frequently dismissed due to the impression that such books only taught superficial manners for outward display, without cultivating the inner morality that had been a requirement for politeness.<sup>194</sup>

An example of this was the anonymously written *The Laws of Etiquette; or, Short rules and Reflections for Conduct in Society*, published in Philadelphia in

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<sup>193</sup> For Fordyce’s views on novels, see, *Sermons to Young Women*, VI, 141-2; see also, Kevin J. Hayes, “Facts and Fictions,” in *A Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996).

<sup>194</sup> Curtin, “A Question of Manners,” 402.

1836. This particular work was aimed primarily at men and provided advice on a range of subjects – from conducting visits, proper behavior towards servants and fashion tips. Another American piece which consisted of a blending of etiquette and politeness was *The Lady's Guide to Perfect Gentility* by Emily Thornwell, published in New York by Derby and Jackson in 1857. This morality guide offered instruction on such subjects as appearance, dress, manners, and public decorum. Specific instruction was also given on the correct behavior to be demonstrated in the company of men.<sup>195</sup>

One of the remaining conduct books was published in Richmond, Virginia in 1828: Mrs. Virginia Cary's *Letters on Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother*. In this work, Cary wrote on questions of women's matrimony, courtship, education and morality – all the standard fare of eighteenth-century conduct literature. Cary (1786-1852) would have been middle aged when this book was published, and was undoubtedly familiar with didactic politeness.<sup>196</sup> But Cary's moral messages were also influenced by her religious views, making the Christian themes contained within this book more in keeping with the religious movements of the era rather than the rational morality of the eighteenth century.

In terms of her other views, however, she echoes the advice offered by British moralists from decades before. Regarding the ideal temperament of a woman, Cary writes that they are, “proverbially soft hearted...Their state of dependence on man, makes them peculiarly sensitive; for, having no security but his tenderness against the many ills of this life, if that resource should fail, they are left desolate.” [287-8] This is similar to Fordyce's teachings that men admire the “sweet solicitude” of women, and that, “To gain men's affections, women in general are naturally desirous...The sexes were made for each other. We wish for a place in your hearts: why should you not wish for one in our's?” [VI, 27-8] Warning against the dangers of novel reading, Cary writes that women instead should read works which “exhibit

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<sup>195</sup> These works have been digitized and are available online through The Library of Congress: Special Exhibition, American Memory. An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490-1920, www.loc.gov.

<sup>196</sup> For more on the Cary's upbringing and education, see Cynthia A. Kierner, “The Dark and Dense Cloud Perpetually Lowering over Us’: Gender and the Decline of Gentry in Postrevolutionary Virginia,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no 2 (Summer, 2000): 185-217.

the beauties and advantages of Christian faith and practice, in an interesting delineation of characters drawn from real life.”[125] Similarly, Fordyce advised that all novels should be avoided, save for those “which turn principally on the two great hinges of sentiment and character; joining description to precept, and presenting in particular the most animated sketches of modern manners, where the likeness is caught warm from life.”[VI, 141-2]

In her adamant calls for the education of women, Cary expressed those views also held by didactic author Hester Chapone. Like Mrs. Chapone in her eighteenth-century conduct book, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Cary encouraged her readers to base their education around the teachings of history, as well as a study of geography. [128]<sup>197</sup> Similar to the ideals of many didactic moralists as well as critics of fashionable etiquette, Cary was also of the view that outward manners must be the product of inner morality and virtue. As she writes, “outward manners so naturally spring from the combination of inward qualities, that I know not how a peculiar mode of behavior can be proposed for adoption...Women should never *study manners*.” [144, 145]

The popularity of this work in Virginia is difficult to determine,<sup>198</sup> but its publication date of 1828 is fitting with evidence which suggests that Virginians were still concerned with civic morality and politeness into the mid-nineteenth century. Aside from having her conduct book originally published in Virginia, Virginia Randolph Cary was also a Virginia native of a powerful, plantation-owning family whose members included other authors (her sister Mary Randolph) and politicians (her brother Thomas Mann Randolph served in the House of Representatives and was Governor of Virginia and the family was also connected to Thomas Jefferson). Cary’s family position and connections, as well as her views condemning the evils of slavery,[170-7]<sup>199</sup> while nevertheless outlining the standards of an ideal plantation (and slave-holding) mistress makes this piece of didactic literature a nineteenth-century, uniquely Virginian interpretation of eighteenth-century politeness.

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<sup>197</sup> Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*, by Mrs. Chapone, (Originally published, 1773, this version published, London, 1793, currently available in ECCO), 183-9. This will also be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

<sup>198</sup> It did, however, have a second edition, published in Philadelphia in 1830.

<sup>199</sup> Cary’s views on slavery will be further explored in Chapter III of this thesis.

Aside from the published work of Virginia Cary, several other Virginia ladies also recorded their life experiences in the form of instructional, sometimes “fictional,” works. Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler [Brent Carrington] of Yorktown, Virginia and Nancy Johns Turner Hall of Bedford County, Virginia both made decisions in their teenaged years regarding the opposite sex that they came to regret. They wanted the young, female, members of their families to learn from their mistakes, and they both wrote instructive documents to assist them in this effort.<sup>200</sup> The writings of both women reflect their childhood tastes for novels and instructive literature. They were familiar with the style and purpose of didactic fiction, and both believed in the power of fictional tales to teach valuable lessons.<sup>201</sup> Finally, both of these women began writing their autobiographical works in the mid-nineteenth century.

As has been mentioned, Elizabeth Grant – and undoubtedly many other Scottish, English and American women – also wrote their memoirs to be read by young relatives. Grant, however, did not necessarily write her memoirs as a didactic piece. Although lessons could certainly have been taken from her life experiences, it does not appear to have been her intention to provide instruction. For instance, in describing her role in an ill-fated, young love affair, Grant writes vaguely, “I was wrong; my own version of my tale will prove my errors; but at the same time I was wronged – ay, and more sinned against than sinning.”[VII, 14-6] This suggests that Grant was still somewhat recalcitrant regarding her conduct, unlike didactic heroine Gertrude St. Clair in Susan Ferrier’s didactic novel *The Inheritance* (1824). Ferrier’s heroine is flawed, and yet by the story’s end, she has come to repent her mistakes and fully admits to the error of her ways.<sup>202</sup> Grant’s defiance, by comparison, suggests she was not recording her life story in a didactic vein, merely relating an episode from her past.

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<sup>200</sup> See Ambler’s work, *Variety, or the Vicissitudes of Life* (undated), in the Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers, available at CW, DMS 54.5 and Nancy Johns Turner Hall, *The Imaginist*, 1844, available at the VHS, Mss5:9H1405:1. Their courtship experiences will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V. Turner Hall’s work will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with O for original document and T for transcript.

<sup>201</sup> Turner Hall’s quest for education and her relationship with novels is discussed in greater detail in Chapter III.

<sup>202</sup> See the secondary analysis of the character of Gertrude in Merryn Williams, *Women and the English Novel, 1800-1900*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1984), 68.

Nancy Johns Turner Hall of Virginia clearly wrote her work to be instructional. She recorded the advice she gave to a friend – and to future readers – regarding her potential marriage, and wrote in a style similar to that of published, didactic authors: “If you love Mr. B. for his intrinsic worth, & he loves you for the same and you are married, and persevere in your endeavours to promote each others [sic] best interest & happiness; I think you will be likely to enjoy as much felicity as generally falls to the lot of mortals...if however, either of you should turn out to be in love with a creature of your own imagination - a perfect being:- such as is no where to be found in this world. You will surely reap your reward in disappointed hopes, & consequent misery.” [T, 33] This advice regarding love and matrimony was almost identical to that presented in conduct books and instructive novels. As Fordyce warned, the greatest error in marriage was when a young couple’s “only concern was to be married, not to be happy, or to gain a heart, not to keep it.” [VII, 134]<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, the creation of these personal, unpublished, didactic pieces appears to have been a trend among genteel ladies, especially in Virginia.

Nancy Johns Turner Hall, of Bedford County, recorded her memoirs for her family’s benefit in 1844. Turner Hall was married and divorced before she was sixteen years of age.<sup>204</sup> An avid reader, she had an ambivalent relationship with fictional works, which she believed were immoral and part of the reason she was led astray. [T, 18-20] Regardless of her warnings against fiction, Turner Hall understood the power of books to convey ideas. In her memoirs she recorded her rebellious marriage and humiliating divorce, and her resulting efforts to continue her education, and find solace with the Lord for her sins. Her work was more evangelical in nature than the unpublished didactic writings of another woman, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler, and her account was slightly less literary in style but it is apparent that Turner Hall was also desirous of a chance to present her long-held views on religion, education for young women, and the evils of slavery. Turner Hall was writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, but her attempt to reflect on her mistakes and record her life’s lessons for posterity was clearly shaped by the ideals and ambitions of the moralist authors of didactic fiction.

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<sup>203</sup> Didactic messages on this subject will be further explored in Chapter V.

<sup>204</sup> This is discussed in greater detail in Chapters III and V.

Further separating the didactic writings of Virginia women as compared to those in Scotland, Elizabeth Grant's recording of her life in Scotland was entirely autobiographical, unlike Elizabeth Ambler of Virginia who wrote her memoirs as an entertaining novel. Around 1810, when Elizabeth Ambler would have been 45 years old, she began writing her sister a series of instructional and biographical letters for the benefit of her niece. In these letters, she outlined not only the history of the family, but also the education she and her siblings received from their father, and some of the mistakes she made in her life regarding her morals and her behavior in society.<sup>205</sup> Ambler's taste for instructional writing culminated in her authorship of *Variety, or the Vicissitudes of Life*. This work is undated, although it can be assumed to have been written in the late 1820's or 1830's.<sup>206</sup>

In this barely-fictional work, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler described her own ill-considered behavior towards the French officers stationed in Virginia during her girlhood (in the Revolutionary War), but more importantly, details the downfall and ruin of her real life acquaintance Rachel Warrington, who was impregnated and abandoned by one of these officers. Similar to didactic fiction, Ambler reflected on the ideal standard for the supervision and education of young girls. Although this work was never finished, it is apparent Ambler believed her story would be most useful as an instructional tool if written in the style of a moral fiction rooted in truth.

Women like Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler and Nancy Johns Turner Hall were similar to published authors like Virginia Cary who believed that their own instruction in morality and gentility, both through their formal schooling as well as their own life experiences, rendered them capable of recording this advice for the benefit of others. While such accounts could be dismissed as the products of the morality of a by-gone era, the fact that Cary's conduct book was published as late as 1828 and had a second edition suggests that such didactic messages were not considered out of date by Virginia readers.

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<sup>205</sup> See letters from March 1809, November 1810 and two undated letters from 1810 – all from Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to her sister [Ann] Nancy Fisher, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers.

<sup>206</sup> Ambler formulated the idea to write a novel based on the letters she had been writing to her sister Nancy, so it would be safe to assume that this document was written after the fact. The last letter in the collection from Ambler to Fisher was written in 1823, so presumably *Variety* came later.

It has been argued by historians, furthermore, that this instruction in gentility had a particular prominence in the American South, especially in Virginia.<sup>207</sup> While it was common in the early nineteenth-century in both Britain and America for women to be involved in the writing of didactic texts, for a Virginia woman to publish a didactic piece in Richmond, and for several other Virginian women to be unpublished authors of didactic works, shows a uniquely Virginian interpretation of the role of women in polite society and the role of didactic literature in creating polite women.<sup>208</sup> The fact that these writings continued to be written and read into the middle decades of the nineteenth century is further indicative of the lingering influence of politeness to guide the behavior and morality of genteel, young women, and the belief in the power of didactic texts to teach these behaviors and morals.

Having examined the catalogue contents, statistical sales and book selections from shops and libraries in Williamsburg and Edinburgh, as well as the personal accounts of individual women regarding their reading tastes, this chapter will next combine the statistical presence of didactic literature with the book selection of individual readers for a specific location in Edinburgh. The following section will present a case study derived from the records of W. Wilson, a bookseller and stationer on George Street. The records come from 1814 to 1815, dates still within the confines of the long-eighteenth century and before conduct literature had fallen out of fashion, but still far enough into the nineteenth century to have evidence of

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<sup>207</sup> For the belief among Virginians that their way of life was distinct, see Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets: Death and Desire at Monticello*, (New York: Basic Books, a Member of Perseus Books, 2005), 91; for more information on how Virginia elites had historically tried to emulate the British, aristocratic way of life, see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina, 1982); this argument is also presented in the introduction to *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774*, Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1947). See the page 6 of this thesis for a rebuttal of Dallett C Hemphill's argument in "Manners and Class in the Revolutionary Era: A Transatlantic Comparison," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 63, no 2 (April 2006): 345-372, that the North was more comparable as a region due to the emergence of an urban middle class.

<sup>208</sup> For more on this argument about the role of female, Virginian authors and polite literature, see Cynthia A. Kierner, "'The Dark and Dense Cloud,'" 211-4. In his work, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, 59, Kevin J. Hayes asserts that the diaries and letters of their mothers often made up a part of a young girl's ideal reading material in colonial America. Interestingly, however, the only evidence he cites of this actually taking place comes from Virginia. This is not to imply that Virginia was entirely unique and that other colonial and republican women did not make similar writings for the benefit of female relatives. But it does reinforce the connection between Virginia women and unpublished, instructive writing, dating back to the middle of the eighteenth century. Regarding other Southern women, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese explores this trend in, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 2.

reading tastes shaped by the ideals of evangelicalism and the Romantic era. This case study serves the purpose of establishing Edinburgh, through the example of this specific print shop, as a location of the diffusion of didactic literature. This case study also allows for an examination of the reading tastes of Edinburgh women in the time period in question on an individualistic basis similar to that conducted of Virginia women.

#### **Part IV: Case Study: Exploring the Selections of Individual Readers: Gendered Book Buying Trends in the Records of Bookseller and Stationer, W. Wilson & Co.**

In Edinburgh, some of the most conclusive evidence regarding the gender differences of book buying, particularly of didactic book buying, comes from the 1814-1815 day book of W. Wilson, a bookseller and stationer on George Street.<sup>209</sup> In this document, Wilson recorded the daily transactions of his shop, which was located in Edinburgh's New Town and drew a collection of primarily genteel clients. As nearly all of the transactions for the year were conducted based on credit, Wilson kept careful records not only of the daily purchases and transactions that took place within his shop, but he also included the names and addresses of each customer who made a purchase. These names and addresses indicate that his patrons came from some of the wealthiest parts of the New Town of Edinburgh, including Charlotte Square, Queen Street, Dundas Street, and Heriot Row. Most of his patrons were not aristocratic or titled – although there were certainly a few.<sup>210</sup> The majority were recorded as “Mister, Miss or Missus,” indicating that although they were not necessarily part of the aristocracy, his clients were nevertheless a part of Edinburgh's genteel, urban elites.

Ranging from July 1, 1814 to August 31, 1815, Wilson's records indicated that women were a large presence in transactions involving book buying and reading. Wilson recorded 1,374 total transactions related to book buying. Of that total, women accounted for just under half of Wilson's book business, 669 transactions. Furthermore, in over a year of records which included everything from book

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<sup>209</sup> Day Book of W. Wilson & Co., Bookseller and Stationer, 44 George Street Edinburgh.

<sup>210</sup> Regarding the clientele, Lady Hope Vere, in particular, purchased several didactic titles, and there were at least 21 other titled ladies who regularly came to Wilson's shop, but no titled gentlemen.



purchases and book binding to reading from Wilson's circulating library, there were only 46 days in which no transactions involving books were made and only 25 days in which there were no book buying purchases carried out by women. Throughout the rest of the year, women were active in the purchasing and binding of books. From the period of July 1, 1814 to August 31, 1815, there were a total of 139 days when more than fifty percent of book transactions were carried out by women. In that time, there were at least 57 days in which women made all of the book-related transactions for that day.

It is important to keep in mind that these records and figures do not take into account the fact that women might not always have bought books in their own name. On two different occasions – March 4 and July 19, 1815 – Wilson recorded that men had purchased copies of a work entitled *Domestic Cookery*. Given the fact that most of Wilson's male patrons were considered gentleman and would have been unlikely to have engaged in cooking, it seems likely that these men were either buying these books for the women in the household, or that women were buying these books under a male relative's account.<sup>211</sup>

It is also possible to draw conclusions about the gendered reading practices of Wilson's clients, although there are limitations to this methodology. It can only be determined that certain books were purchased by particular customers, it cannot be determined if these customers actually read these books or what their opinions on the contents of the books might have been. Many transactions also involved book binding, and this action was frequently carried out by both men and women. It can be inferred, for instance, that customers were only willing to spend money on binding books that they valued, but books as material objects were also an important sign of social status.<sup>212</sup> It is possible that these books were bound for the benefit of their appearance in a collection or in a private library, rather than being seen as indicative of personal value. Each of these factors makes it difficult to determine actual reading habits of book purchasers in Edinburgh, only the book buying habits are illuminated.

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<sup>211</sup> In "The Prentis Family and their Library," marginalia indicates that Joseph Prentis, Sr. owned domestic manuals in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but Richter indicates that this was unusual, 50.

<sup>212</sup> For more information on the role of books as status symbols rather than reflections of personal taste, see Mark Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment*, 32.

Despite these limitations, Wilson's records indicate a divide between the books purchased or bound by men and those purchased or bound by women. Women tended to purchase religious works, didactic literature – in the form of conduct books and didactic novels – as well as other, non-didactic novels. Some of the most popular examples of non-didactic fiction purchased by women were the novels of Sir Walter Scott, specifically *Waverley* (1814) and *Guy Mannering* (1815). Women also tended to buy large numbers of children's books which often contained instructional lessons and stories. Women frequently bought ladies' magazines such as the *La Belle Assemblée* (1806), as well as collections of poetry, such as those by Lord Byron, and instructional manuals for the household such as *A New System of Domestic Cookery* and *Housekeepers Books*. Regarding intellectual materials, women bought works on geography, history, and exercises in mathematics, grammar, and languages such as French and Italian.

Wilson's male patrons purchased from genres similar to those of the ladies, but they also bought from a wider array of genres. Not only did they buy the novels of Sir Walter Scott along with many religious works such as *Sermons, Chiefly on Particular Occasions* by Archibald Alison,<sup>213</sup> which were equally popular with women, but they also bought works related to philosophy, science, and military affairs. These men also, like Wilson's female patrons, purchased gendered magazines such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *The Sporting Magazine*, along with non-gendered magazines such as *The Edinburgh Review* and *The Edinburgh Almanack*, which were also often purchased by women. While women bought French and Italian language books, men also purchased these as well as books written in German and Latin.

One genre of literature that was purchased more frequently by women than by men was didactic literature. Women often purchased these works in the form of conduct books and novels of manners. Of the 669 book-related transactions carried out by women from July 1, 1814 to August 31, 1815, 79 transactions were related to the purchasing of didactic literature. Men were by no means excluded from the

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<sup>213</sup> Refers to the work of Archibald Alison, an Edinburgh didactic author who wrote about religion and philosophy. His sermons were published in two volumes in 1814 and 1815. He was also married to John Gregory's daughter. See "Alison, Archibald (1757–1839)," Philip Carter in *ODNB*.

purchasing of didactic literature, and according to Wilson's records, men purchased didactic literature in 20 transactions.

It is unknown if these men actually read these works, or if they were purchased by females under a male relative's account. They might also have been purchased by men to give as gifts. The gift-giving of didactic works between men and women, particularly between men and younger, female relatives, like daughters or sisters, was a common practice.<sup>214</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that so few morality guides written by and directed to women were purchased by men. Men certainly bought and read novels, but it was women who were the main consumers of novels and nonfiction works about women's religion and conduct. Assuming that the purchasers were also the intended readers, this supports the idea of didactic literature being a gendered genre associated with women's reading, women's instruction, and women's writing. Furthermore, it supports the argument that didactic literature made up a significant proportion of women's reading habits in Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century.

Equally revealing from Wilson's records was the fact that when women purchased didactic literature, they often bought more than one conduct book or didactic novel at a time. Of the 79 total purchases of didactic literature by women in the period in question, 15 of those transactions involved women buying at least two pieces of didactic literature. In the most extreme case, Mrs. Stirling of Kippenross bought 29 different titles of didactic literature on May 16, 1815. For two of the titles, she purchased ten copies of each work. From this information, it can be inferred that Mrs. Stirling intended to further sell, or perhaps give as gifts, several of these additional copies of didactic works. It is for this reason that it is possible to underestimate the spread and influence of didactic literature, as books might have been shared, leant and gifted among friends and family and a single transaction might have had a wider readership than that which was recorded in Wilson's day book.

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<sup>214</sup> For more on this in early American society, see Kevin J. Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, 59. For more information on buying books on credit, borrowing from circulating libraries, family libraries, and book gifting among women in England, see Susan Staves, "Books without which I cannot write": How Did Eighteenth-century Women Writers Get the Books They Read?" *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, eds., (Palgrave, 2007), 163-75.

Further evidence of acquiring multiple pieces of didactic literature in a single transaction can be seen in the purchases of booksellers and publishers in other locations, such as London and Glasgow. Wilson recorded 12 different transactions in which he sold works of didactic literature to booksellers in London. These transactions often involved the purchase of more than one copy of certain titles of didactic literature, indicating a demand for conduct books and novels of manners in other venues throughout Britain. On July 17, 1815 R. Hunter, a bookseller from London purchased four copies of Anna Barbauld's *Evenings at Home* (1793), twelve copies of *Parent's Assistant* (1796), four copies of *Popular Tales* (1804), fifteen copies of *Early Lessons* (1801), and ten copies of *Continuations of Early Lessons* (1815), all written by Maria Edgeworth. This indicates not only the potentially high demand for didactic literature, but also demonstrates the exchange of conduct books and novels of manners between Edinburgh and London and places Edinburgh as a site for the diffusion of didactic texts.

Finally, this case study allows for the examination of reading habits within families across two generations. This chapter has already explored the reading choices of Hannah Hope Vere in London, but her mother, Lady Elizabeth Hay, was also a frequent patron of Wilson's shop, as is demonstrated by the records from 1814 to 1815.<sup>215</sup> Lady Hay had wide reading tastes, not dissimilar to those of her daughter. She purchased editions of the *Edinburgh Review* on July 18, October 18, and December 20, 1814, as well as on April 11, 1815, while Hannah Hope Vere's journal entries from nearly three decades later indicate that she also frequently read editions of this publication, which ran from 1802 to 1929 and contained pieces on a wide variety of subjects. Unlike Hannah Hope Vere, Lady Elizabeth Hay did not appear to be an admirer of Sir Walter Scott, given that she returned his novel *Guy Mannering* on February 25, 1815 and his narrative poem *Lord of the Isles* on 2 March, although admittedly no reason is given for the return.

Most relevant to this study is the fact that Lady Elizabeth Hay also made several purchases of didactic literature. She was avid purchaser, and presumably an avid reader, of *La Belle Assemblée*, which, until 1820 when it became primarily a fashion magazine, was a magazine devoted to publishing poetry and fiction for

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<sup>215</sup> In the records from 1814, she is Lady Hay. By 1815 she is Lady Hope Vere.

women, as well as articles on politics and science for feminine instruction. Lady Hay purchased editions of this work on February 4, March 3, and every month following until August of 1815, when the record comes to an end. She also bought an Italian work called *Novelle Morali*, which was used in the moral education of young people, on January 26 and then again on April 19 of 1815. The two different transactions suggest that she might have been buying another volume of this work (several volumes were published from 1782-86), or perhaps meant to give it as a gift. She also bought Ann Radcliffe's Gothic, didactic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) on January 13, 1815, and the instructional novel *Discipline* (1814) by Scottish author, Mary Brunton on December 20, 1814.<sup>216</sup>

While Lady Elizabeth Hay and Hannah Hope Vere had several reading tastes in common, such as their apparent admiration of the *Edinburgh Review*, they were also both products of their time in the sense that Lady Elizabeth in 1814 and 1815 enjoyed the didactic texts written in the eighteenth century, or inspired by eighteenth-century morality, while Hannah Hope Vere in the early 1840s displayed affinity for intellectual texts, Romantic works, and books on religion and evangelical Christianity. This study has argued, however, that Hannah Hope Vere in London, while not necessarily directly influenced by Scottish Enlightenment-inspired politeness, was nevertheless aware of its teachings and moral codes. While it cannot necessarily be inferred that Hannah Hope Vere was shaped by her mother's reading habits, Hope Vere's writings indicate that she was familiar with the morality of didactic politeness and had at some point received polite instruction. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Lady Hay's reading tastes reflected the prominence of didactic literature in Edinburgh, and further records from W. Wilson reflect that his Edinburgh shop occasionally supplied didactic texts to London.

## Conclusion

It has been the aim of this chapter to demonstrate the relative popularity of didactic literature – here defined as conduct books, instructional novels and advice

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<sup>216</sup> For more on the ways in which Gothic and Enlightenment literature blended together, see Peter Walmsley, "The Melancholy Briton: Enlightenment Sources of the Gothic." *Enlightening Romanticism*, 39-53.

periodicals – among the general reading public in Edinburgh and locations in and around Williamsburg, Virginia. These works were considered staples of conventional reading of the long eighteenth century, especially among women, but what happened to this literature after 1820? This chapter has sought to further explore the varying degrees to which didactic literature remained fixed in public taste in both Virginia and Scotland as the nineteenth century progressed.

It is difficult to assess the responses of readers to their reading material. The statistical popularity of a work in regards to book sales or to book borrowing trends does not necessarily reflect if the book was well-liked nor – in the case of didactic literature, which was by its very definition designed to offer instruction – does popularity necessarily mean that young female readers applied the lessons of advice manuals and instructional novels to their daily lives. It is for this reason that this chapter also took into account references to their reading in the personal writings of Scottish and Virginian women, as well as a case study which focused on an individualized account of the reading and book buying trends of specific people at a specific location over time.

According to statistical research, conducted in archives in Virginia and Scotland, throughout the long eighteenth-century in bookshops and libraries, didactic literature on average consisted of roughly 8 to 10% of the entire catalogue available to potential readers. This, of course, was not a fixed value – it was shown in the evidence gathered from the *Virginia Gazettes* of Williamsburg that the available didactic titles ranged from as little as 3% of the overall catalogue to as much as 24%. On average, however, the values across the Atlantic consistently fell between 8 and 10%. While this is certainly not an overwhelming number, its consistency does reflect the fact that didactic literature, presumably for women, was considered a popular reading staple in both Williamsburg and Edinburgh. Furthermore, the titles of didactic literature offered in the *Virginia Gazettes* were regularly purchased and replaced, indicating that demand was steady, if not necessarily overwhelming.

The trends in the popularity of didactic literature remained mostly similar in Virginia and Scotland throughout the long eighteenth century; it was with the progression of the nineteenth century that distinctive regional changes began to emerge. This chapter has shown that readers in both locations showed an increasing

taste for a new type of literature – specifically, a new type of novel. Nevertheless, the personal writings of individual women reveal that the moral philosophy of didactic literature, while falling out of fashion, had firmly permeated society. In Virginia, furthermore, women continued to reference their didactic works into the nineteenth century. The power of literature to teach moral lessons was so valued that several women in nineteenth-century Virginia felt it was their duty to relate their life stories and life lessons to their younger, female relatives, by writing entertaining pieces that were also instructional. The fact that one such didactic piece was even published in Virginia in the mid-nineteenth century further suggests that the taste for texts on didactic politeness had not disappeared.

The reasons for the fact that didactic literature remained more prominent in Virginia than in Scotland will be explored in greater detail in later chapters of this thesis. It can be argued that part of the reason for this continued habit of referring to didactic texts as instructional tools might have come from the fact that education in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century South lingered behind the rest of the country. While the American Revolution brought about changes for some in attitudes towards education, other women, particularly in Virginia, found themselves denied the right to advance their intellect due to lack of opportunity, or to lingering prejudices regarding the education of women.<sup>217</sup> Self-education became popular, and given that interest in politeness and gentility was especially prominent in Virginia, it is likely that these women used the few tools at their disposal – their conduct books and instructional novels – to further their education.

Finally, it is also possible to see links between Virginia and Scotland, and a transatlantic expression of Enlightenment-inspired civility, regarding the popularity of didactic literature. Edinburgh was the second largest supplier of books to the Williamsburg Print Shop behind London, and Glasgow was the fourth largest supplier, indicating that two of the top four suppliers of Williamsburg books were Scottish cities. Furthermore, 15% of the didactic literature sold in the Williamsburg Print Shop came from Edinburgh.

Similarly, Lady Jean Skipwith began compiling her Virginia library while living in Edinburgh under the intellectual culture of the Scottish Enlightenment.

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<sup>217</sup> Women's educational trends in Britain and America are discussed in Chapters II and III.

Although the majority of her collected books came from American cities and only 5% in total came from Edinburgh, 33% of her collection of didactic literature was originally published in Edinburgh. In other words, London and later, as the century progressed, Northern American cities such as Boston and Philadelphia served as the largest overall suppliers of books to personal and public libraries and bookshops in Virginia. It is important to note, however, that Edinburgh supplied a substantial amount of didactic literature to Virginia readers, indicating a link between Virginia and Scotland and the production and consumption of polite literature.



### III. Chapter II: Polite Education: The Impact of Didactic Literature on Theories of Women's Education, 1750-1850

#### Introduction

Inevitably linked to themes of women's reading habits, literacy, and instructive literature are the questions regarding women's education in Virginia and Scotland in the time period in question. The prominence of didactic conduct books and prescriptive novels in both Britain and America reflects the fact that instructional messages to women, particularly in print form, were more important than ever before. But what role did such literature play in shaping the standards of curriculum for women's education? The previous chapters have asserted that Virginia was closely linked to Scotland with regards to reading habits and aspirations towards the emulation of the polite, moral society originally instilled in Scottish moral philosophy, but did this connection extend to educational trends? And how did women use the polite, instructive tracts available to them in shaping their own views regarding their educational studies? This chapter will examine the theoretical standards of instruction described in published didactic literature and how those standards were communicated to female readers in both Scotland and Virginia.

Furthermore, this chapter will also explore the theories related to women's education as expressed in personal documents. Many of the women profiled in this study wrote about education, though not necessarily about their own practical experiences of instruction. Often, these women wrote about the ideal standards and curriculum for a woman's education, and presented these writings as guides on which young friends and relatives might model their own educational experiences. These personal writings on educational theory showed many similarities to that expressed by didactic authors, although there were certainly deviations in the ideas as well. While this chapter, therefore, focuses on the theories of women's education as presented in published and unpublished documents, the following chapter will investigate how those idealized standards measured up to the reality of women's education reflected in women's letters, diaries and other contemporary documents. Finally, this chapter will establish that the theoretical views surrounding women's education between Scotland and Virginia were similar regarding eighteenth-century standards of polite instruction. With the progression of the nineteenth century, it is

possible to see the influence of evangelical religion and revolutionary thought in the educational theories of both Scotland and Virginia.

### **Part I: The Educational Curriculum of Didactic Literature**

Didactic literature, in the form of conduct books, novels and monthly advice periodicals, was often vocal about the importance of education for girls and young women, and about the ideal components of female education. The educational trends instilled in didactic literature were similar across the Atlantic due to the fact that Britons and Americans read so many of the same works and the previous chapter has established that this was especially true between Scotland and Virginia. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, America did not have a well established publishing industry, and therefore relied mostly on the importation of British books.<sup>218</sup> This continued after the American War for Independence and into the early days of the republic. Political differences did not necessarily mean that ideas about politeness, behavior and women's education could not be shared between the two countries. Later, as the nineteenth century progressed and a printing business native to America was firmly established, the reading taste for didactic literature and moralistic advice, still similar to that originally found in Britain over fifty years ago, remained popular.<sup>219</sup>

#### **Part I.I: Moralists and the Merits of Women's Intellect**

One of the major issues addressed in eighteenth-century didactic literature directly related to ideas regarding women's education which would have had relevance in both Scotland and Virginia were the discussions concerning women's intellectual capabilities. In general, though with several prominent exceptions, many educational theorists and moralists believed that women's minds were inferior to those of men, and education for women was to be designed in a manner that took this belief into account. Reverend Fordyce, author of *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), refers to

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<sup>218</sup> See Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Chapter 2, for more information about American taste for British works.

<sup>219</sup> This point refers specifically to the messages about education contained in didactic literature. In practice, there was a shift in American women's education in the nineteenth century, and those social changes will be discussed in the following chapter.

spheres of study to which women, by nature, were more suited. He stresses accomplishments, rather than intellectual pursuits, and urges women to avoid history and science as subjects more ideally fitted for the minds of men.<sup>220</sup>

Fordyce also shared the view of other theorists that women's lack of physical strength was indicative of mental weakness. Many prominent eighteenth-century minds believed that physical and mental capacity were not only linked, but were lacking in the case of women.<sup>221</sup> As Fordyce writes on the matter, "Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your sex for the most part with less vigour than those of ours." "Exceptions we readily admit," he allows, but he also states, "But you yourselves, I think, will allow that war, commerce, politics, exercises of strength and dexterity, abstract philosophy, and all the abstruser sciences, are most properly the province of men. I am sure those masculine women, that would plead for your sharing any part of this province equally with us, do not understand your true interests." [VI, 137-8]

Other authors expressed a similar view of the female intellect. In a combined, American publican of several British didactic works called *The Lady's Pocket Library*, Jonathan Swift's "Letter to a Young Lady Newly Married" was printed alongside Dr. Gregory's *Legacy to his Daughters* and Mrs. Chapone's "Letter on the Government of the Temper," which was originally included in her 1773 work, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*. Although each of these works was originally published in Britain in the eighteenth century, this American printing, published in New York in 1818, was in its fifth edition. Furthermore, this work was available to Virginia readers in the catalogue of Ross and Douglas, and can be assumed to have been carried in other libraries and bookshops as well. In Edinburgh, a work entitled *The Young Lady's Pocket Library* was recommended to be added to the Edinburgh Subscription Library in 1806. If this was indeed the same text, this serves as an example of readers in Edinburgh and Virginia being directly linked by a

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<sup>220</sup> James Fordyce. D. D. *Sermons to Young Women. Two Volumes in One*. Originally published, London, 1766. Published by M. Carey, Philadelphia: and I. Riley, New York. 1809, available at CW, VI, 102-3. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

<sup>221</sup> For more on this attitude, see Katharine Glover, "The Female Mind," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 25, no 1 (2005): 1-20, where she also analyzes the attitude of Hume on the subject of the mental and physical inferiority of women. For American examples, See Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 61-75.

didactic work.<sup>222</sup> In his “Letter,” Swift states that even the most capable women will only ever achieve “the perfection of a school boy,” in educational mastery.<sup>223</sup>

It was not just male authors who sought to instill this ideal in young, female readers and this mindset was not limited to the theorists of the eighteenth century. Mrs. Virginia Cary, a native of Virginia and a member of a prominent Virginia family, espouses a similar argument in her conduct book, *Letters on Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother*, which was published in Richmond, Virginia in 1828.

Mrs. Cary writes that while she is an advocate of women’s education in general, she feels that such an education should prepare women for their appropriate sphere in life. She advises that women must not have the vanity to assume they are the mental equals of men: “In our happy country, the female sex are just beginning to participate in the benefits of rapidly progressing refinement...It should be the object of all who really aim at moral improvement, to assist in developing the faculties of so large a portion of the human race. To *train women for usefulness* is the object of the following little unpretending work...The peculiar difficulties of our southern housewives, are taken into consideration in the following pages, and a few hints offered to their acceptance.”<sup>224</sup> As she also insists, “It is no derogation from the dignity or utility of woman, to declare, that she is inferior to man, in moral as well as physical strength. She has a different part to act in life and does not require the same qualities.”[21]

Cary is also adamant that it is God’s will that women acknowledge their shortcomings in comparison to men. Although she praises the merits of education, she also writes, “But these advantages are liable to abuse, from those erring spirits, who grasp at more than their allotted portion of power. Some aspiring females are not content to retain any vestige of subordination to the anointed lords of the

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<sup>222</sup> *A Catalogue of Books, &c. Now Selling By Ross & Douglas, Booksellers and Stationers, Petersburg.* Petersburg, Jan. 1800. Available online at CW. See also Edinburgh Subscription Library – Catalogue of Books Recommended for Purchase – Available at ECL, NRAS3563/124/2.

<sup>223</sup> Jonathan Swift, “Letter to a Young Lady Newly Married,” *The Lady's Pocket Library*, Fifth American Edition, (New York: Published by L. and F. Lockwood, no 110 Chatham-Street, J&J Harper Printers, 1818), 242. Available at CW. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

<sup>224</sup> Virginia Cary, *Letters on the Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother*, (Richmond, Virginia: A. Works, 1828), vii, available at CW. This statement is also telling in that it reflects her attitude that Southern women have different experiences than Northern women. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

creation.” This is potentially damaging, not only to society, she warns, but to a woman’s immortal soul. “When a woman breaks down the barrier erected by Omnipotence around her, she renders herself liable to the full penalty of God’s violated law,” Cary warns. “She was formed for man, and therefore must continue in contented subordination to his authority.”[vi]

According to Cary, there is also historical precedent for the dangers caused by women who aspire to be the mental and intellectual equals of their men. As she asserts:

A wrong mode of education may give the female character a degree of inflation, which passes with superficial people for solidity...But when women are taken out of their appropriate sphere, not only the individual, but national misery will be the result. Look at the state of the female sex in France before the revolution, when it was said that they had attained their true and legitimate station of equality. They were learned in all things, but in their allotted portion of knowledge. They vied with men in literature, philosophy, science, and even infidelity. Their children were neglected, their husbands *dishonoured*; their homes converted into places of abomination, where the Spirit of God never could come, to rectify the disorders of nature. What were the consequences? Such as blacken the page of history, and startle the thoughtful mind, even in another age and region...Had the women of France retained their appropriate sphere of duty, there is little doubt that their influence might have upheld the fabric of natural virtue, and prevented the desolation of their country. What but ruin can ensue from a system of education which converts one of the most active agents of moral improvement into a mere ornament, a useless and superfluous toy. While these women were cultivating their talents with the ambitious desires of emulating masculine supremacy, their children were corrupted by dissolute menials, their domestic fire-sides were forsaken, and the social contract gradually dissolved.[21-2].

Women’s education, therefore, if misdirected, was thought to be capable of upsetting the social order and women’s place within it.

A similar view from Scotland in the nineteenth century regarding women’s intellectual abilities is presented in the published memoirs of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. Although not necessarily written as a didactic piece, Grant writes that she has recorded important events in her own early life, concerning her

education, social life, and courtships, for the benefit of her niece.<sup>225</sup> Grant describes several situations in which it is remarked upon by both men and women that women were emotional and sensitive, yet lacking in reason. This comment is made on one occasion by a woman called Lady Logie who was renowned for her learning and intellect. [VI, 126] While travelling as a part of a social outing, one of the women of the party became frightened. When Grant's father responded with his "Masculine Consolation of appealing to their sense," Lady Logie immediately said to him, "A reasonable man like you, Rothiemurchus! to attempt to appeal to the judgment of a woman while under the dominion of the passion of fear." [VI, 128]

Of course, there were many moralists and theorists who argued that women were not by nature inferior to men at all. Mary Wollstonecraft argued in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that it was essential to give women a thorough education to allow them to become the intellectual, and therefore social, equals of men.<sup>226</sup> Later, in the American South, thinkers like the abolitionist Sarah Grimke and Thomas Dew, a professor at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, believed that it was a combination of education and social custom – not nature – that made women inferior to men. Grimke was critical of such institutions, while Dew advocated the ideal image of the submissive, delicate, Southern woman and believed that such a state of womanhood was preferable to both sexes. They did both agree, however, that such characteristics were taught, they were not inherent.<sup>227</sup>

### **Part I.II: A Controversial Pastime: The Dangers of Women's Reading**

This debate about women's intellectual capabilities served the purpose of addressing the quality of women's education, and questions of how it should differ from that given to men. Finally, it broached the subject of *what* exactly women should be taught. Should they be trained in practical skills for the running of the house, or

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<sup>225</sup> Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady, Volumes One and Two*, with an introduction by Andrew Tod, ed., (First published 1898 by John Murray. First published Canongate Classics in 1988 by Canongate Publishing Ltd. This edition published in 1992 by Canongate Press: Edinburgh), VI, 266. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

<sup>226</sup> For more analysis of Mary Wollstonecraft's views on education, see Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History*, (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1965), 130-3.

<sup>227</sup> See Anne Firor Scott, *Southern Lady*, 61-7. For an in-depth analysis of British men who supported women's intellectual advances, see Arienne Cherneck, "Cultivating Woman: Men's Pursuit of Intellectual Equality in the Late British Enlightenment," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no 3 (July, 2006): 511-31.

should they be given a graceful education of accomplishments to prepare them for polite society? Should they be trained in traditional academic pursuits, or would such teachings unfit them for their roles in the domestic sphere as wife and mother? Didactic literature addressed these questions by offering advice about women's reading material, as well as the ideal curriculum of women's instruction.

Although not necessarily a part of women's formal education, moralists and educational theorists wrote about the sorts of material that women should be reading. Books were believed to be valuable teaching tools, and while it was possible for conduct books and novels of manners to instill the correct morals and behaviors in female readers, books could also present ideas that were immoral and dangerous. Women, especially young girls, were believed to be easily influenced by what they read. It was believed by some moralists that they could not fully distinguish between the fictions presented in books, and the realities of their own lives. As a result, novels, and particularly novels of romance were considered one of the most dangerous types of reading material. Although this opinion of novels would come to be altered for the better as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed, with the concession that some fictional works could teach valuable moral lessons about life and love, novels nevertheless continued to be a dangerous genre for female readers.<sup>228</sup>

One of the most vocal authors on the subject of women's reading was the Reverend James Fordyce, who offered his thoughts on nearly every type of genre that might be encountered by the female sex. He believed in the value of books as an instructional tool, and that it was through books that women should learn about some – but not all – of the realities of life. Unlike men, genteel women should not learn about the world through a variety of experiences, he advised. On the contrary, “A female that acts upon the same plan is lost; and she who would effectually escape

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<sup>228</sup> See Cathy N. Davidson, “The Novel as Subversive Activity: Women Reading, Women Writing,” *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, Alfred F. Young, ed., (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 283-316; Naomi Tadmor, ““In the Even My Wife Read to Me” Women, Reading and Household Life in the Eighteenth Century,” *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor, eds., (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 162-74. For more information on the rise of the novels as a genre see Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press, 1987). For more information on the moral authority of the novel, see Lionel Trilling, “Manners, Morals and the Novel,” *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*, (London: Mercury Books, 1961), 193-209.

dishonour and remorse, reproach and ridicule, must endeavour to know the world from books, to collect experience from those who have bought it, and to shun misconduct herself by observing the calamities it has occasioned to others.”[VII, 7-8] As a result, Fordyce encouraged women to read. As he informs his female readers, “Books you have, or may have, on every subject that is proper for you.” He also chastises women who do not read enough: “Remember too, that the price of one expensive gown, or of one shining toy, will at any time furnish a little library of the best authors.”[VI, 146-7]

Despite this encouragement of women’s reading, Fordyce was also adamant on which works should *not* be perused by the fairer sex. “We consider the general run of Novels as utterly unfit for you. Instruction they convey none. They paint scenes of pleasure and passion altogether improper for you to behold, even with the mind's eye...their representations of love between the sexes are almost universally overstrained.”[Vol I, 75-6] Furthermore, some novels were so lacking in their moral teachings that, according to Fordyce, they could call into question a woman’s character. “What shall we say of certain books where we are assured (for we have not read them) are in their nature so shameful...and which contain such rank treason against the royal of Virtue, such horrible violation of all decorum, that she who can peruse them must in soul be a prostitute, let her reputation in life be what it will.”[VI, 148] A woman’s reading, therefore, could put her sexual reputation at risk, for it was the belief that if her mind and her modesty were violated (a loss of her “mental virginity”) by images in books, the chastity of her body was likewise ruined beyond repair.<sup>229</sup>

Fordyce also reminded his readers that private reading could lead women to distraction. Instead, he advised, “Your business chiefly is to read to Men, in order to make yourselves agreeable and useful.”[VI, 138] He recommended that women read history, biographies and memoirs of admirable and reputable individuals, travel works, geography, as well as “Fables, Visions, Allegories...where Fancy sports under the control of Reason; Dramatic Writings also, where truth of character and purity of thought are preserved,” and poetry, provided “a strict regard is paid to decorum.” He directed his readers to works “of the sublimer forms, where Nature,

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<sup>229</sup> Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 52.



Virtue, Religion, are painted and embellished with all the beauty of a chaste yet elevated imagination.”[VI, 138, 139, 140-1]

Unsurprisingly, Fordyce also recommended other instructive pieces, such as *The Spectator*. “How much are both sexes indebted to their elegant pens,” he writes of such publications, which he believes to be, “a species of instruction better fitted perhaps than most others of human device, to delight and improve at the same moment...You cannot fail of improving under such tutors.” Despite his condemnation of novels, Fordyce does concede that a few benefits can be found in the genre. “I say nothing now of Novels and Romances, having had occasion to speak of them so largely in a former discourse.” He writes. “But I must not omit to recommend those admirable productions of the present century...presenting in particular the most animated sketches of modern manners, where the likeness is caught warm from life; while the powers of fancy, wit, and judgment, combine to expose vice and folly, to enforce reformation, and...to convey the rules of domestic wisdom and daily conduct.”[VI, 142, 141-2] Richardson, for instance, and his novels *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1748), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), were a few of the novels of which Fordyce specifically approved.<sup>230</sup>

What is more surprising in Fordyce’s selections of recommended works is the fact that he does not encourage extensive religious reading among women. “Of books in Divinity I do not wish you to read very many,” he advises, “Those in way of Religious Controversy, as it is called, but which are frequently written in a most irreligious spirit, that is, without any candour or fairness, I do not wish you to read at all.” The reason for this, he states, is because he has never known “Mere argumentative theology...to improve the temper, or regulate the conduct; but often to hurt both.”[VII, 80] While women were praised for their piety in both Britain and America, serious theological study was considered to be an academic pursuit more fitting to a man’s mind. It was appropriate for women to read scripture and sermons like those written by Fordyce and many other didactic and religious moralists but

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<sup>230</sup> See James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women, in Two Volumes*, (Originally published, London, 1766. Currently available in *ECCO*), VI, 147, for his approval of Richardson’s novels. This is a different edition than the previous citations.

books involving religious debate, or religious controversy were considered to be too dangerous and likely to challenge the faith of impressionable young ladies.<sup>231</sup>

Several American publications of the eighteenth century were equally adamant in their ideas about the reading habits of women. Editions of the *Virginia Gazette* contained pieces about women's reading habits, as well as the evils of novels of romance. In one entry, dated from March 28, 1771, the anonymous author of an editorial written "for the Perusal of our female Readers," asserted that "The reading of Romances is pernicious. I would have but very little Use made of them." Like Fordyce, this author believed that novels contained little instructional material, and furthermore, "They falsify the Understanding; because, being never founded upon Truth, and only on Illusions, they warm the Imagination, weaken the Modesty, disorder the Heart, and, if the young Readers are of delicate Feelings, hasten their Disposition, and precipitate them headlong into Errours." Instead, "one ought, as much as possible, to read solid Books, which adorn the Mind, and give Vigour to the Heart."<sup>232</sup>

A different editorial addressed another social fear raised by the too-frequent reading of novels, especially among young women of the lower sorts. "What Effect such graceless Raptures, and broken Periods, may produce on untutored Minds, let ten Thousand Boarding Schools witness," the writer of this piece, from June 11, 1772, lamented. "This Contagion is the more to be dreaded, as it daily spreads through all Ranks of People; and Miss, the Tailor's Daughter, talks now as similarly to her Confidant, Miss Polly Staytape, of Swains and Sentiments, as the accomplished Dames of genteel Life." Finally, the author revealed his true objection to novels: "If a Man of Sense has an inclination to choose a rational Woman, for his Wife, he reaches his grand Climacterick before he can find a fair One to trust himself with; so universal is the Corruption! These are the fatal Consequences of Novels!"<sup>233</sup> Books, therefore, and women's reading habits, were considered in both Scotland and Virginia to be a defining part of women's education.

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<sup>231</sup> For secondary analysis of this opinion, see, Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45.

<sup>232</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie & Dixon), March 28, 1771, 2 :2. Photocopies of the *Virginia Gazette* are available at CW.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1772, 1: 2.

Finally, works printed in both Britain and America into the first decades of the nineteenth century issued similar advice on what made for appropriate reading for young ladies. A piece printed in Philadelphia in 1802 offers advice regarding novels of manners, which were typically recommended due to their portrayal of virtuous courtship and the downfalls of seduction and coquetry.<sup>234</sup> In this example, written in the style of polite discussion between several ladies and gentlemen, one woman defends this new trend of novel by pointing out, “There are books of this description which deserves the highest commendation; and when we meet with characters struggling with magnanimity under complicated distress, we may be led to think that they are examples worthy of imitation.”[84-5]

Another participant in the discussion, while acknowledging that some novels could have merit, related this story: “A very sensible woman of my acquaintance once honestly confessed to me, that of all the books she had ever read, the novel of Sir Charles Grandison [sic] had done her most harm...she had perused it before she came into life, and that when she was introduced to the world, she expected to have found in some lover a character similar to that of Richardson's hero; that for some time she had been in a state of continual disappointment and mortification, which prevented her from accepting several offers which would have been advantageous and proper. These romantic notions did not leave her, till it was too late: ‘And I have now,’ she added, ‘the felicity of being an old-maid.’”[87-8]

This warning addressed the dangers of the notion that women could safely learn about the world around them from books. It was possible, particularly in matters of love and courtship, for women to have their expectations skewed by the standards they found in novels. It was believed that even novels of manners could go too far in creating ideal heroes who possessed no counterpart in reality. This demonstrates that novels were believed to be a powerful, if sometimes inaccurate, method of teaching women about life and love.

Another piece, written by a lady in *The Lady's Pocket Magazine*, published in London in 1827, extols the virtues of polite literature of the nineteenth century by stating, “Our female literature has now swollen to a large bulk. Of the whole mass of

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<sup>234</sup> *The Female Mentor: Or Selection Conversations. In Two Volumes. Vol I*, (Philadelphia: Printed by John Hoff, 1802), “Conversation VIII. On Novels.” Available at CW. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

publications by which the age has been instructed or amused, no contemptible portion has been furnished by the gentler sex. Nor have their effusions been wholly of a light or frivolous character, fitted only to obtain a temporary popularity, founded on caprice or bad taste. Many of them will bear comparisons with the best productions of the human intellect, at this or any period.”<sup>235</sup> Most importantly, in the opinion of this author, is the fact that women’s fiction has made learning more accessible to female readers. As she describes, “Learning has assumed a more popular garb, than she formerly wore, and is becoming more easy of access, more simple and familiar. She is no longer the tenant solely of universities and cloisters; she has laid aside her scholastic robes, and gone forth into the world, and is carrying instruction and solace to every hamlet and cottage. The writings of several distinguished females have had great influence in effecting this change.”[129]

### **Part I.III: Ideal Instruction?: Didactic Literature Debates Women’s Curriculum**

Aside from the advice offered on the informal teaching provided by reading, didactic moralists frequently gave their opinions on a more formalized curriculum for women’s instruction. This curriculum was often laid out in detail in conduct books, newspaper editorials and ladies’ magazines. Although the messages instilled about women’s formalized schooling were similar in Britain and America based on didactic material, in practice the trajectory of women’s educational movements varied between Virginia and Scotland as the nineteenth century progressed and this will be explored in the following chapter.

The education of genteel women in both Scotland and Virginia during the eighteenth-century was mostly ornamental, shaped by the standards of polite accomplishments, but also due to beliefs in women’s limited mental capacity. Curriculum was also gendered, with women being given instruction in subjects appropriate to their sex. Such a system, with its focus on dancing, music and other pleasing arts rather than on moral and scholastic teachings had many critics, including several authors of didactic literature like Hannah More and James

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<sup>235</sup>*The Ladies Pocket Magazine of Literature and Fashion*, (Published by Joseph Robins, London, & Dublin; & sold by James Robins & Co., 1827), No. IV. April, 1827, 128. Available at CW. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

Fordyce.<sup>236</sup> Fordyce in particular describes such instruction as being, “calculated to enflame the fancy, and flatter the passions.”[VI, 140]

Many eighteenth-century moralists demanded that women walk a fine line between scholarly aspirations, and frivolous ornamentation in their quest for knowledge. Fordyce sums up this balancing act by stating, “For my part, I could heartily wish to see the female world more accomplished than it is; but I do not wish to see it abound with metaphysicians, historians, speculative philosophers, or Learned Ladies of any kind. I should be afraid, lest the sex should lose in softness what they gained in force; and lest the pursuit of such elevation should interfere a little with the plain duties and humble virtues of life.”[VI, 102-3] As is indicated by this passage, it was thought possible, through too much education, to de-feminize women and make them unfit for their proper role in the domestic sphere.

Fordyce did not lay out a specific plan for women’s education. He believed in the power of good society in teaching impressionable young women, and the importance of mingling with individuals who set the standard of learning and behavior. In stressing that humility was crucial to any young lady who wished to be accomplished, and avoid the dreaded title of pedant, he nevertheless indicated the instructive role played by other experienced – but still moral – persons in society who should be looked to as examples. There was much women could learn from the discussion of others, and young women should be “willing to learn, instead of courting applause are ready to confer it, instead of proudly directing are content to quietly follow the current of discourse... Depend upon it, that the best breeding is not learnt by rambling from one assembly, and one diversion, to another; but by living among the best bred people, by cultivating a fund of goodness in the heart, and possessing the advantage of a well educated mind.”[VI, 152, 58]

Similar advice is also offered by Jonathan Swift, in his “Letter to a Young Lady Newly Married.” Swift did not think highly on women’s education in general, or on the capability of women to be educated. Instead, he advises women to be

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<sup>236</sup> For an analysis of Hannah More’s views on education, see Anne Stott, “Evangelicalism and Enlightenment: The Educational Agenda of Hannah More,” 41-56, for more on evangelicals and religion, see Mary Clare Martin, “Marketing Religious Identity: Female Educators, Methodist Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Childhood,” 57-76, both in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, with an introduction by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin, eds., (Surrey, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

guided by those of superior intellect in society. “You must invite persons of knowledge and understanding to an acquaintance with you, by whose conversation you may learn to correct your taste and judgment,” he urges, and as a result, “you will arrive in time to think rightly yourself, and to become a reasonable and agreeable companion.”[239] Mrs. Hester Chapone was also concerned with the influence of good society, and the example set by other women, regarding women’s education in her work, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773). Chapone not only encourages women to read history and geography, but also to question their readings to further stimulate their minds, and then to conduct discussions regarding their reading with female companions. Furthermore, she advises young girls to select an older female companion as a mentor to guide them in both their standards of behavior as well as in their pursuit of knowledge.<sup>237</sup>

Eighteenth-century moralists believed in the power of politeness, gentility, and civility to regulate society and improve the mind of the individual, and they also believed that this instruction was offered through social interaction as well as in the printed teachings of didactic texts.<sup>238</sup> The presence of many of these texts in the hands of readers not only in Scotland, but also in colonial and republican Virginia indicates both that these ideas were diffused and embraced across space and over the passage of time as well as a link between Scotland and Virginia with regards to moral instruction. With the progression of the nineteenth century into its middle decades, guidelines about women’s education became more specific, and the role of religion and religious teachings had an increasing impact on the motivations and objectives surrounding women’s instruction. Furthermore, changes were also seen in practice in Virginia. Despite initially copying the graces of the British elite, Virginians – like many other American states following the American Revolution – found themselves inevitably influenced by the ideals of the Revolution and the changing role of men and women in a new republic.

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<sup>237</sup> Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*, by Mrs. Chapone, (Originally published, 1773, this version published, London, 1793, currently available through *ECCO*), 183-9.

<sup>238</sup> For secondary analysis of how good society was supposed to shape the education of British children, see Peter Borsay, “Children, Adolescents and Fashionable Urban Society in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, Anja Muller, ed., (Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 53-62.

## Part II: Personal Writings from the Nineteenth Century on Women's Education

It was not only the published authors of didactic texts who wrote on the theories of women's education. With the progression of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, personal writings reveal that many individuals in Scotland and Virginia sought to elaborate on their personal views regarding the ideal standards of women's learning. It remained the commonly-held belief in many of these writings that women needed only enough education to be effective domestic managers, or that they should be educated in appropriately polite graces. Education was to be practical with regards to a woman's station, and those women who pursued further academic studies found themselves saddled with the title of "intellectual," and faced many of the same prejudices regarding their position as an educated woman as their counterparts several decades ago.

Writing at the end of the eighteenth century, for instance, Elizabeth Halkett, daughter of Elizabeth Fletcher, who was the youngest daughter of Lord Milton of the Fletcher of Saltoun family in Scotland, described the merits of the illustrious figures from her family's history. These writings were primarily limited to recording the efforts of men, although Halkett also included a few women in this memoir such as her aunts, the two oldest daughters of Lord Milton, Margaret and Mary. Although these women were known for their intellectual pursuits and correspondence with thinkers of the age, Elizabeth Halkett did not record those details in her family history.<sup>239</sup> Instead, she discussed their accomplishments, their polite graces and their moral character.<sup>240</sup> This indicates that it was not only men who believed that too much education was potentially damaging to a woman's reputation, as evidenced by the fact that Halkett recorded only the acceptable feminine graces of the era as the primary accomplishments of Margaret and Mary Fletcher.

She also described the academic pursuits of her mother, also called Elizabeth, who was the sister of Margaret and Mary. Elizabeth Fletcher, according to Halkett, was greatly respected, with "high Accomplishment supported by Acquisition in Science (allowing for her time of life) in respect of the latter she was equaled by few

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<sup>239</sup> For more on the education of Margaret and Mary Fletcher, see Katharine Glover, "The Female Mind." Their education will also be explored in the following chapter.

<sup>240</sup> E. Halkett, *Memoir of the Fletcher of Salton*, 95-6, 99-101, available at EURL, La. III, 364.

among the Ladies surpass'd by still fewer among the gentlemen.” As she also wrote, “with the genteelest and most delicate frame of Body this Lady possessed a strength of understanding, force of imagination & perspicuity of discernment, equaled by few of either sex, her Curiosity & [illegible] in philosophic researches her thirst for knowledge & Patience in the Investigation of truth excited the admiration of all her acquaintance.”<sup>241</sup> It is evident that Halkett valued the merits of education in any sex, and anticipated that her readers would do the same. Tellingly, however, she combined this praise of her mother’s intellect with the typical descriptions of the modest female. She also mentioned her mother’s genteel and delicate body, reinforcing the view that women were believed to be weaker than men in their physical forms, which was also reflective of their mental state. By such an observation, Halkett reinforced her mother’s femininity, in spite of her intellectual interests.

Halkett also wrote about the strength of her mother’s moral character, and emphasized that this attribute was more important than any of the others. As she described, “these mental accomplishments connected with all that is elegant & amiable mild gentle & modest in female characters attracted the attention of several ingenious gentlemen who have of late made a great figure in the literary world & with general Applause, when it is asserted that Drs Robertson Ferguson Smith Wilkie & John & David Humes [sic] owed their connections with the Duke of Argyle & Lord Milton & their introduction to fortune & fame to this Lady.” Elizabeth’s mental prowess, therefore, was enhanced by her other, feminine virtues and it was those attributes that drew the attention of many of the great thinkers of the day, as much as her intellectual merit. As Halkett also described, “But the virtues of [her mother’s] heart & Headiness of Conduct (without which all qualifications are useless) were still more amiable than the natural or acquired accomplishments of her understanding.”

Halkett also detailed her mother’s devotion to her husband, and stated that he was dearer to her than life.<sup>242</sup> In recording the significance of the achievements of her female relatives for posterity, Halkett reinforced the images that were deemed most important for women throughout the eighteenth century. She stressed that the

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 103-4.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, 104-5 (quote), 107-8.



intellectual ambitions of Elizabeth Fletcher never took precedence over her moral character, her social graces, or her devotion to her husband. Such was the dangerous path walked by intellectual women. It was possible for them to win some praise and acclaim, but only if they equally emphasized their traditional role as wives, mothers, and the moral centers of polite society.

Such views were not limited to Scotland or to the eighteenth century. Hannah Hope Vere, a Scot living in London, wrote of similar attitudes regarding women's intellect over fifty years later. She did not speak directly about her own education, as she was most likely in her mid-twenties when she composed her journal and therefore her formal instruction would have come to an end. That said, it is evident from her reading habits, style of writing, and ability to read and write in French that she had previously received a good education. Vere also attempted continue her learning, at least informally, through her reading practices. She described her reading of poetry, Scott's novels, Shakespeare, as well as religious works, such William Paley's *Evidence of Christianity* (1794), and many works on history such as Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (first volume, 1776) as well as instructional magazines such as the *Edinburgh Review* (1802). Hope Vere was well read, well educated, and intelligent, but she also saw firsthand the dangers faced by an intellectual woman.<sup>243</sup>

She described her acquaintance with a lady named Mrs. Grote, and recorded a brief time visiting with Mrs. Grote in which they engaged in political and intellectual discussions. Suddenly, Hope Vere "Received a letter from Mama (mysterious) requiring me to be in London to-morrow...Saw Mrs. Grote in bed to take leave she kindly asked me to return to her next week to which I fear Mama will not agree." As she explained, "Mama [is] not at all disposed to let me cultivate [the friendship] further and thus I fear I will end my acquaintance with those celebrated persons whose style and powerful minds have [illegible] across the quiet dull stream of fashionable life like meteors and nothing but the recolection [sic] of their intelectual [sic] brightness to remain. I almost wish I had not known them having so much to admire and found so little consistence of purpose." Hope Vere also heard other

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<sup>243</sup> Journal Kept by Hannah Hope Vere, Later Wife of Keith Stewart MacKenzie of Seaforth – contained within the Papers of the MacKenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth (Seaforth Papers). Available at the NRAS, GD46/15/286.

negative opinions of Mrs. Grote. “Saw Mr. Stevenson today,” she wrote, “he said talking of Mrs. Grote he thinks her amazing clever but wanting femininity.” Apparently, the negative opinions of the rest of society took effect, and Hannah Hope Vere dropped her intimacy with Mrs. Grote. An entry from 1842 revealed her new attitude towards her old friend. “Saw Mrs. Grote to day [sic] think her much more vulgar than ever,” she explained, “determined to eschew her company even with my great admiration for [her] talent.”<sup>244</sup>

Nevertheless, Hope Vere often acted as an educator within her own household towards the younger children of the family, reading to them from religious works but also helping her siblings with basic grammar and reading skills. She even debated the matter of women’s education publicly with a gentleman acquaintance. As she wrote on July 18, 1841, “Argued with Mr. Senior after dinner during our walk that the principal reason women do not excel or rather equal men in intellect is that we [are] being educated to please them.” She further reflected her thoughts on the topic by writing, ““The exception [expectation?] to attain equality with [the] male sex we feel would defeat what we are taught to consider our being’s end and aim!!!” Despite her distaste for what she considered “erroneous” mentality of “philosophers and freethinkers” of the previous century,<sup>245</sup> Hope Vere nevertheless shared the views of eighteenth-century intellectuals like Mary Wollstonecraft who argued that women were made intellectually inferior to men by their education, not by nature. Hannah Hope Vere in nineteenth-century London was exposed to the same views of Elizabeth Halkett at the end of the eighteenth century in Scotland regarding attitudes about the place of education in women’s lives. Furthermore, both Elizabeth Halkett and Hannah Hope Vere attempted to put into practice the teachings of didactic moralists by advocating that education for women should be practical rather than merely ornamental, while still preserving the most important aspect of womanhood: feminine morality.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., entries from July 18, 19, 1841. See also the entry from July 13, 1841. The final quote is from an undated entry, probably April or May, 1842.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., undated entry from April(?), 1844.

<sup>246</sup> Contemporary evidence of the ideal standards of educated women were presented in Hannah More didactic novels *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809). See the secondary analysis of Anne Stott, “The Educational Agenda of Hannah More.”

Education for Virginian women took a different trajectory to that of Scottish women with the progression of the nineteenth century, mainly due to attitudes regarding women's role in the new republic. It was believed that women must be educated to better serve the republic in the role of wives and mothers whose inherent, feminine morality would shape the virtue of their husbands and children and theirs was a Godly calling, and unique to the newly formed United States.<sup>247</sup> Those views represented an ideal, however; not necessarily the reality.

Independence from Britain did not mean that all connections were completely severed or that ideas were no longer shared. A large number of Scots had settled in Virginia in the eighteenth century and correspondence between the families separated by the Atlantic frequently continued in the years just after the American Revolution.<sup>248</sup> Also, personal documents reveal that after the Revolution, regional identities were beginning to emerge just as strongly as national ones. This was especially true in the South, but was even more heightened in the attitude of Virginians.

Many Americans shared the idea that they had now adopted radical social and political changes, but there was still a belief in Virginia that, "society was moving in an egalitarian direction, but not so fast that it should overturn gendered rules of conduct, or eliminate gendered spaces in the process. Europe would do as it wished; New England would do as it wished. But Virginia must remain Virginia, wherein women were understood to be the special agents of sentiment and affection."<sup>249</sup> This idea occasionally manifested itself in the attitude that romantic relations should not cross regional boundaries. In a letter from June 27, 1831, a man called C. F. Whiting wrote "what a pity more Southrons do not study divinity, and marry our Girls instead

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<sup>247</sup> For more literature on Republican Motherhood see, Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980); Ruth H. Bloch, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815," *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California; London, England: California University Press, 2003); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). For more information on how this attitude continued into the middle decades of the nineteenth century, see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 19.

<sup>248</sup> For evidence of exchange between Edinburgh and Virginia, see the Peyton Family Papers, particularly the correspondence between Elizabeth Gordon Scott and Thomas Gordon available at the VHS, Mss1P4686, and the Smith-Digges Papers, and the Spotswood Papers, available at CW, MS 31.7, and MS 48.2.

<sup>249</sup> Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets: Death and Desire at Monticello*, (New York: Basic Books, a Member of Perseus Books, 2005), 91.

of those blessed Yankees.” He expressed the view that women were impressed by religious men and that more Southern men should take an interest in religion in order to prevent losing their women to the Yankees. This attitude also indicated a belief that Southerners should only mix with other Southerners.<sup>250</sup>

As a result of such divisions, attitudes regarding women’s education in the early republic were not consistent. One example of the educational challenges faced by women comes from the unpublished memoir of Nancy Johns Turner Hall, who was raised in Virginia. Turner Hall wrote her memoirs in 1844, but was reflecting on Virginia life at the turn of the nineteenth century. As an adolescent, Turner Hall was desperate for more than the minimum levels of education she received as a young girl, but her father was both unwilling and unable to accommodate her. She wrote that her father believed it was best, when raising children, to “keep them under his own roof, under his own eye; and thus have them removed from the precepts & example of the wicked world around.”<sup>251</sup> She also described her earliest experiences of school. “From a child I had an innate thirst for knowledge, but I had few advantages for improving my mind.” She explained. “Schools we had none but the most indifferent of the old field class. They were generally taught by strangers who came along and offered their services cheap. This last seemed the best recommendation to most of our neighbors, who tho’ they were not satisfied for their children to grow up in complete ignorance; were nevertheless well pleased with almost any kind of school, if it only could be got at a low price.” [T, 2]

Because of her father’s limited means, it was only Turner Hall’s brothers who received a liberal education. “My father felt himself quite unable to educate all his children liberally and besides in those days, where I lived reading, writing and a very little Arithmetic, were thought by most people, quite sufficient for girls,” she recollected. She was told that anything more than the education she had already received was “of no use to women!” “Thanks to a merciful Providence, & to wiser

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<sup>250</sup> Letter from C. F. Whiting at Morven, Fairfax County, Virginia, to Mrs. Mary B. Little, at Millwood, Frederick County, Virginia, June 27, 1831, available in the Blair, Banister, Braxton, Horner, and Whiting Papers, hereafter referred to as the Anne Blair Papers, available in photocopy at CW, PH 25. Original documents stored at Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

<sup>251</sup> Nancy Johns Turner Hall, *The Imaginist*, 1844, Transcript, 1. The document contained a typed transcript and an original document. The page number is in reference to the typed transcript, available at the VHS, Mss5:9H1405:1. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with O for original document and T for transcript.

men of this time,” she exalted, “those days of pitchy darkness are gone by! and the mind of the female is beginning to be considered as worthy of cultivation as that of the male.” [T, 9]

Hall then attempted to educate herself through private reading. In her ignorance, she exhausted the few intellectual books in her father’s library and began to read novels and other improper books. [T, 12-3] She later received an invitation from her older brother, a clergyman, to attend his newly founded academy for young ladies. Once again, her father refused. “My father soon declared himself unable to furnish me with an outfit for such an undertaking,” she wrote. “He declared moreover that he considered my proper place to be at home with my mother.” At this stage, her mother interceded on her behalf (and Turner Hall related that her mother almost never spoke in disagreement with her father), but he was still unmoved. As Turner Hall, retrospectively resigned to his decision explained, “He loved to have his daughters about him. He considered them comparatively safe under his own roof; and with their mother, of whose judgment, prudence, and every feminine virtue he had an exalted idea...with such an example before us as that of my estimable mother how, humanly speaking, could we but do well? How could we but be contented and happy!” [T, 12-4]

Furthermore, as she described, “His sons he thought, must be educated for public life - but his daughters, making a virtue of necessity; his wishes and expectation in regard to them, had long been limited to the sphere of domestic life; which he thought might be usefully & honourably filled without any extraordinary mental attainments. To see us fill what he thought our proper stations as well as our mothers & grandmothers had done before us, was the height of his present ambition...Once or twice indeed, I heard him express a wish to depart from this good old way, in my casement by trying to give me a good education, but...that wish perished almost as soon as it was born.” Despite her disappointment in this regard, Turner Hall came to believe that she had been vain in her youth to believe she was entitled to such an education. She explained that she had been so praised by her teachers as a young child that she thought there was something exceptional about her intellect that must be nurtured. Even in her defense of education for women, Turner Hall was nevertheless shaped by the view that the ideal woman was a modest

woman, and to believe she was entitled to any more education than she had already been given was the height of immodesty. [T, 14-5]

Turner Hall's memoir reflects various mentalities about women's acceptable public and private roles in the early American republic. Her struggle for education indicates that some individuals in Virginia were not so convinced of the need for increased educational opportunities for women, even for the good of the republic. Although there were an increasing number of schools for Turner Hall to attend, suggesting some social acceptance of enhanced education for women, the attitude of her father reflected that the patriotic call of duty could not erase older, engrained mentalities that women did not need formal instruction for their lives as wives and mothers. Eventually, Turner Hall did go to her brother's school and continued for years in the pursuit of academic study. This decision was made only after she sank into a deep depression and fell into misery and folly, which was fueled – according to Turner Hall – by her attempts to self-educate through novels and other fictional works with questionable morals.<sup>252</sup>

These writings demonstrate, however, that the presence of female academies throughout the American South in the nineteenth century became more common and more women were given the opportunity to pursue educational study. This trend, as well as its practical applications regarding women's education will be explored in the following chapter. The theory behind this advance, however, was believed to have been primarily driven by the new republic's fixation with the virtue of its women, and the importance of a rational and thinking citizenry, culminating in the theory of Republican Motherhood.<sup>253</sup> In the early days of the American republic, it was believed that women were responsible for the success of the new government through the moral example they provided to their children. It was essential, in a republic, for its citizens to be virtuous, and it was the role of the mother to instill virtue in her children and, through them, the republic's future citizens. As a result, a woman's domestic responsibilities became political. To neglect the home and hearth was not only to neglect her individual children and responsibilities, but such a woman was also failing in her duty to the new republic. Furthermore, these new republican mothers must be educated in order to adequately raise and educate the

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<sup>252</sup> See Chapter V of this thesis for an analysis of Nancy Turner Hall's marriage and divorce.

<sup>253</sup> Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 271-2.

children (presumably male children) who would become the republic's future citizens.

In describing the education of the young girls in the Randolph family in Virginia, of which conduct book author Virginia Cary was a part, by their Scottish tutor just after the American Revolution, historian Cynthia Kierner asserts that they were primarily given ornamental instruction – similar to that seen in Scotland and England at the same time. Furthermore, she uses a quote from their brother to argue that the motivations for this education were not political. As he wrote, “I shall never be contented until they are absolutely and not relatively accomplished...the latter will insure their pleasing far the greater part of the other sex.”<sup>254</sup> Kierner concludes that this education was not driven by any other aim than to make the young ladies of the Randolph family pleasing to men and society, and asserts that the Randolphs were not motivated by the ideals of Republican Motherhood or promoting civic responsibility. While an ornamental education was indeed not conducive to the aims of promoting virtue, and it is evident from the experience of women like Nancy Johns Turner Hall that not every family was motivated to educate their daughters out of civic duty, it must not be assumed that Republican Motherhood was not still mostly designed for the benefit of the republic's men rather than its women. Women were educated to make men and boys better citizens through their moral example and for the good of the new government, not necessarily for their benefit or to prepare them to be citizens themselves.

Although the motivations for this new interest in women's education were propelled by nearly every motive except the desire for women's intrinsic, intellectual improvement, and the curriculum of some of these schools was sometimes still questionable at best,<sup>255</sup> there was an increase in opportunities for young, Southern women to pursue an education. It is also in this respect that the experiences of genteel young women in the Virginia took a deviation from the lives of their counterparts in Scotland. The Revolution, admittedly to varying degrees,

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<sup>254</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, “‘The Dark and Dense Cloud Perpetually Lowering over Us’: Gender and the Decline of Gentry in Postrevolutionary Virginia,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no 2 (Summer, 2000): 189-90.

<sup>255</sup> See Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 68, 71, for the remaining limits on education for Southern women leading up to the American Civil War, and the motivations for women's instruction.

nevertheless resulted in an unprecedented attention to women's instruction.<sup>256</sup> Although the eighteenth century saw many similarities in instructional trends between Scotland and Virginia, and a desire to emulate British subjects and teachings practices in Virginia, the experience of Virginia women in the nineteenth century was distinct from the experience of women in Scotland. These discrepancies will be analyzed in the following chapter.

### **Part III: The Influence of Religion: Combining Politeness, Enlightenment and Evangelical Thought**

With the turn of the nineteenth century, many works of didactic literature decried the purely fashionable systems of formal education to which women were still mostly subjected, but not all. The author of *The Mirror of the Graces*, an 1811 British publication also printed in New York in 1815 which strove to instill European, primarily British, modes of fashion and gentility, is unapologetic in her desire to see young women acquire graceful accomplishments. While this work reinforces that, alongside external talents, the morality and character of a young woman must be cultivated as well, the author also asserts that to deny that such graces could be beneficial in a woman's life was to put young women at a disadvantage. As she writes, "It is surely more reasonable to direct the youthful mind to that medium between negligence and nicety which will preserve the person in health and elegance, than, by leaving a young woman ignorant of the real and supposed advantages of these graces." Otherwise, she warns, young ladies are, "liable to learn the truth in the worst way from strangers who will either insult her aggravated deformity, or teach her to set off her before obscured charms with, perhaps, meretricious assistance."<sup>257</sup>

This work made an impact on one American reader, though perhaps not in the way the author intended. While several inscriptions on the book's inside cover indicate that it was kept in the family over several generations and into the twentieth century, one reader went so far as to inscribe the lessons she learned from this

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<sup>256</sup> Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), see specifically Chapter VII.

<sup>257</sup> *The Mirror of the Graces; or, The English Lady's Costume...With Useful Advice on Female Accomplishments, Politeness and Manners...* By a Lady of Distinction, (Originally published in London, 1811. This edition published in New York: Published by I. Riley. No. 4, City-Hotel, 1815), 6. Available at CW.



volume and how it impacted her life. “While other females tread the giddy rounds of what mistaken mortals pleasure style, may I, restrained by virtues decent bounds, In useful arts my happy hours beguile,” she wrote, in an undated entry. “And oft may I peruse the sacred page there learn the dire effect of sin and pride. Be that my joy in youth, my stay in Age, and may its precepts all my footsteps guide. Thou God seest me.”

As this inscription indicates, works such as this one were taken seriously in providing instruction for young women, though not always by means of a *good* example. It is possible that this reader, who was clearly religiously inclined based on her inscription, found this book shallow, and lacking in any true lessons for improvement and instruction. With the rise of religious evangelicalism, the standards for what was considered polite, genteel behavior began to change. Although politeness had always gone hand-in-hand with inner morality and virtue, nineteenth-century readers began to look down upon polite instruction, associating it with false values, vanity, and pride. Although didactic literature, especially in America, did not disappear entirely, it did change considerably in its tone by the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

A protest against the frivolous types of education thought to be offered to most women was presented in the *Lady's Pocket Magazine*, originally printed in London in 1827. While previous didactic pieces dismissed an ornamental education as useless, or unnecessary, nineteenth-century advice manuals warned that there were dire consequences of such instruction: the risk to a woman's very soul. In an essay entitled, “The Victim of Fashion, A Tale of Truth,” the author recorded in serial form how her education focused only on acquiring fashionable skills and gaining applause rather than on moral teachings. “The child of fashionable parents, I was destined, from my birth, to move in no better sphere than that of fashionable routine,” she explains. “Preparations for this scene of action commenced, I may say, as soon as I escaped from the nurses arms - as soon as I could be dressed out to look pretty enough...Of my mother I had seen so little, that I scarcely knew her better than the rest of the company who surrounded us.” [No. IV, 122]

This piece goes on to criticize formal institutions of learning that instilled such immoral education in women. “I was now taken to school, which laid the

ground-work of my follies and miseries. Though I certainly made a rapid advance in accomplishments, it was far from being so in religion and in virtue.” The author regrets that she was taught only to develop her external attributes, and display her accomplishments. She was never encouraged to concern herself with her inner character, nor was she given any instruction in morality or, most importantly, in religion.

This, she believes, was the greatest danger of all. “In *our* education, surely the heart ought to be made the very first object; for what is woman without it?” She demands. “Divest her of tenderness and pity, and the true and natural touches of spirit, and what an icy, affected, and fashionable creature - what a piece of frostwork she becomes!” As she asks, “Where indeed, are petty vices more common than in ill-regulated schools? I almost wonder, when I look back on the daily temptations and trials to which I was daily exposed, in the examples which were constantly before my eyes, that at so early an age I was not irretrievably ruined.”[123] The rest of this piece, told in detail over several editions of the magazine, describes how her faulty education led her to develop immoral values, and with such a character, she was surrounded only by other false, vicious individuals. At the story’s end, she was left unhappy and alone. All of this, she instructs the reader, was due to a misguided education.

Although the piece is not overtly religious in its tone, it can be inferred from the focus on the state of the woman’s soul that the author meant to emphasize the importance of a spiritual morality, rather than a moral code based solely on the rules of politeness, which came to be viewed as false and superficial.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, this piece, although it was never acknowledged in the magazine, was possibly fictional, written and published with the aim of presenting a lesson about women’s education and the importance of morality – specifically religious morality. This then, would have continued the nineteenth-century trend in didactic literature in both Britain and America of publishing moral pieces in entertaining, fictional form. Although Richardson was considered one of the first authors to do this, with *Pamela* in 1740, the work was originally marketed as a secret history, rather than a piece of fiction.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> This attitude will be explored in Chapter IV.

<sup>259</sup> Kevin J. Hayes, *A Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), see specifically Chapter 5, “Facts and Fictions.”

Later, with the progression of the nineteenth century, it became common for fictional pieces to present moral examples for young female readers that were increasingly religious in tone. Many of these texts were written by women, and as a result, they had a great deal to say about the importance of women's education and how religion and morality could be reinforced, or neglected, by that education. A uniquely Scottish example of this type of didactic text is Susan's Ferrier's novel *Marriage*, published in 1818. Aside from Ferrier's views on women's education, she was also swept up in the Scottish evangelical movements of the nineteenth century. Her work was a blend of the polite civility and morality of the eighteenth century inspired at least partly by the Scottish Enlightenment, combined with the religious influences of the nineteenth century.<sup>260</sup>

The plot of *Marriage* revolves around on a young woman's instruction, and explores the positive and negative impacts of education – or lack thereof – for several other female characters in London, Edinburgh and the Highlands. Regarding the minor characters, Ferrier uses uneducated females, usually spinsters, to show the results of neglecting the education of women. It is also this aspect of the work that is distinctly shaped around Scottish culture and Scottish attitudes. The unmarried aunts and sisters of Henry Douglas, Mary and Adelaide's estranged father, have never had the opportunity of cultivating their minds. To learn about morality and manners, they look to eighteenth-century conduct books, such as those written by the Reverend James Fordyce. [256] These works, by this point in the nineteenth century, were considered out of fashion, and the women are portrayed as ridiculous for looking to outdated codes of morality for instruction. Nevertheless, these characters are also depicted as good-natured, well-meaning and are usually sympathetic. It is suggested that they do not deserve all responsibility for their ignorance. Ferrier uses a speech by Scottish nobleman Lord Glenfern to explain typical attitudes towards women's education in Scotland. As he remarks, "If a woman can nurse her bairns, make' their claes, and manage her hoose, what mair need she do?"[90-1]

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<sup>260</sup> For more information, see Nelson S. Bushnell, "Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* as Novel of Manners," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 5 (July, 1967- April, 1968): 216-228; Ian Campbell, "The Novels of Susan Ferrier," *Susan Ferrier, 1782-1854*, (Published for the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh: Bucleuch Printers, Ltd., 1982), 9-16.

Also in this work, Ferrier explains the frivolous and morally lax character of Lady Juliana, the heroine's mother, as a result of insufficient cultivation of her intellect or her morality. "Educated for the sole purpose of forming a brilliant establishment, of catching the eye, and captivating the senses, the cultivation of her mind or the correction of her temper had formed no part of the system by which that aim was to be accomplished."<sup>261</sup> While Lady Juliana is a despicable character and responsible for much of her fate – she is certainly not as forgivable as the spinster aunts and sisters – the blame still largely lies with Lady Juliana's father since "the Earl was too much engrossed by affairs of importance to pay much attention to anything so perfectly insignificant as the mind of his daughter."<sup>[6]</sup>

*Marriage* also traces the educational and moral journey of Lady Juliana's children. Mary, the heroine, is abandoned by her mother to be raised and educated by Mrs. Douglas, a woman whose intelligence is only surpassed by her Christian faith.<sup>262</sup> Ferrier was an advocate of strong, Christian teachings but she also believed that academic instruction was equally important in the development of a young girl's character and mind. In describing Mary's education, and what she also believed was the educational ideal, she stresses that "the fear of God was the only restraint imposed on her dawning intellect."<sup>[208]</sup>

Mary's twin sister Adelaide and her cousin Lady Emily receive a thorough but fashionable, and therefore insufficient, education under the direction of Lady Juliana. This consisted of supervision by fashionable governesses and lessons in pleasing arts and ornamentation, but neglected both girls with regards to intellectual stimulation or moral development. Adelaide, in contrast to her sister, "was as heartless and ambitious as she was beautiful and accomplished." The character of Lady Emily is more ambiguous. "The mind of Lady Emily Lindore had undergone exactly the same process in its formation as that of her cousin; yet in all things they differed...she had hitherto resisted the sophistry of her governesses, and the solecisms of her aunt. But her notions of right and wrong were too crude to

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<sup>261</sup> Susan Ferrier, *Marriage*, (First Published in 1818 by William Blackwood and John Murray. Reprinted with an introduction by James E. M. Irvine in Bampton, Oxfordshire: Three Rivers Books, Ltd., 1984), 5. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text, and page numbers refer to the 1984 edition.

<sup>262</sup> For more on the character of Mrs. Douglas and her motivations for Mary's education, see Nancy L. Paxton, "Subversive Feminism: A Reassessment of Susan Ferrier's *Marriage*," *Women and Literature* 4, no 1 (Spring, 1976): 18-29.

influence the general tenor of her life, or operate as restraint upon a naturally high spirit, and impetuous temper.” Furthermore, “Not all the united efforts of her preceptresses...[could]...restrain her from saying what she thought, and doing what she pleased.” [243]

Lady Emily is a highly intelligent young woman and Ferrier offers one of her many critiques of fashionable education by having Lady Emily state, “Oh! The insipidity of a mere Miss! A soft simpering thing with pink cheeks, and pretty hair, and fashionable clothes; - *sans* eyes for anything but lovers – *sans* ears for anything but flattery – *sans* taste for anything but balls – *sans* brains for anything at all!”[376-7] Despite her intelligence, Lady Emily is morally lacking. She is indicative of Ferrier’s disapproval for certain trends in education that had been inspired by Enlightenment codes of rationality. Lady Emily has shaped her values based on her sympathy, reason and intellect and as a result she is not so morally devoid as Lady Juliana or Adelaide, but she has neglected Christian teachings and, as Ferrier indicates, her character suffers as a result.

This point of view represents one of the major differences of opinion between Scottish Enlightenment thinkers and the church. Scottish philosophers such as Francis Hutcheson and William Robertson were Moderate members of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, but they also believed that a civic moral code could be based on principles of education, sympathy, rational thought – not necessarily on religion.<sup>263</sup> Ferrier, as an evangelical Christian, rejects these ideas through the character of Lady Emily and the fate that she meets. Lady Emily must accept that the man she loves will always love her cousin Mary, whom he has come to admire due to her Christian spirit. [529] Through the example of both Lady Emily and Mary, Ferrier meant for readers to see that young men and women must have religious as well as intellectual instruction, and that even the most thorough liberal arts curriculum was not enough.

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<sup>263</sup> Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2001), 117; John Dwyer, “Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists: Sympathetic Relations in Eighteenth-Century Scotland,” *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher, eds., (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1993), 96-118. For more on Christianity and education, see Dominique Julia, “Christian Education,” *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815*, Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 147-65.

Through an analysis of the writings of Susan Ferrier, it is evident that many of the didactic messages presented in Scotland came to be shaped by evangelical morality, but how does this compare to the experience of women in Virginia? In an American example of religious evangelicalism in a didactic magazine, printed in 1845, women's education was still revealed to be of great concern. This monthly periodical contained several pieces on the importance of women's education, and gave detailed instruction on the ideal curriculum. In an essay entitled, "A Plan of Education, Social Reform, and Juvenile Associations," the author reveals her belief that an education based on Christian principles is the only way to instill social reform. She believes that educational institutions spend too much time on the teaching of general facts and rote memorization, while "much less than their proportion is devoted to perfecting of the reasoning powers, the acquirement of wisdom, and the formation of sound principles of morality." She continues, "permit me to observe, that at the close of a classical and mathematical education, when the habits (and often vicious ones) are confirmed, and, may be, the opinions biased by the private perusal of Hume's essays, the student is directed to Paley, or to some other author on ethics. This seems too much like ending where we should begin."<sup>264</sup>

Specifically of women's education, the author states, "An opinion is current, that the only difference between the minds of males and those of females is produced by education. This error, it is possible, originates from false ideas of gallantry. I say *false* idea of gallantry; for however we may admit an equality in *degree*, we cannot but perceive a difference in *quality* and *character* that requires a different mode of treatment. It is not necessary to make flowered and painted dolls of our daughters; but it is as obvious in mind as in body, that beauty and delicacy belong to the one - strength and energy to the other." This author also called for the education of women as a part of the moral reformation of society, and viewed a wider implementation of schooling for children of both sexes as a solution to the problem of gangs of children roving the streets of urban centers.[210] The potential remedy

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<sup>264</sup> "A Plan of Education, Social Reform, and Juvenile Associations," *The Ladies Repository, and Gatherings of the West: A Monthly Periodical. Devoted to Literature and Religion*. Rev. E. Thomson, ed., Volume V, (Cincinnati: Published by L. Swormstedt and J. T. Mitchell, R. P. Thompson, Printer. 1845), 209, available at CW. All editions of the magazine for the year are bound together in a single volume. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

for urban crime and moral depravity was one of the most important points stressed by evangelicals in both Britain and the United States.<sup>265</sup>

Another essay from this same volume, “The True Dignity of the Female Character,” takes issue with the current trends in fashionable education. As the piece states, “In what does the true dignity of the female character consist? Shall we find it in what are called polite accomplishments? The passion for these, in the present day, seems to us to be largely inflated.”[162] Furthermore, “Beauty, wit, and genius, are bright and valuable gems, adding greatly to the charms of more substantial worth. Yet these, even, cannot compensate for its absence. They are often found *delusive* and *dangerous*, flattering their possessor into false notions of her personal consequence, only to feel the bitterness of disappointment, because more valuable attainments have thus been neglected.”[163]

The author of this piece advocates a plan of education for women that would render them most fit for their appropriate, domestic spheres. Like “A Plan of Education,” but more importantly, like Fordyce’s *Sermons* and its eighteenth-century counterparts, this piece argues not necessarily for the inequality of women, but asserts that there were certain strengths and weaknesses that must be considered in a feminine education, and that these discrepancies were part of a natural order that must be respected. “The proper dignity of woman consists not in aspiring to direct the affairs of state or to wield the reforms of the day,” the author asserts. “Ambition for this in the female sex is preposterous. Yet such ambition, we regret to say, in certain quarters in the exuberance of our democracy, has been developed.” The author states that he does not doubt the female mind’s ability for intellectual attainment, but argues that such instruction is at odds with their higher, and infinitely nobler, purpose.

Women, he believes, were the moral centers of society. Why should they aspire to emulate men in the realms of business and politics, when their own role in the domestic sphere was so much more important? As he writes, “Your quota of influence in promoting the great moral reforms of the day is indispensable, but not to *lead* and *guide* them. We would, by no means, intend any invidious comparison

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<sup>265</sup> See Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990).

between the native endowments of the sexes. It is freely accorded that woman possesses intellect equal to, and every way worthy of man's companionship. Yet she is fitted to a different sphere of activity in the great drama of human life.”[163-4] More importantly, he claims, “During the forming state of human character she has the empire. The molding of the youthful mind is all her own: the dignity, the grace, the piety, the ennobling sentiment she may transfer to it.”[193]

These views regarding women’s morality were not only a continuation of evangelical teachings; they were also a mid-nineteenth-century interpretation of Republican Motherhood. It is nearly impossible, however, to entirely divorce the ideology of Republican Motherhood from the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment, and the practical application of Enlightenment theory in ideas of polite sociability. Although the social implications of such ideas undoubtedly took a political stance in America in the years following the American Revolution, and a uniquely Christian slant with the evangelical movement, the notion of woman as the moral center of society had previously been advocated by Scottish philosophers like David Hume and William Robertson, and moralists such as James Fordyce.<sup>266</sup> As Fordyce explained, “The influence of the sexes is, no doubt, reciprocal; but I must ever be of opinion, that yours [woman’s] is the greatest. How often I have seen a company of men who were disposed to be riotous, checked all at once into decency by the accidental entrance of an amiable woman...there is nothing so beautiful as female excellence, nothing so delightful as female conversation in its best form!” [VI, 11]

## Conclusion

Women had to be appropriately educated to serve as the standard for a moral society, and the beliefs espoused in didactic literature and moral philosophy that women must be educated for the greater social good can be applied in general to the attitudes regarding women’s education in both Britain and America. Whether motivated by polite sensibility or religious evangelicalism, a woman’s education – according to didactic moralists but also in the view of many women writing about their own

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<sup>266</sup> Rosemarie Zagari, “Morals, Manners and the Republican Mother,” *American Quarterly* 44, no 2, (June, 1992): 192-215; Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).



education – was to be centered on the development of her internal, moral, character rather than on achieving intellectualism. Furthermore, regardless of the curriculum deemed appropriate for women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their general learning was not to be simply for their own, personal benefit. According to moralists, women had a higher purpose to serve as the civilizing companions for men, as the guardians of public virtue, or as reforming soldiers of God.<sup>267</sup> In Britain, education continued to focus on the ornamental instruction to fulfill a pleasing domestic role, while in America the ideology of Republican Motherhood led to a new examination of women's formal education in the newly formed United States.

This, however, was the ideal. Virginia, more so than Scotland, which at least possessed the urban centers of Edinburgh and Glasgow, was a cultural periphery to London, particularly in the eighteenth century. Virginia and Scotland were linked with regards to the standards of polite morality and learning, and they both strove to almost *over-emulate* the cultural core regarding manners, morality and gentility and an education largely focused in the arts of politeness. But, by the nineteenth-century, Virginia had become part of a republic. Standards for women's education were changing, and yet the role of politeness – and the role of didactic literature in teaching politeness – had not disappeared.

The letters, diaries and other personal writings of women across Virginia from the middle of the eighteenth into the nineteenth centuries, which will be explored in the following chapter, reveal that levels of education varied, and that each woman's individual experience was unique. Furthermore, the following chapter will explore the direct links between women's education in Virginia and Scotland, as well as how the standards of what constituted a polite education altered with the influence of the American Revolution and the theories of Republican Motherhood. Finally, the following chapter will trace the role of didactic literature in providing a means of self-instruction for women in Virginia with the progression of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>267</sup> See also the argument of Anya Jabour that Southern women believed that they had a special duty as Christians in *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 39-40.

#### IV. Chapter III: “It is of no use to women!”: The Changing Realities of Women’s Education in Scotland and Virginia in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

##### Introduction

It was possible for eighteenth and nineteenth-century schools and instructors in both Virginia and Scotland to reinforce the social status quo through the instruction they provided. Regarding social divisions, for instance, children who went to school on the charity of their social betters would always be aware of what they owed to the higher orders. Fears that too much education might cause the poorer masses to question their lot in life were addressed through a strict regulation of curriculum. Parish schools in Scotland, for instance, often instilled the notion that certain orders of people were destined to be laborers, and were to learn to content themselves at the lower end of the social spectrum. Such stratification was God’s will, the schools taught, it was the duty of the individual not only to accept, but to rejoice in God’s plan, and find dignity in fulfilling that plan.<sup>268</sup> Motivations for and the practice of women’s education was equally ambiguous. In all levels of instruction, from ornamental to scholastic, it could be argued that there were many other aims than the intrinsic improvement of women’s minds.

The previous chapter discussed the ways in which didactic moralists as well as female journalists and letter writers wrote about women’s education, regarding their intellectual capabilities, reading habits, and the ideal curriculum for women as well as how these ideas were interpreted relating to educational theory in both Scotland and Virginia. But what about the ways in which women wrote about the practical realities of their educational aspirations and progress? In presenting the argument that Scotland served as the origin of polite instruction and moral philosophy practiced and adapted in Virginia, how closely did women’s lives match up with standards of moralistic literature and educational theory in Virginia as compared to Scotland? In an attempt to address this question, this chapter will explore the realities of women’s educational opportunities in Edinburgh and

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<sup>268</sup> For this argument in the case of generally British, but specifically English, schools Lawrence Stone, “Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900.” *Past and Present* 42 (Feb, 1969): 69-139.

Williamsburg based on the personal writings of genteel ladies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>269</sup>

First, it will analyze the difficulties of financing education for girls, both rich and poor. Then, it will explore the educational experiences of elite young women in the eighteenth century as well as tracing the changing trajectories of women's instruction between Virginia and Scotland following the American Revolution and the emergence of the early American republic by exploring the role of private, female academies. This chapter will also investigate the role of didactic literature in the education of young women, not only by comparing the ideal standards of instruction laid out the previous chapter with the realities of women's lives, but also by exploring the ways in which didactic literature was used as a tool for the self-instruction of determined young women. It will question if the republican ideals of the American Revolution had any impact on women's education in the Southern states, an area which is typically neglected by historians of the early republic. Lastly, it will also determine if the experience of Virginian women regarding their education was different from their Scottish counterparts, or if ideas about women's learning, shaped by Enlightenment-inspired notions of politeness, morality and gentility, were more similar between Scotland and Virginia than has previously been acknowledged.

### **Part I: Money Matters: Financing the Education of Girls**

While the women whose lives are explored in this study on both sides of the Atlantic came from families wealthy enough to engage private tutors for their instruction, it is nevertheless useful to acknowledge the difficult and uneven trajectory of education in Scotland and Virginia for children, particularly girls, of lesser means. The history of and the motives for education in general have long been debated by both historians and educational theorists, but it is acknowledged that girl's schooling was

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<sup>269</sup> The quote in the title's chapter refers to Nancy Johns Turner Hall's memoir *The Imaginist*. The quote can be found on page 9 of the typed transcript of Turner Hall's document. The typed transcript, as well as the original document, is stored at the VHS, Mss5:9H1405:1. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with O for original document and T for transcript.

inferior to that received by boys throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and this was often the case in the education provided to rich and poor.<sup>270</sup>

In eighteenth-century Scotland, because the wealthy instructed their children privately, often at home, and those who had wealth but no title or property could nevertheless afford to send their sons and daughters to private academies, instruction for the poor was almost entirely a charitable institution. Parish schools were run by the churches, and consisted of a curriculum which included mainly religious and moral instruction and resulted in only basic literacy. Furthermore, in many of these schools Richard Allestree's religious and didactic work, *Whole Duty of Man* (1658), was used as a text book throughout several centuries, thus demonstrating an early link between conduct manuals and British (and later American) educational curriculum.<sup>271</sup>

In the nineteenth century, many schools still relied on the charitable donations and financial support of their patrons. Jane Innes of Stowe, a resident of Edinburgh, came into a great deal of money with the death of her brother in the 1830s. As a result, individuals and institutions that had previously looked to Jane's brother petitioned her in the hopes of continued monetary support. One such letter, written by John Cormack on April 7, 1832, stated "You may perhaps be aware that for a very long time there has been a school at Fountainhall. It has become very numerous...in February last, the scholars were upwards of 80 in number." He also informed her that the school was crowded, and the pupils lived and worked in such poorly ventilated, miserable conditions as to make them very ill. He would have

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<sup>270</sup> See, Michele Cohen, "'To think, to compare, to combine, to methodise': Girls' Education in Enlightenment Britain," *Women, Gender and the Enlightenment*, Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, eds., (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 224-42; E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," *American Quarterly* 40, no 1 Special Issue: Reading America (Mar 1988): 18-41. For secondary analysis on receptions to Enlightenment theory and the education of boys, see "John Locke's Images of Childhood: Early Eighteenth Century Responses to *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17, no 2 (Winter, 1983-1984): 139-55. For more on gendered childhoods, see Brigitte Glaser, "Gendered Childhoods: On the Discursive Formation of Young Females in the Eighteenth Century," *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, Anja Muller, ed., (Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 189-98.

<sup>271</sup> Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History*, (11 New Fetter Lane, London, EC4: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), 83-4.

asked her brother for help, he declared, by being so generous as to build a new school building on the family property.<sup>272</sup>

The wealthy in Scotland were often personally invested in the establishment and running of parish schools. Janet Drummond, a cousin and frequent correspondent of Jane Innes, addressed a problem of great social concern when she wrote, “the Ignorance of the lower orders is really deplorable.”<sup>273</sup> Not only could schools provide education for benevolent reasons, but they could also reinforce the social hierarchy and provide a means of social control. In urban centers, for instance, schools served the purpose of keeping potentially troublesome children off the street. It was therefore only logical for the wealthy to support the parish schools, argued educational theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as such an institution could be a benefit to society.<sup>274</sup>

This support from patrons continued throughout the nineteenth-century in Scotland. As Mary Mackenzie, of the powerful Stuart Mackenzie family, wrote concerning a girls school in Stornoway, on August 23, 1825, “I feel greatly obliged by your kind note of yesterday, submitting to my inspection and perusal the intended Plan of the Building to be erected for the instruction of Young Females of this Place: together with the General Heads of Government for the Institution. I beg leave to signify, only my approval of the whole, well knowing that the subject cannot be in better hands than your own for rendering the Establishment perfectly complete in all Parts. I shall without loss of time cause one hundred and Fifty sterling to be invested as you direct; and the like sum about the twentieth day of January next.”<sup>275</sup>

The following year, on March 8, 1826, the same school elicited a letter from Harriet Howell of Edinburgh to her “dear Miss Charlotte.” “As you are the only person who has furnished me, with a written communication conveying Mr. Stuart MacKenzie's wishes, & intentions, relative to the projected School at Lewis,” she wrote with a hint of exasperation, “I hope you will allow me the liberty & comfort of depending your writing to inform Mr. S. M., that after many enquiries I have

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<sup>272</sup> John Cormack to Jane Innes of Picardy Place, April 7, 1832, contained in the Innes of Stowe Papers, available at the NRAS, GD113/5/498.

<sup>273</sup> Letter from Janet Drummond to Marion and Jane Innes, Picardy Place, Ibid., GD113/5/93.

<sup>274</sup> See Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, Chapter V. See also Lawrence Stone, “Literacy and Education in England.”

<sup>275</sup> Letter of Mary Mackenzie concerning a girls’ school at Stornoway, The Papers of the Mackenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth, available at the NRAS, GD46/17/66.

succeeded, I trust delightfully, in securing a suitable person, for a school Mistress.” Harriet Howell described this new teacher, and thereby defined the acceptable standards relative to school mistresses, as “a young, but not girlish woman: of good family: a native of Argyle:(as I hear the Mistress ought to be).” In a circumstance unique to Scotland, it was mentioned that this new school mistress had enough of an “understanding Gaelic so as to prefer the Gaelic preaching here; but not able to read it: I have therefore, ventured to engage a Tutor for her, an hour a day, a guinea per month.”<sup>276</sup>

It is in the following sentences that the most important role of the patron family was revealed: “I have also persuaded her friends to place her [the school mistress] at Ms. Kepburne's School (my model institution) to attend daily for her improvement, for which her board, lodging, & washing 5/ per week is allowed by her friends.” Howell explained. “But as she is of humble expectations, & without personal property, I trust that if Mr & Mrs S. find in her the treasure which her amiable temper, & moral & religious worth, lead me to anticipate, they will, hereafter, be disposed to allow some part of the expence [sic] incurred: so that the young women's connections may not have too much exacted of them.” As Harriet Howell concluded, “I beg also to add, that I have the prospect of a gratuitous supply of elementary Gaelic books for the Lewis School...& I wish to know if Mr. Mackenzie will authorise me to order a set of the British & foreign lessons besides.” In the case of the girl's school at Stornoway, therefore, the Stuart Mackenzie family provided financial support for the school as an institution, but also for the training and living expenses of the school's intended mistress. Equally important, they also had a decisive voice regarding the curriculum taught in the schools.

It was the opinion of certain individuals in Scotland, furthermore, that although their own system of education – particularly for girls and for the poor – was less than ideal, it was still better than anything present in England. As Janet Drummond, travelling through Britain, wrote to her cousin, Jane Innes in Edinburgh on June 24, 1806, “while the higher and middling orders of the Clergy in England revel in Luxury the poor Curates are starving and half of their parishioners cannot even spell their own [name?].” She went on to assert that, “We are...better off in

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<sup>276</sup> Letter of Harriet Howell of Edinburgh, Ibid., GD46/17/71.

Scotland, thanks to our first reformers, for it was they who established Parish Schools.”<sup>277</sup>

There was no similar precedent for schooling of the poor in the American South – at least not on the same scale. Although the New England states established minimal levels of basic instruction for children, such a system was not mirrored in Virginia in the eighteenth century. The relative lack of religious infrastructure in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, partnered with slower urban development meant that the South historically lagged behind in the development of accessible education for women, and this has led many historians to take the view that the South did not possess an intellectual history during the period in question.<sup>278</sup> This discrepancy will be further explored later in the chapter through an examination of the personal writings of Virginian women.

Although *Virginia Gazettes* from Williamsburg and greater Virginia, dated from the 1750’s through the 1770’s, contained the advertisements of many school masters seeking pupils, as well as advertisements from townfolk seeking a suitable school master, it is apparent from the wording of these adverts that they were not necessarily similar to the free, parish schools in Britain. One entry, dated November 29, 1770, informed readers that “Patrick Thomas Duke, takes this method to acquaint

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<sup>277</sup> Letter from Janet Drummond to Jane and Marion Innes, Picardy Place, Innes of Stowe Papers. For more on the comparisons between Scottish and English schools, see Douglas Myers, “Scottish Schoolmasters in the Nineteenth Century: Professionalism and Politics,” in *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education 1800-1980*, specifically pages 76 and 81. See also, Rosemary O’Day, “Women and Education in Nineteenth-Century England,” *Women, Scholarship and Criticism: Gender and Knowledge c. 1790-1900*, Joan Bellamy, Anne Laurence, and Gill Perry, eds. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 93. O’Day asserts that regular educational opportunities were unavailable in England for all but the very wealthy into the 1830’s and 1840’s. See also Carol Percy, “Learning and Virtue: English Grammar and the Eighteenth-Century Girls’ School.” *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, with an introduction by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin, eds., (Surrey, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 77-98. For information specifically on general education in Scotland, see James Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education, Volume I: From the beginning to 1872*, (London: University of London Press, 1969).

<sup>278</sup> For more information on how the educational systems of the South lagged behind the North, see Linda K. Kerber, “‘Why Should Girls be Learn’d or Wise?’: The Unfinished Work of Mary Alice Baldwin,” *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997). See also Linda K. Kerber, Chapter VI, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, (Williamsburg, Virginia: The Institute of Early American History and Culture; Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980). For arguments with regards to women’s lack of intellectualism and patriarchy in the American South see, Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982). For counter-arguments, concerning the lack of historiography on women’s intellectualism in the South, see Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3, 202.

the public that he has got the FREE-SCHOOL, where he intends to teach ENGLISH, WRITING, and ACCOUNTS, in the best manner.” The instructor also promised that “Gentlemens [sic] children may be waited upon at their own houses,” suggesting that while some free schooling did exist, most education was nevertheless catered to serve the needs of genteel children and their families.<sup>279</sup>

More common were advertisements for governesses who could also provide minimal levels of instruction in reading, mathematics, and perhaps another skill, such as needle work.<sup>280</sup> Other advertisements mentioned specific academies, often for young ladies, whose curriculum included primarily ornamental instruction.<sup>281</sup> Such advertisements were clearly directed to genteel clientele with the means to acquire for their daughters a polite education.

By the nineteenth century, the number of academies for ladies increased in Virginia and the founders of these schools faced similar funding challenges to their counterparts in Scotland. Even if the schools catered to a wealthier clientele, they still found themselves restricted by the level of financial support that they could attract. Thomas Lewis Preston was given advice on how to solicit money from wealthy donors to assist in funding the Ann Smith School in Lexington, Virginia. In a letter dated January 6, 1808, Preston was informed that, “We shall verry [sic] much need about \$1000 more Subscribed to the Female Academy...if no other Way promises Success Suppose You candidly acknowledge Our Poverty & Solicit Subscriptions among the Wealthy at present Colected [sic] in Richmond get Some of the ladies to Join you and you will be Sure of Success.”<sup>282</sup>

A similar letter from January 13 of the same year acknowledged, “Your great success as a beggar induces me to trouble you with a line respecting the Ann Smith Academy, its present prospects are such as to induce a belief that the building contemplates must be on a pretty extensive scale, the number of young ladies now

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<sup>279</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Rind) November 29, 1770, 3:1. Photocopies are available at CW.

<sup>280</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Hunter), September 24, 1767, 1:3; *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), October 10, 1777, 2: 2.

<sup>281</sup> See an example in the *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon) May 16, 1771, Francis Russworm School, 3: 1.

<sup>282</sup> Letter from William Caruthers (Lexington) to Thomas Lewis Preston, January 6, 1808, Coker Family Papers, Thomas Lewis Preston Correspondence, Box 1, available at the VHS, Mss1 C6458d FA2.



amounts to 40 and several others are expected in a few days.”<sup>283</sup> As he was also informed, “The present amount of our subscription is about £800 [ \$? ] - this sum will fall considerably short of what would erect buildings to correspond with our prospects; and should there be any chance in Richmond for procuring assistance, I know you will avail yourself to it.” Preston was lastly directed, “It is very probable that a piano will be wanted in the Spring, & I think Col M.Dowell mentioned to me, that you would take the trouble to enquire whether it could be procured in Richmond or not.”

In both Scotland and Virginia, the standards of women’s education, not only in the parish schools, but in female academies and among private family tutors often lingered behind that of young men and boys. Girls’ education ended sooner than boys’ and they were often – at all social levels – given instruction which was believed to be most suited to their future roles as wives and mothers.<sup>284</sup> The elite, or at least genteel, women of Scotland and Virginia, however, were educated differently than their counterparts among the parish or urban poor. These women were taught skills ranging from practical, to the ornamental. They were taught reading, writing and basic sums, as well as needlework, music, dancing and drawing – all the components of a polite education.

## **Part II: The Educational Experience of the Wealthy in the Eighteenth Century**

The previous chapter explored the educational theories from both didactic texts and unpublished documents regarding polite, moral education for women while this chapter will compare the realities of women’s educational experiences in both Scotland and Virginia. With regards to the eighteenth century, it has been the argument of this thesis that Virginia’s elite were aspiring to a generally British, but specifically Scottish, education centered on the moral philosophy of politeness and civility. This section of the chapter will compare the educational experience of genteel women in Virginia to that of women in Scotland to examine to what extent similarities existed between the theory and practice of a polite education.

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<sup>283</sup> Letter from John Leyburn (Lexington) to Thomas Lewis Preston, January 13, 1808, Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, 122.

The documents of the Fletcher family of Scotland from the 1730s and 40s include bills from the various instructors employed to teach the Fletcher children, both male and female. Although these documents were recorded before the time period in question, the papers of the Fletcher of Saltoun family nevertheless shed some light on the curriculum that had been previously received by young women. A bill dated from 1739 requested payment for John Warden for ten and a half months of private instruction for two of the daughters of the Fletcher family. This bill also revealed that the Fletcher boys were educated at Mr. Warden's school, while their sisters received private education at home.<sup>285</sup> Another bill from 1738 from Mr. Thomas indicated that the girls received four months of instruction in French. In 1737 and in 1738, the girls received three months of instruction from Pierre LaMotte, the dancing master.<sup>286</sup> The boys, by comparison, did not receive ornamental training. In 1741, Lord Milton received a bill for books ordered on behalf of his son Francis. These books included works by Virgil and Julius Caesar, indicating that Francis received a classical education.<sup>287</sup> The Fletcher boys, therefore, received instruction in Latin and Greek, presumably to prepare them for University, while the girls were given instruction in the ornamental arts of dancing and French to prepare them for polite society.

The education of the boys and girls in the Fletcher family was not entirely separate. Over the years, the family made several payments to William Grainger, who provided general instruction to all the children in the family – although his bills did not elaborate on the subjects he taught, or which books he bought for the children's use. In 1738 and 1739, however, Grainger billed the family for providing their son Francis with a full year of instruction. The girls were given only six months.<sup>288</sup> The same circumstance was repeated in 1741. The daughters of Lord Milton of the Fletcher family were taught from February to July of 1741, while Milton's son Archbald was taught from September of 1740 to July of 1741.<sup>289</sup> This indicates that, in their general instruction, the girls of the Fletcher family received

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<sup>285</sup> Fletcher of Saltoun Papers, items relating to education, available at the NLS, MS 16866, f. 165.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., MS 16865 f. 164, MS 16865 f. 165.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., MS 16868 f. 177.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., MS 16866, f. 164. It must also be noted that this same bill states that their son Archbald received only three months of instruction, and no reason is given for this.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., MS 16868 f. 176.

approximately only half of the instruction given to at least one of their brothers. Typically, this might be assumed to be because a family had limited funds and it was deemed more important for what little money could be spared for education to be designated for the men in the family. The Fletchers were wealthy, however, and could have spent any amount on their daughters' education, and could afford to provide them with additional instruction in ornamental subjects. It can be concluded therefore, that the daughters of the Fletcher family were given the maximum levels of instruction that were thought necessary for women in the eighteenth century.

That said, Margaret and Mary Fletcher, the two eldest daughters of Lord Milton, were renowned for their intelligence as they matured into adulthood.<sup>290</sup> Despite what might appear to have been a limited early education, at least when compared to their brothers, these women travelled in intellectual circles, conversed with major Scottish Enlightenment figures, and impressed individuals of both sexes with their intellectual abilities. One particularly praising letter was addressed to Margaret [married name Hepburn] from William King, the Principal of St. Mary Hall at Oxford, from London, dated January 19, 1754. "You are so complete a mistress of the English language and seem so desirous of further improving yourself, that I cannot help repeating what I so often recommended to you. I mean, to acquire a competent skill in the Latin tongue," he wrote. "You have so many persons in your country, whom for a small stipend you might engage for this purpose, and you have such an aptitude to learn anything, by which your mind may be better formed, and so much application, that I am persuaded [sic], you will be able in six months to read with pleasure the works of the Roman poets, & to distinguish their beauties."<sup>291</sup>

Such a pursuit was incongruous with typical standards of women's curriculum, and King further acknowledged this point in his next statement. "Don't be diverted in this undertaking by the jeers and reproaches of silly women or ignorant men," he advised, "who look upon all accomplishments, which they cannot attain themselves, to be pedantry, and think it an impertinence in their neighbour,

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<sup>290</sup> Katharine Glover, "The Female Mind: Scottish Enlightenment Femininity and the World of Letters. A Case Study of the Women of the Fletcher of Saltoun Family in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 25, no 1 (2005): see pages 13-9 for an analysis of the influence of the Fletcher women on intellectual works by John Home and William Robertson.

<sup>291</sup> William King to Margaret Hepburn, January 19, 1754, London, Fletcher of Saltoun Papers, MS 16688 f. 78.

especially in a young Lady, to read Latin when perhaps they are not able to read English.” This letter is nevertheless reflective of the wider debates that would emerge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries concerning women’s education. Although King believed that the study of traditionally male subjects should not be banned to exceptional women, he warned that not all of society would look on these pursuits with a friendly eye. More importantly, however, this letter was reflective of the individualistic nature of women’s education in Scotland, and such a model can also be applied to Virginia. Despite the limited approach that was often taken towards the education of girls, women of means in Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were sometimes able to take their learning into their own hands.

In eighteenth-century Virginia, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler of a wealthy family, residing at various times in Williamsburg and Yorktown, wrote that her father was concerned with the education of his children, no less with that of his daughters. As she wrote in an undated letter to her sister Nancy, “Our poor Mother being too infirm to engage much in the care of her children it almost entirely devolved on my Father; and when my sister...and myself were barely 5&6 years old he went through the arduous task of teaching us...the moment he left his chamber in the morning which was at an early hour, we were called, and throughout the day every hour from business was devoted to us - Our copies as soon as we could write were written in the fairest hand by himself - short, but always containing a lesson of piety; or an elegant moral quotation; the Orthography and grammar entirely defective which we were to correct.”<sup>292</sup>

Her own experience shaped Ambler’s views on the education of children in general; furthermore, she also reflected that most of her instruction was informal – meaning that she did not adhere to a set curriculum. Instead, it appeared as though her father created instructional opportunities from daily events. As she described, “Our arithmetic commenced most pleasantly the first figures I well remember were encircled with flowers which had a happy effect in drawing our attention; amusing

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<sup>292</sup> Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Ann Fisher (“Nancy”), Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers, available at CW, DMS 54.5. The letter is undated but it is probably from the early decades of the nineteenth century, like most of the other letters Ambler was writing to her sister in this time. Because she is talking about their childhood, it is clearly reflective of eighteenth-century education practices.

books were carelessly left open on the writing table - letters from the children of his friends in Philadelphia were given us to answer and our education went on without...form.” She then reflected, that “had it been our lot to come into life a little later, much trouble might have been spared by the after publications of a Barbauld [sic]; an Edgeworth.” Both of these women were the authors of didactic works, and both were especially concerned with the education of women and of children.<sup>293</sup> Ambler’s statements reveal not only that she found it appropriate to rely on didactic literature in dictating the curriculum for children’s education, but that the publication of such pieces when she was younger would have made her own instruction more complete.

Other fathers were unconcerned with the education of their daughters, and Gilbert Innes of Scotland, in a more extreme case, apparently desired nothing more than to find a way to deal with his daughters as infrequently and indirectly as possible. Letters to Gilbert’s two sisters, Jane (Jean) and Marion, in Edinburgh in the late-eighteenth century reveal that he sent four young girls to live with them and be put under their care. As he wrote to Marion on May 31, 1793, “I regret the very troublesome task I have put on you & Jean about these children and it distresses me to write to you about them.”<sup>294</sup> Regarding their potential to learn and be useful, Innes admitted that, “the Girls are very far from being Clever but I am sure they will do everything you order them in word or writing.” These girls were, in fact, the illegitimate daughters of Gilbert Innes – thus explaining why he was so eager, perhaps, to remove them from public view and put them in the care of his sisters.<sup>295</sup>

In another letter from June 4, 1793, Innes spoke of his obligations to the children by stating, “I think it a Duty incumbent on me to take some charge of those Children, who from wanting many advantages that others have, appear to a disadvantage...they neither have good looks or cleverness to set them off.” Furthermore, as to their education, he stated that he wished for them to be cared for

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<sup>293</sup> Anna Barbauld wrote *Lessons for Children* (1778), *Evenings at Home* (1792-6), which were both pieces for children, while Maria Edgeworth wrote – among many other publications – *The Parent’s Assistant* (1796), *Practical Education* (1798), and *Early Lessons* (1801). She is also the author of several instructive novels, such as *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Belinda* (1801). See “Barbauld, Anna Letitia (1743–1825),” William McCarthy, and “Edgeworth, Maria (1768–1849),” W. J. McCormack in *ODNB*.

<sup>294</sup> Gilbert Innes to Marion Innes, May 31, 1793, in the Innes of Stowe Papers.

<sup>295</sup> See the biographical information contained in the Innes of Stowe Papers.

by a trusted servant or preferably by a gentlewoman, although he stated that he trusted his sisters' judgment in the matter and therefore felt no need – and undoubtedly, no desire – to be informed of their decisions concerning the care and education of his children. Finally, he wrote, “When Jean & you have a spare hour send for the...Girls & make them tell you what hours they have engaged at school & order them to any schools you think fit, they are certainly far back & by no means quick at any thing but are ready to do as they are bid - a younger One Ann is sharper than the two eldest but deaf in the extreme having been hurt at her birth.”<sup>296</sup> Although not directly comparable with Elizabeth Ambler given that these children were illegitimate, these examples nevertheless emphasize the ranging attitudes towards the instruction of girls in both Scotland and Virginia.

With regards to formal education which was offered in private schools and academies for genteel young ladies, some of the strongest examples for Virginian but also for British education come from the *Virginia Gazette*. The *Virginia Gazette*, printed weekly in Williamsburg, reflected the typical attitudes about education for genteel young women not only in eighteenth-century Virginian society, but also in British society as well. Until 1776, residents of Virginia – and of any American colony – would have considered themselves British subjects. In the years following independence, Virginia still received a large portion of its news from London, and several editorials and commentaries – on many subjects, including education – were copied directly from London newspapers.<sup>297</sup> More telling was the fact that there was a distinct preoccupation among the Virginia elites with imitating the aristocratic, British lifestyle, particularly the methods of education.<sup>298</sup>

The *Virginia Gazette* contained many advertisements for the opening of local schools, or academies, as well as the notices of private tutors searching for wealthy

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<sup>296</sup> Gilbert Innes to Marion and Jane Innes, June 4, 1793, Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> It is possible to see evidence of this in the format of *Virginia Gazettes* at CW. The first page of every edition is almost always news from London. More localized Virginia news comes in the later pages. See also Catherine Kerrison, “The Novel as Education: Learning to be Female in the Eighteenth-Century South.” *Journal of Southern History* Vol 69, no 3 (Aug 2003), 524, footnote 32, for her discussion of novel reading in eighteenth-century Virginia. She cites several pieces from the *Virginia Gazette*, but then explains how it was possible that these pieces were written by British authors. This trend, however, makes it clear that attitudes about many of these subjects were similar in both Britain and Virginia.

<sup>298</sup> See Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina, 1982), especially Chapters 2, 5, and 6.

pupils. In an entry dated from 1752, teacher John Walker declared that he had come to Virginia from London, emphasizing his connection to the epicenter of polite, fashionable culture, and described his plan “to instruct young Gentlemen in Reading, Writing, Arithmetick, the most material Branches of Classical Learning, and ancient and modern Geography and History.” More importantly, he promised to “exert his principal Endeavours to improve their Morals, in Proportion to their Progress in Learning, that no Parent may repent his Choice in trusting him with the Education of his Children.” The final sentence of the advertisement listed the services of Mrs. Walker, who “likewise, teaches young Ladies, all Kinds of Needle Work; makes Capuchins, Shades, Hats, and Bonnets; and will endeavour to give Satisfaction to those who shall honour her with their Custom.”<sup>299</sup> This was typical of the fashionable, primarily ornamental education that was received – at least formally – by the daughters of the wealthy in Virginia, but also in Britain. In a Scottish document from the late eighteenth century, a boarding school for girls advertised the fees for the various subjects offered at the school. Young ladies were taught music, drawing, dancing, French, English grammar and writing – curricula that was similar to ladies’ instruction in Virginia.<sup>300</sup>

Young girls were not given lessons necessarily geared to improve their minds or their reasoning capabilities, but instead to lubricate the worlds of polite and genteel society. French was one of many polite skills necessary not only in Scotland, but also in the developing cities of Virginia. On March 25, 1773, it was advertised that “BARTHOLOMEW LE PETIT Begs Leave to acquaint the Ladies and Gentlemen of Williamsburg that he has left Norfolk, and is now settled in this City; where he will continue to teach the FRENCH (that polite and agreeable Language so universally courted in the most genteel Companions) in its greatest Purity, attended with its Elegancies of Pronunciation, as well as the greatest Care taken to ground them in the Rudiments of Grammar.”<sup>301</sup> Young ladies also received instruction in needle work, and this was a skill which was both practical and ornamental. As one advertisement from February 20, 1773 claimed:

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<sup>299</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Hunter), November 17, 1752, 2: 2.

<sup>300</sup> Monmouth Boarding School List of Fees, 1794-1795 item 6, Papers of the Vans Agnew Family of Barnbarroch, Wigtownshire available at the NRAS, GD99/299/14. The location of this school is unspecified.

<sup>301</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie & Dixon), March 25, 1773, 3: 2.

E. Armston...continues the School at Point Pleasant, Norfolk Borough, where is a large and convenient House proper to accommodate young Ladies as Boarders; at which school is taught Petit Point in Flowers, Fruit, Landscapes, and Sculpture, Nuns Work, Embroidery in Silk, Gold, Silver, Pearls, or embossed, Shading of all Kinds, in the various Works in Vogue, Dresden Point Work, Lace Ditto, Catgut in different Modes, flourishing Muslin, after the newest Taste, and most elegant Pattern, Waxwork...Painting in Water Colours and Mezzotinto; also the Art of taking off Foliage, with several other Embellishments necessary for the Amusement of Persons of Fortune who have Taste...with a strict Attention to the Behaviour of those Ladies instructed to her Care. Reading will be her peculiar Care; Writing and Arithmetick will be taught by a Master properly qualified; and, if desired, will engage Proficients in Musick and Dancing.<sup>302</sup>

Another common advertisement related to ladies' education was for instruction in dancing. Dancing was not only a polite skill, but it was also a skill necessary for courtship. In both Scotland and Virginia, it was important for men and women to be able to dance, as this was one of the most popular interactions between the sexes, and allowed for romantic preferences to be developed. Frances Baylor Hill of Virginia in her 1797 diary, for instance, described several social situations where dancing was eagerly called for by the young people, while Elizabeth Grant in Scotland described herself as a young woman with "A head filled with nonsense, dress balls, beaux" in the early nineteenth century.<sup>303</sup> As one advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* from August 18, 1775 stated, "The subscriber begs leave to acquaint the ladies and gentlemen, that on Friday next, at Mr. Blovet Pasteur's, in this city, she intends opening a DANCING SCHOOL, and hopes to be favoured with the instruction of their daughters in that genteel accomplishment."<sup>304</sup>

Young women were also often educated in music, with the aim that this would render them pleasing and entertaining, particularly to the opposite sex. This

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<sup>302</sup> Found on 3:2 of this edition.

<sup>303</sup> Frances Baylor's Hill Virginia Diary of 1797, see entries on March 31, May 11, June 5, available at CW, M-1988. See Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady, Volumes One and Two*, with an introduction by Andrew Tod, ed., (First published 1898 by John Murray. First published Canongate Classics in 1988 by Canongate Publishing Ltd. This edition published in 1992 by Canongate Press: Edinburgh), VII, 3. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second. See also, J. A. Leo Lemay's introduction to Robert Bolling's courtship journal, *Robert Bolling Woos Anne Miller: Love and Courtship in Colonial Virginia, 1760*, (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1990), 2-3.

<sup>304</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie), August 18, 1775, 3: 2.



was a trend in the Southern states that continued throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>305</sup> As Sarah Frew Davidson, a plantation mistress in North Carolina, recorded in her journal in 1837, “It has become a fashion or custom for all who are able to bear the expense to learn musick [sic], regardless of ear or taste for it.”<sup>306</sup> This was also a valuable skill in Britain, and a means through which accomplished young ladies could impress in society. Hannah Hope Vere composed her own pieces of music, which she often played for those of her acquaintance. On July 12, 1841, she sang some of her “own music” for a companion, while on another occasion she wrote, “Colonel Mac said I did not sing distinctly and that my music was borrowed very civil to say so in my hearing.”<sup>307</sup> This comment suggests that in Britain as well as in the American South, music was a skill designed to render a woman pleasing to society as much as for her personal enjoyment and occupation.

If such advertisements did not distinguish between the instruction offered to young men and young women, the eighteenth-century curriculum was still so gendered that it was clear which subjects would be designated to each sex. “To the Publick. A CLERGYMAN of the Church of England, a sober young Man, with a good Character, would serve as a Minister to a Church in any of his Majesty's Plantations, upon Trial, on reasonable Terms,” described one listing from the *Virginia Gazette* on May 2, 1771. “He proposes to teach Ladies and Gentlemen the French, Latin, Greek and English Languages, Book-keeping by double Entry, Algebra, Geometry, Measuring, Surveying, Mechanicks, Fortification, Gunnery, Navigation, and the Use of Globes and Maps, after a natural, easy, and concise Method, without Burthen to the Memory.”<sup>308</sup>

While it is not directly stated, it can be assumed that young ladies would not have been instructed in mechanics or gunnery. At most, the females of this establishment would have been instructed in French and English, and perhaps the

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<sup>305</sup> Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle: From Accomplished Lady to Confederate Composer*, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press), 13.

<sup>306</sup> Private Journal of Sarah Frew Davidson, March 11, 1837, Box 1, Folder 9, Inventory of the Caldwell and Davidson Family Papers, available at UNCC.

<sup>307</sup> Journal Kept by Hannah Hope Vere, Later Wife of Keith Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth – contained within the Papers of the Mackenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth (Seaforth Papers). See the entries from July 12 and October 6, 1841, available at the NRAS, GD46/15/286.

<sup>308</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie & Dixon), May 2, 1771, 3: 2.

math subjects, though that would not have been a certainty.<sup>309</sup> The other subjects were in keeping with a gentleman's polite instruction, or for preparation in trade. It was certainly not deemed necessary to prepare a woman for trade in the eighteenth century, and a woman's polite education was different from that of men. Latin and Greek were not thought to be appropriate subjects for women, although, as evidenced by Margaret and Mary Fletcher, some intelligent and educated young women were nevertheless encouraged to study the classics.

More typical for those of means in both Scotland and Virginia, was an education that consisted of some instruction in academic subjects, combined with ornamental accomplishments. As one advertisement from Virginia, dated December 20, 1776 described, linking Virginian and British instruction, "Mrs. Brill (who for a considerable Time past, has lived in Colonel Lewis's Family, Gloucester County) purposes to open a Boarding School in Williamsburg for the Reception of young Ladies, on the same Plan of the English Schools, provided a sufficient Number of Scholars engage, to enable her for such an Undertaking...She will instruct them in Reading, Tambour and other Kinds of Needle Work...The best Masters will attend to teach Dancing and Writing. She will also teach the Guittar [sic]. Those who choose to learn any of those Accomplishments to pay for each separately."<sup>310</sup> While genteel Scottish and Virginian women might have received minimal instruction in reading and writing, the most important aspect of their education in the eighteenth century were the genteel graces that allowed them to participate in polite society.

### **Part III: Insights from the Academies: Comparing Formal Instruction in Nineteenth-Century Scotland and Virginia**

This chapter has thus far explored education for women in the eighteenth century, but what changes occurred with the turn of the new century following the influence

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<sup>309</sup> Personal documents reflect some discrepancies about teaching mathematics to women. Most received simple arithmetic, as was necessary to keep a house, but more in-depth instruction was not offered. Elizabeth Ambler, for instance, was instructed in arithmetic as a child, but on her husband's death in 1810 indicated that she had no idea of how to handle his finances or his estate. (See her letter to her sister Nancy, 1810, Elizabeth Ambler Papers). Since this advert does not specify, it is difficult to know whether girls would have received instruction in algebra and geometry or not. For more information on the gender divides in mathematical instruction in Britain, see Shelley Costa, "The Ladies' Diary: Gender, Mathematics, and Civil Society in Early-Eighteenth-Century England," *Osiris*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series 17, Science and Civil Society (2002): 49-73.

<sup>310</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, (Dixon and Hunter), December 20, 1776, page 4.

of the American Revolution and the expansion of evangelical religion? One of the ways that this change can be traced is through an examination of women's academies in Virginia during the early republican era and then comparing those institutions with the methods of instruction available to women in Scotland.<sup>311</sup> Evidence from the late eighteenth-century which reveals the types of education given to elite young women in Britain comes from the Gordon family papers. The young ladies of the family of the Duke of Gordon, a powerful Scottish Lord, spent much of their time in London. A series of bills from the years 1789 through 1793 reveals the expenditures of the ladies during their duration in London and the educational services for which they paid. Beginning in 1789 for instance, the family paid bills to the drawing master for more than thirty lessons throughout the course of the year.<sup>312</sup> Another bill from that same year requested payment for several unspecified lessons, but the bill also included tickets to a ball. It can be assumed therefore, that this bill was from the dancing master. The young ladies of the Gordon family also received other types of musical, graceful instruction, specifically taking lessons in singing and harpsichord in 1791 through 1793.<sup>313</sup>

It is evident that during this time at least two of the ladies attended formal academies. There were two bills for education and board from 1789, one extending from January to July and the other from February to August. The bills appear to be from the same institution and include lessons in music, dancing, singing, drawing, and painting as well as instruction in Italian. The only academic lessons were in writing, spelling and geography, and the text books purchased included grammar books, prayer books, fables, and "polite literature."<sup>314</sup> A similar theme in their formal instruction was included in a second volume of London bills dating from 1791-1792. Aside from lessons in music, art, and more than forty lessons with the riding master, there were also two more bills from a ladies' academy, dated 1791 and 1792 consisting of an almost identical curriculum of primarily ornamental and moral instruction.

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<sup>311</sup> For trends in British education for girls in the early nineteenth century, see Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, Chapter X.

<sup>312</sup> Gordon Family Papers, Accounts paid for by the Young Ladies, Papers of the Gordon Family, Dukes of Gordon, available at the NRAS, GD44/51/325/12.

<sup>313</sup> Gordon Family Papers, London bills for the Ladies, Papers of the Gordon Family, Dukes of Gordon, GD44/51/329/18.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

Equally important is the role of polite literature in the instruction of the ladies of the Gordon family. In a bill dated from February to June of 1791, a work entitled *Polite Preceptor* was included in a list of purchases from the academy, and in 1792 a bill from Thomas Hookham, bookseller, included author Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* and the poems of Anna Barbauld – both didactic authors.<sup>315</sup> These purchases reveal that the ladies of the Gordon family received primarily a polite, ornamental education. While it is certainly revealing that formal ladies' academies recognized and invested in the instructional power of conduct literature, it is equally noteworthy that in the years after the American Revolution, the British system of women's education was still primarily focused on minimal academic instruction and placed emphasis on the graceful arts.

Another piece of evidence for the education to be found in British ladies' academies comes from the writings of Margaret and Marion Trotter of Edinburgh to their cousins, Marion and Jane Innes, also in Edinburgh. As Marion Trotter informed Jane Innes in 1790, "We was more agreeably surprized [sic] the other day, with a visit of Miss Jacky Hunter, I dare say you recollect the Girl that stayd [sic] here for her education...I fear she is likewise a very silly weak girl - She told us after dinner, in the Drawing room, before the Gentlemen found us - that for as much as was bestowed, on her education, that...(her Husband) was dissatisfied [sic], with her ignorance, and that he had brought her to Edinburgh, to attend the Pastry School, and he would take it upon himself to instruct her in writing and the common rules of Arithmetic, himself."<sup>316</sup> From this piece of evidence, it can be inferred that Miss Hunter's husband found her education wanting, and from his desire to take over her education himself, it can also be deduced that he had little faith in any educational institution for women, save for that which offered instruction in baking.

Marion Trotter then elaborated regarding her views on the ideal education for women: "But in my humble opinion he will be obliged to instruct her in the necessary Accomplishments of sewing Washing, and Ironing with Key and house keeping besides. Such is the folly, the Stupidity the useless conduct, and example of

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Marion Trotter to Jane Innes, dated 1790 from Morton Hall, Innes of Stowe Papers, GD113/5/81b. See also, Stana Nenadic, "Experience and Expectations in the Transformation of the Highland Gentleman, 1680 to 1820," *Scottish Historical Review* 80, no 2 (Oct., 2001); 203, footnote 13 explains the significance of pastry cooking as a skill for accomplished ladies.

her Idiot Mother and her no less Anomalous Father.”<sup>317</sup> It was evident that Marion Trotter believed that the most important skills were domestic ones, and that it was the duty of the mother to convey such teachings to her daughter, and give her the skills which were most important in marriage. It can also be supposed that Trotter put little faith in the power of academies to successfully educate women, if she was of the view that their instruction should consist primarily of domestic skills learned in the home.

Reflecting on her childhood and adolescence in the early nineteenth century, Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus further indicated the questionable quality of ladies academies in Scotland. As a member of a wealthy Highland family, Grant was given private instruction by her governess or individual masters.[VI, 35, 56, 135, 157] Her father felt nothing but disdain for the education provided by formal schools for girls. Grant did attend a formal school run by a relation in Ramsgate in 1811 when she was approximately fourteen years old but, as she explained, “I was to be sent every day for so many hours, ostensibly to learn flower painting, and be kept up in French and singing; but in reality to take down a deal of conceit which unavoidably sprung up in the mind of a quick girl without means of fairly testing her abilities by an equal standard.” [VI, 185-6]

The following year, after Grant complained about the competency of her governess, her father responded, “A more correct knowledge of history, a more cultivated mind, would have been a great advantage certainly, but we could not expect every thing [sic], particularly from school educated young women.” [VI, 219] Finally, Jemima Blackburn of Edinburgh received some formal schooling in the house of a neighbor in the 1820’s, which consisted of French lessons and copying words from the dictionary to practice spelling. Although Blackburn was a talented painter of the Victorian era, her skills were encouraged through private instruction and the guidance of her mother rather than formal schooling.<sup>318</sup>

It can be concluded, therefore, that the education given to genteel Scottish women after the American Revolution and in the first decades of the nineteenth

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<sup>317</sup> Marion Trotter to Jane Innes, dated 1790 from Morton Hall, Innes of Stowe papers.

<sup>318</sup> Jemima Blackburn, *The Paintings and Memoirs of a Victorian Lady*, with an introduction by Robert Fairley, ed., (Canongate Publishing, Ltd.: Edinburgh, 1988), see the Introduction for Blackburn’s educational background.

century was still similar to that offered to them in the eighteenth century. The progress of women's education in America in general and in Virginia specifically, was different to that which occurred in England and Scotland. What made the American situation unique, as compared to the purely ornamental instruction offered in British institutions, were the changing attitudes towards the reform of women's educational curriculum by advocates like Benjamin Rush and Judith Sargent Murray in the decades following the Revolution. Although such changes appear to have happened more quickly in the Northern than in the Southern states, it was possible to see advances in women's education by the early nineteenth century.<sup>319</sup>

Moving outside of Virginia to examine the South in general, Susan Davis Nye Hutchinson opened her first school for girls in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1815. Throughout her teaching career, she opened another school in Georgia in 1822, in Salisbury, North Carolina in 1835 and in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1839.<sup>320</sup> At these schools, her pupils could learn – for \$12 per session – “Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic, Composition, and History.” For an additional payment, they could also study “Latin, French, and Spanish Languages, Drawing and Music, at the usual prices.” At this point in Hutchison's teaching career, she did not include any branches of science into her school's curriculum. By 1838, her schools offered instruction in “Botany, Algebra, Astronomy, Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Mental and Moral Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Logic.” The cost of this was \$15.50 per session, though for a lesser price of \$10.50, students could receive a simplified curriculum of “Reading, Spelling, Writing, Arithmetic, and Geography.” Extra classes included, “Latin and French, Drawing and Water Color Painting, Wax Work, Embroidery, Lamp Mat and Worsted Work, Music on Piano or Guitar,” at a cost of \$25 per session.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*; Chapter VII, Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, Chapter IX. This argument is also supported by Josephine Kamm in *Hope Deferred*, with her assertion that academic institutions for women in Britain remained mostly ornamental throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century and saw little push for reform until the latter half of the century. See Chapters X and XIII; Ellen Jordon, “‘Making Good Wives and Mothers?’ The Transformation of Middle-Class Girls' Education in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no 4 (Winter, 1991): 440, 452. See also the Introduction to Cynthia A. Kierner, ed., *The Contrast: Manners, Morals and Authority in the Early American Republic*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 9.

<sup>320</sup> Susan D. Nye Hutchinson Papers. Available at UNCC. This is a transcript, the original document is at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, see the transcript of advertisements for the curricula of Hutchison's schools.

Hutchison's schools consisted of minimal instruction in reading and writing available to poorer students, as well as a thorough liberal arts education for wealthier students and additional classes in the ornamental graces of polite society – which were also restricted to students of mainly wealthy families and many of the standards of polite accomplishments had not altered throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The curriculum, however, reflects only so much about what these schools actually achieved. There are no examples of her students' work, or comments from Hutchison herself on how thorough this education actually was.

Furthermore, Hutchison often remarked disparagingly on the few numbers of students that attended her schools. She wrote in her diary on May 1, 1831, that she had only eight pupils, though by May 6 she had thirteen. On October 15, 1831, she remarked that her Salisbury school had “ten or eleven” scholars and on October 29, although six more students arrived, she wrote, “I should have sixty.” Despite the sporadic attendance, Hutchison's teaching methods and her schools were well reviewed. A piece in *The Raleigh Star* from November 12, 1835, stated, “Mrs. Hutchison's qualifications as an Instructress, her zeal, her kindness to her pupils, her untiring diligence, her acquaintance with polite literature, and the Christian tendency and influence of her counsels and example, all conspire to mark her out as not unworthy of the continuance of the respectable patronage which she has already received.”<sup>322</sup>

Furthermore, she was also a respected member of the communities in which her academies were located, indicating that both her profession and her schools were valued by society at large. As she wrote, for instance, on December 19, 1837, “Mr. and Mrs. Morrison are very desirous that I should teach somewhere in the neighborhood of the College where I could have my own dear children educated while I educated theirs.”<sup>323</sup> On December 21 of that same year, she also recorded, “Mr. and Mrs. Hampton wish me to remove my school to Catawba Springs.” In other words, the services provided by Hutchison were desired by the people of these various towns in North Carolina and Georgia, and the establishment of schools for girls was encouraged.

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., see both Hutchison's transcribed journal, and a copy of the *Raleigh Star* Review, also contained in the documents.

<sup>323</sup> Mr. Morrison was the President of Davidson College, an elite private college in North Carolina.

There were similar schools for girls in Virginia as well, and report cards from the various institutions give some indication as to the curriculum as the nineteenth century progressed.<sup>324</sup> The Williamsburg Academy in 1852 offered young ladies instruction in Moral Philosophy, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, History, Composition, Algebra, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Spelling, Reading, Geography, Writing, French, German, Italian, Mythology, Latin, Music, Drawing, and something referred to only as “Industry.”<sup>325</sup> The student in question, Miss F. Hunt, had taken Arithmetic, English Grammar, Spelling, Reading, Geography, Writing, Mythology and Industry, receiving her highest scores in Reading and Writing, and her lowest score in Mythology. The report card suggests that the other subjects were offered to all students, and it is possible this student had already taken these other courses, or would take them some time in the near future.

Part of the reasons for the discrepancy between women’s academies in Scotland, or London, and Virginia, was the fact women’s education in Britain, specifically Scotland, had fewer educational reformers in the nineteenth century than in the early American republic. Although a few voices did cry out for a more intellectual curriculum for women, the majority of Scottish and English schools were still focused on ornamental accomplishments, and on practical domesticity. By contrast, women’s education in the early American republic was fueled by the fact that women were viewed to have a new significance in the preservation of the republic through the education of children, and their moral example as mothers. While women in the Victorian Era in Britain also found themselves responsible the moral center of the home and family, they were frequently denied an intensive education due to the belief that such moral skills were best learned at home, from their own mothers, and formal instruction was not needed.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> For more information on how report cards were perceived by pupils and their families, see Anya Jabour, *Scarlett’s Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 55-6.

<sup>325</sup> The Williamsburg Academy, Report Card of Miss F. Hunt, May, 1852, available at CW, MS 1929.4.

<sup>326</sup> For more on the progression of women’s education in the nineteenth century, see Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, (First Published in Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books. Printed and bound in Great Britain by Redwood Burn Limited, Trowbridge & Esher, 1980); Sophia Woodley, “‘Oh Miserable and Most Ruinous Measure’: The Debate between Private and Public Education in Britain, 1760-1800,” *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain*, 21-40. For the ways in which British women were educated for fulfill their domestic duties, see, Dana Harrington, “Gender, Commerce and the Transformation of Virtue in Eighteenth-Century Britain.”



One of the factors linking both Scottish and Virginian women was the realization of the necessity for self-instruction to supplement an education that was unavailable or insufficient. Sometimes, in the case of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, this took place later in the lives of these women. After a mostly ornamental education, Grant decided in the early 1820s when she was approximately in her mid-twenties to begin “a plan of earnest study,” mostly through her reading of history. [VII, 167] Although not implicitly stated, it can be inferred that Hannah Hope Vere underwent a similar program of self-directed study, as much of her journal was dedicated to her descriptions of reading of historical and religious texts. She maintained a regimented routine in her reading habits, making almost daily mention of what she read through the day or through the week, though she was past the age of formal schooling. Also, she seemed disappointed in herself on the days when she did not manage to read something of value. As she wrote on February 3, 1844, “Another day passed without reading!”<sup>327</sup> Other women used didactic texts as addendums to or replacements for education, and it is these circumstances that will be explored in the following section of the chapter.

#### **Part IV: Informal Instruction: The Use of Didactic Literature in Women’s Self-Education**

Because formal schools, especially in the Southern United States in the eighteenth century, remained relatively rare, many women received an education at home and this education could range from limited to thorough.<sup>328</sup> It was also not unheard of for women who had received minimal instruction to seek to continue their studies through self-education and using informal means. A common feature shared amongst Virginian women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was that many of them supplemented their education with their readings of didactic literature.<sup>329</sup>

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*Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no 3 (Summer, 2001): 33-52; Ellen Jordan, “‘Making Good Wives and Mothers’? The Transformation of Middle-Class Girls’ Education in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no 4 (Winter, 1991): 439-62.

<sup>327</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, February 3, 1844.

<sup>328</sup> Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, Chapter 9, Part I.

<sup>329</sup> For evidence of this in the South, see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 75. See also Anya Jabour, *Scarlett’s Sisters*, 99-101. For evidence of this in Britain, see Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Stephen Bygrave, *Uses of Education: Readings in Enlightenment in England*, (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 2009). For more information about using books in the

Although women mentioned their reading frequently in their journals and letters, the use of conduct books as a source of instruction was more commonly practiced in Virginia than in Scotland.

Aside from stating that her early education would have been easier had authors like Maria Edgeworth and Anna Barbauld already been published, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler also reflected on the ways in which she used other didactic pieces to supplement her learning.<sup>330</sup> “The preceptor,” she explained, referencing Robert Dodsley’s *The Preceptor: Containing a General Course in Education* (1748), “a large Volume differing from any other of the kind that I have ever seen, was imported by my father and was really a valuable work, Comprising lessons of various sorts, interspersed with pleasant stories, and some well selected poetry - thus did our dear father devote himself to us, and pursue every means in his power to give us instruction at a time when most girls in our Country were simply taught to read and write.” The reason for this, she wrote, was because, “a boarding school was nowhere in Virginia to be found,” in the mid-eighteenth century.

Other young girls also found didactic literature useful to be a tool in their methods of self-instruction. Elizabeth Lavalette Barksdale, writing her diary in 1836, recorded reading several didactic pieces throughout the year. She read pieces from “the Lady’s Book,” and several times mentioned reading from *The New York Mirror*.<sup>331</sup> Each of these works would have contained essays and advice for young ladies, helping them to direct their reading habits and cultivate polite tastes. An earlier reader was Frances Baylor Hill, writing her Virginia diary in 1797. Baylor Hill read Lady Montague’s *Turkish Letters* (1763), Addison and Steele’s *The Spectator* (1711-12), Catharine Macaulay’s *Letters on Education* (1790), Robert

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instruction of very young children, see, Heather Klenmann, “The Matter of Moral Education: Locke, Newbery, and the Didactic Book-Toy Hybrid,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no 2 (Winter, 2011): 223-44; M. O. Grenby, “Delightful Instruction? Assessing Children’s Use of Educational Books in the Long Eighteenth Century,” *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain*, 181-98.

<sup>330</sup> Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to her sister Nancy, undated, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers.

<sup>331</sup> Elizabeth Lavalette Barksdale Diary, 1836, entries from April 9, 10, 17, 28, May 6, and September 5, 1836, available at the VHS, Mss5:1B2475:1. *The New York Mirror* (1823-1842) refers possibly to a weekly publication that contained essays for ladies, and was specifically related to literature. *The Lady’s Book* is probably *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (1830-1878) which was another weekly literary publication for ladies edited by Sarah Josepha Hale. According to Catherine Clinton in *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*, A Revised Edition, (New York: Hill and Wang, first published in 1984, this edition published in 1999), 40, this was the most successful nineteenth-century American magazine for women.

Dodsley's *The Economy of Human Life* (1750), and John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774). She described Gregory's *Legacy* as, "a very good book."<sup>332</sup>

Despite the warnings of didactic moralists, Frances Baylor Hill also read and took instruction from novels. On October 25 she wrote, "Began a very clever novel – *Evelina* it was called," referring to Frances Burney's 1778 novel *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*. Despite being a humorous novel of sentiment, this work nevertheless demonstrates both proper and improper behaviors in society, and for her mastery of these skills, *Evelina* is rewarded with the love of a nobleman. By October 28, Baylor Hill had finished the first volume, and throughout November read the second and third volumes of this epistolary novel. Given Baylor Hill's history of reading primarily instructive, behavioral literature, it can be assumed that she read this particular novel with the hopes of entertainment, but also with the hope of social instruction.

Nancy Johns Turner Hall also recorded her reading of novels as a young girl, but with negative results. Following her father's repeated refusals to allow her to continue her formal education, Turner Hall began reading privately from the family library. Because she was left unsupervised in this reading – something she came to deem as a mistake on the part of her parents – she turned to novels. [T, 18] In her view, her reading habits also led to daydreaming, secrecy, and – indirectly, by affecting her morals – to a disastrous marriage when she was only fifteen years of age. [T, 18-9]<sup>333</sup> In her later recommendations to young ladies seeking to improve their minds through literature, she recommended scripture and the conduct books of Mrs. Hannah More. These works, she believed, unlike novels, would improve the mind as well as the morals.

While Hannah More was primarily writing and publishing her didactic works in Britain in the eighteenth century, the texts were still being read by a Virginia woman in the first decades of the nineteenth century and recommended to young readers by this same woman in the 1840s. Although it is possible to dismiss these recommendations based on the fact that it would be expected for an elderly or middle-aged lady to recommend books and moral codes from her childhood, the fact

<sup>332</sup> Frances Baylor Hill Diary, 1797. Quote in reference to Gregory was written on October 23, 1797.

<sup>333</sup> For information on Turner Hall's marriage, see Chapter V of this thesis.

that Susan Hutchison's schools were praised for their use of "polite literature" in Raleigh in 1835 suggests that these values were not necessarily outdated in the South at this time.

In Scotland, by comparison, an examination of women's private writings reveals less direct mention of didactic works. This is indicated in the letters of Janet Drummond of Edinburgh to her cousins Marion and Jane Innes. On October 19, 1770, Drummond related to her cousins that she was reading "Peruvian letters," a reference to *Letters from a Peruvian Woman*, a satirical French epistolary novel written in 1747 by Françoise de Graffigny. She also referenced Swift in a letter dated June 22, 1783, indicating a familiarity with his works as well.<sup>334</sup> Throughout the final decades of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, her reading consisted of books of poetry, the Scotch-Gaelic poems of Ossian (1760), and the *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). The only scholarly work mentioned in her letters was a book on British History, specifically on the history of the monarchy. Several of these books were recommended to her by Jane and Marion, suggesting that these women frequently shared books and exchanged opinions on their reading material. Unlike her American counterparts, Drummond never made any direct reference to didactic literature.<sup>335</sup>

Instead, these letters were full of *indirect* references to conduct books and morality pieces, supporting the idea that the cult of sociability and the teachings of polite gentility were not entirely ignored by Drummond and her cousins. In a letter dated August 20, 1805, Janet wrote, "My Dear Miss Jane's kind, moral, and witty Epistle gave great pleasure to all." The rest of the letter then went on to praise the virtues of works that could instill moral lessons and encourage individual improvement. This letter also presents the second reference to Jane Innes being a writer, and the fact that she occasionally shared her work with friends and relatives.<sup>336</sup> Her tendency to write moral and entertaining stories suggests that she must have been familiar with the prevailing conduct literature of the day. Indirect

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<sup>334</sup> Letters of Janet Drummond to Marion and Jane Innes, Innes of Stowe Papers, GD113/5/46.

<sup>335</sup> See Letters from September 15, 1783, June 9, 1804, August 26, 1784, and July 29, 1790, Ibid. Swift did write "Letter to a Young Lady," but it is not mentioned if Drummond read that particular work.

<sup>336</sup> The other references come in the Letters from Mary Hay of Edinburgh to Miss Innes of Picardy Place, undated, Ibid., GD113/5/84/31.

references such as these, as well as the prevalence of didactic literature and novels of morality in bookshops and circulating libraries throughout Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century indicate the popularity of such works. Women readers in nineteenth-century Scotland, therefore, were still concerned with polite morality but they did not, unlike several female readers in Virginia from the same and even later eras, directly reference specific didactic texts and their teachings as the ideal standard for polite behavior.

Further deviation in the reading trends for didactic material continued as the nineteenth century progressed. Though Virginian women in the first decades of the nineteenth century continued to read and recommend morality works from the eighteenth century, Scottish women looked to religious pieces as the source of their moral teachings, rather than the polite codes recommended by the rules of Enlightenment-inspired gentility. An exception to this was Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. She frequently recorded her reading of didactic texts in the early nineteenth-century, citing works by Maria Edgeworth and Anna Barbauld, and wrote “What excellent books these are for children - ay and for those beyond childhood, how they form the mind, enlarge it and the heart as well, make virtue so lovely, teaching to shun the vile, excuse the sinner, filling the head with so much good that there is no room for evil.” [VI, 40, 53, 284]

More typical references to improving literature are found in the correspondence of Mary Hay of Edinburgh. In letters to her close friend, Jane Innes of Picardy Place, Hay recommended several printed works and apparently loaned books to Jane Innes as well. As she wrote in an undated letter from 1818, “In my way to Chapel, I will leave [a book of sermons] for your perusal. In my humble opinion they contain many fine passages, and a great deal of good matter.”<sup>337</sup> Several other letters further reveal the tendency of the two women to exchange books and periodicals, nearly all of which were religious in nature.<sup>338</sup>

On October 30, 1820, however, Mary Hay sent a Memorandum for Jane Innes’ approval regarding donations to a free school for the purchase of edifying books. As she explained, the school suffered from “the total want of books, of

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<sup>337</sup> Mary Hay to Jane Innes, Innes of Stowe Papers, GD113/5/84.

<sup>338</sup> See letters from April 4, 1819, several undated letters from the 1820’s make reference to Mary Hay sending over a sermon for Jane to read. She also sent religious magazines, *Ibid.*, GD113/5/84/40.

Religious and Moral instruction, and improvement, amongst the young people of the village.” The school was forced to elicit donations to purchase more books of this kind because, “the Parents of the poor, have it not in their power to provide such books for their children, and every one knows, how powerfully they effect the minds of the young!” The letter then specifically mentioned John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), a religious, didactic novel written for children, as an appropriate book for the example of young children. As moralistic reading in nineteenth century Scotland came to be dominated by religious works, rather than books on Enlightenment-inspired civility, there was still a belief in the instructional power of the printed word.

### **Part V: Servants and Slavery: Lessons to and from the “Servant” Sphere**

Finally, another practical aspect of women’s polite education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Virginia that must be addressed is how wealthy women were educated about slavery – in other words, what were women taught about the large number of enslaved individuals who made their genteel way of life possible? Such a comparison is nearly impossible to make, at least directly, with Scotland, and can be limited only to education regarding the treatment of servants. Of servants, for instance, Fordyce advises in *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), “I am persuaded that treating them [servants] with tenderness when sick, and with gentleness at other times, without making them confidants, would, joined to a wise and pious example, go far to gain and reform many of them.”<sup>339</sup>

As another didactic author, Lord Halifax, declares in his work *Advice to a Daughter* (1688), “the *Inequality* which is between you, must not make you forget, that *Nature* maketh no such distinction, but that *Servants* may be looked upon as *humble Friends*, and that *Returns of Kindness* and *good Usage* are as much due to such of them as deserve it, as their *Service* is due to us when we require it.”<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women. Two Volumes in One*, (Originally published, London, 1766. Published by M. Carey, Philadelphia: and I. Riley, New York. 1809), VII, 136, Available at CW. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

<sup>340</sup> Lord Marquess of Halifax, *The Lady's New-Year's-Gift or: Advice to a Daughter*, First Printed for Matthew Gillyflower: London 1688, (This edition printed in 1934 by The Overbrook Press, Stamford:

Servants were to be treated with kindness, therefore, but neither Fordyce nor Halifax would ever encourage intimacy or a relationship of social equality with a servant. It can also be inferred from the writings of Fordyce that servants were believed to be of lower moral quality than the genteel members of society. While a “pious example” might improve their conduct, too much interaction was believed to be potentially dangerous.

A similar attitude was taken towards slaves in the advice literature produced in the Southern United States. As Mrs. Virginia Cary writes in her work, *Letters on the Female Character*, published in Richmond in 1828:

Slavery is indeed a fearful evil; a canker in the bud of our natural prosperity; a bitter drop in the cup of domestic felicity. But, like all other evils, it admits of mitigation. It is surely the part of wisdom to apply such remedies as our situation affords, to this great and obvious impediment to our national and individual happiness. I blush for my countrymen and their female coadjutors, when I see instances of thoughtless inattention, or cruel neglect, of the comfort of our helpless fellow beings. God has pleased to suffer this state of things among us, but I shudder to think how few are sensible of the responsibility they incur, by holding their fellow creatures in abject and despotic subjection.<sup>341</sup>

Cary also warns that one of the “consequences arising from slavery, one of the most pernicious and least noticed, is its effect on the female temper,” implying that women who severely disciplined their slaves not only demonstrated cruelty, but also an unladylike lack of dignity and decorum. For children, she advises that although they must be taught to be kind to slaves, all familiarity must be avoided. “‘Tis not because they are slaves,” she insists, “but because they are uneducated, uninstructed people that you should avoid them. You are kept away for the same reason from dissolute, unprincipled white people. Children are apt to catch bad habits; therefore,

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Connecticut), 51-2. For secondary analysis of the impact of the lower orders on beliefs and superstitions, see Celestina Wroth, “‘To Root the Old Woman out of Our Minds’: Women Educationists and Plebian Culture in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no 2 (Spring, 2006): 48-73.

<sup>341</sup> Virginia Cary, *Letters on Female Character, addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother*, available at CW, (Published by A. Works, Richmond, Virginia, 1828), 172. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text. See also Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 47-53; Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War*, 37; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008) for more information on women and their views towards slavery and the complex dynamics between white slave-holders and house slaves.

while you are a child, I must keep you away from bad examples. But you must pity these people while you avoid them. It is not their fault, but their misfortune, that they have not been instructed as you have in morals and religion. Pity them, therefore, and do all you can to promote their comfort and happiness; but at your time of life, you should associate with people who can improve you, not with those who would cause you to fall off from the improvement you have already acquired.”[173-7]

The interactions between genteel women and their servants or their slaves were mentioned occasionally in their personal writings. Hannah Hope Vere of London, for instance, wrote on March 29, 1842, “A tremendous fracas among the servants obliged to dismiss Le Maise and Isabella.”<sup>342</sup> Hope Vere referred to servants in terms of her own role as a domestic manager. Regarding education, she indirectly instructed her servants that disruptive behavior would not be tolerated in polite households. In the American South, in an incident from North Carolina, an unmarried but wealthy woman by the name of Sarah Frew Davidson taught the slaves on her father’s plantation to read. Although this was an illegal activity, it was nevertheless fitting with both evangelical and polite attitudes regarding women’s role as moral caretakers and instructors. As Fordyce described women as reforming agents of uncivilized society, [VI, 11] evangelical writings also asserted that, “During the forming state of human character she [woman] has the empire. The molding of the youthful mind is all her own.”<sup>343</sup> Davidson’s writings revealed that she believed her slaves had unformed minds and that it was her moral obligation to instruct them.

On February 7, 1837, Frew Davidson wrote that she “attended to the instruction of our young servants.”<sup>344</sup> Although she never referred directly to the fact that her “servants” were not paid servants, but slaves, it is made apparent by the fact that she also refers to “negroes” in her journal. Regarding their education, she confessed that she was, “much troubled and perplexed (relative to my duty) on this subject – and believing that religious instruction can not [sic] be well communicated

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<sup>342</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, March 29, 1842.

<sup>343</sup> “The True Dignity of the Female Character,” *The Ladies Repository, and Gatherings of the West: A Monthly Periodical. Devoted to Literature and Religion*. Rev. E. Thomson, ed., Volume V, (Cincinnati: Published by L. Swormstedt and J. T. Mitchell, R. P. Thompson, Printer. 1845), 193, available at CW. All editions of the magazine for the year are bound together in a single volume.

<sup>344</sup> Private Journal of Sarah Frew Davidson.



without some knowledge of letters – about six weeks ago – I commenced learning them to read.” She believed that it was more dangerous to have a large population of amoral and irreligious slaves than it was to give them access to literacy, and to minimal levels of education.

Frew Davidson also viewed her slaves as superstitious and prone to foolish beliefs and practices and believed they were in need of her guidance. As she wrote on April 1, 1837, April Fool’s Day, “The negroes are amusing themselves by deceiving each other with playful jests – an old custom – but whence it has its origins I have never had curiosity to enquire – but will the first opportunity. It is certainly the cause of a species[?] of lying – and of course not to be countenanced by Christians. But I will not judge, – it may be innocent – and as I cannot approve of it myself \_ will take no part in it. It is to say the least a foolish custom.” It was evident from these entries that Davidson viewed herself as the source of moral instruction, thus explaining why she found the education of her slaves in religious principles to be of such importance.

This leads to questions about the reverse situation – the impact of servants and slaves on the education of genteel children in Scotland and Virginia. Gilbert Innes of Stowe, for instance, wrote to his sisters Jane and Marion that he was content for the care of his illegitimate daughters to be directed by a gentlewoman or a trusted servant.<sup>345</sup> Both Elizabeth Grant and Jemima Blackburn mentioned their supervision by governesses or nurses, women of lower station than the rest of the family.<sup>346</sup> Furthermore, neither writer described her caretakers as being well-educated. Elizabeth Grant dismissed one of the governesses of her childhood as being “a mere school girl, which at that time of the day meant a zero.” [VI, 36] Jemima Blackburn wrote of the superstitions instilled in her by her governess. “Old Mam was a kind good sort of person but injudicious in her treatment. I must have been troublesome when unable to go to sleep and she used to tell me that there was a woman without head that went about the house at night.” As she also added, “It was her only fault. I wept when she died as I have never wept since.”<sup>347</sup> Unlike Elizabeth Grant, Jemima

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<sup>345</sup> Gilbert Innes to Marion and Jane, Innes of Stowe Papers, June 4, 1793.

<sup>346</sup> See Jemima Blackburn, *Paintings and Memoirs of a Victorian Lady*, 99 and Elizabeth Grant, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, VI, 204, 216, 219.

<sup>347</sup> Jemima Blackburn, *Paintings and Memoirs of a Victorian Lady*, 99.

Blackburn was very attached to her caregiver. Similar instances were further repeated among children in the South who were mainly cared for by slaves rather than hired governesses or servants.

Like Virginia Cary's advice book, letters and documents from Virginia indicate a belief that slaves could exert influence on children's morality and behavior. In a letter written on August 21, 1769, Anne Blair described to her sister, Mrs. Mary Braxton, that she had some difficulty in managing the education of her young niece Betsey although, as she assured Braxton, Betsey was improving overall. For instance, Blair had not heard her use any bad words, and "I do not observe her to be fond of Negroes Company now."<sup>348</sup> This suggests that Betsey was overly fond of the company of her caretaker, or of the slave children on the plantation, and had to be disciplined out of such associations. It can further be inferred that the children of slave-holders, as a part of their social education, were taught to avoid familiarity with slaves not only to maintain authority, but to preserve their morality and their polite gentility from these supposedly immoral and impolite influences.

## **Conclusion**

Through their education, women in Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought not only to improve their minds and practice ornamental graces, but also to learn the moral and behavioral codes originally inspired by the polite sociability of the Scottish Enlightenment. The formal instruction offered in England and Scotland was copied in the academies of Virginia, and what was not offered directly, was self-taught to women as they consulted didactic works, and polite instructive novels.

Virginia was closely linked to Scotland generally and to Edinburgh specifically when it came to education in the eighteenth century. Philip Vickers Fithian was educated in New Jersey by Dr. Witherspoon, a Scot, and then came down to Virginia to act as private tutor to the children of Robert Carter at Nominy Hall. At one point, Vickers Fithian related in his journal that Carter informed him

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<sup>348</sup> Anne Blair to Mrs. Mary Braxton, August 21, 1769, Anne Blair Papers.

that he preferred his children to be instructed by “Scotch Young Gentlemen.”<sup>349</sup> Similarly, it was not at all uncommon for Virginia residents, especially those of Scottish descent, to send their sons to Edinburgh for their education. From 1799 through 1805, Virginia native Anne Blair Banister wrote often to her niece regarding her son’s anticipated departure to Scotland for his education, his residence and education in Edinburgh, and finally his return.<sup>350</sup> In another case, Elizabeth Gordon Scott, a native of Scotland, moved to Virginia with her husband in the eighteenth century, but she left her young son with her relatives in Aberdeen. They became responsible for his education and sent his mother frequent letters over the years keeping her abreast of his progress.<sup>351</sup> One letter, dated March 30, 1789, informed Elizabeth Gordon Scott that her son was now pursuing a medical degree in Edinburgh, and that the family’s good friend Dr. Gregory – the son of the Dr. Gregory who wrote *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* – would be keeping a protective eye on him during his residence there.

But what about the women? Philip Vickers Fithian taught Robert Carter’s daughters as well as his sons and while the brothers of Virginia Cary went to Edinburgh for their education, she and her sisters were educated at home by a private Scottish tutor.<sup>352</sup> But how directly were the women of Virginia connected to Scotland and to educational urban centers such as Edinburgh and the polite moral philosophy practiced there? Further evidence of the link between the two areas can be seen in the role of didactic texts and the emphasis on Scottish Enlightenment-inspired politeness in the education of young women.

While eighteenth-century instruction for women took similar trajectories in Scotland and Virginia, the American Revolution resulted in an increased emphasis on the formal education of the new republic’s moral mothers. Educational opportunities tended to occur more readily in the North than in the South, however and when formal instruction was available, some women still found themselves

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<sup>349</sup> Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, with an introduction by Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., (published in Williamsburg, Virginia by Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 1957), April 6, 1774.

<sup>350</sup> For specific evidence of this, see the Anne Blair Papers, specifically letters from August 16, 1799, August 15, 1802, October 25, 1803, January 16, 1804, and October 15, 1805. See also the Peyton Family Papers, specifically letters from May 15, 1770, October 30, 1772.

<sup>351</sup> Peyton Family Papers, see letters from May 15, 1770, October 30, 1772.

<sup>352</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, “The Dark and Dense Cloud,” 188-9; Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal and Letters*, his post is first described on August 9, 1773.

denied by lingering views that women's domestic responsibilities were more important than formal education – thus further emphasizing the power of didactic texts as teaching tools when formal instruction was not accessible. The education of women in Virginia as compared to Scotland is one aspect where it is possible to see the impact of the American Revolution on women's lives. While some Scottish women in the nineteenth century were privately well educated in a variety of subjects, formalized instruction in schools and academies continued to focus on polite graces like music, arts and dancing. Academies for women in North Carolina and Virginia, by comparison, although still not as numerous as in the North, were beginning to take on a more academic curriculum than that seen in Britain.

Regarding the role of didactic literature, although the instructive texts in the vein of Fordyce and Gregory had fallen out of fashion in Scotland with the end of the long eighteenth-century, it is evident that some Scottish women, like Elizabeth Grant, still looked to didactic texts as a source of instruction. Others demonstrated familiarity with polite codes, even if they no longer read didactic texts, suggesting that the values had become engrained in public consciousness as appropriate, polite behavior. In Virginia, women were reading and writing didactic texts to supplement their still limited access to women's academies into the middle of the nineteenth century. The rise of evangelical morality, prominent in both Virginia and Scotland, and the spread of Romantic emotion taking the place of Enlightenment civility, did not necessarily diminish the power of didactic texts as instructive tools and this was especially true in Virginia. Aside from the changing curriculum of formal education, Virginia women's continued use of didactic texts to supplement their instruction further distinguished them from their Scottish cousins as the nineteenth century progressed.

Continuing in the vein of informal education, the following chapters will explore the ways that women were instructed about their social interactions, particularly their interactions with the opposite sex. This was an important part of a woman's social instruction and it was a subject frequently explored by the authors of didactic literature. The following chapter will examine the social context of the teachings of politeness and how this theory can be seen to have mixed with the major political and cultural movements of the age. It will explore the ways in which

women wrote about polite behavior, but also the ways in which politeness was seemingly rejected with the rise of Romantic emotionalism and evangelical morality. The final chapter will investigate the personal writings of women to determine the ways in which they viewed courtship and romance, and compare this with the theoretical instruction provided in didactic literature.

## V. Chapter IV: Enlightenment, Revolution and Religion: The Social Context of Politeness and Didactic Literature, 1750-1850

### Introduction

Having established that didactic literature was a popular genre among genteel, female readers in both Virginia and Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and that women in Virginia were given a polite education influenced by the principles of Scottish moral philosophy, it is next essential to examine various aspects of women's lives to determine to what extent this education and reading of polite literature affected women's social behaviors. What role did politeness play, for instance, in women's behavior in public, social settings or in intimate relationships, such as romantic courtships? Before this can be done, it is important to explore the greater social and cultural movements taking place in the time period in question in both Britain and the American South. This chapter will first explore the concept of politeness as an aspect of Scottish Enlightenment-inspired gentility. It will analyze the role of women as the purveyors of civil society in Scotland, and then explain how Virginians attempted to emulate and reinterpret this image of the moral, civilizing woman in forming their own polite society.

Furthermore, this chapter will examine the rejection of politeness, particularly the view among many women coming to maturity after the Napoleonic Wars that Enlightenment-inspired politeness was false and immoral when compared to the morality instilled through the teachings of evangelical religion. It will make the argument, supported by unpublished, primary documents such as personal diaries and letters written by women in Virginia and Scotland that this was a misunderstanding of the ideals of politeness. It will argue that after the eighteenth-century standards of gentility had supposedly fallen out of fashion, the social and intellectual codes regarding women's manners in Scotland, but especially in Virginia, were still similar to those advanced by the ideals of politeness and sociability inspired by the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment. Civility and politeness, however, were not the only social factors shaping morality by the turn of the nineteenth century. This chapter will also trace the tradition of religious dissent in Scotland and Virginia, as well as the rise of the evangelical movement and

the conservative backlash that followed the violence of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

### **Part I: Politeness in the Enlightenment**

Politeness in the eighteenth century was not merely a set of rules for manners and behavior in society. Instead it was a larger mark of civilization and gentility in the British Atlantic world. This thesis has already explored the idea that London, as the metropolitan center of culture and fashion, would have set the standard for polite civility, but also that provincial locations such as Scotland and Virginia would have had their own interpretation of polite standards which were both related to and yet distinctly different from the London model. Equally important, this study has also explored the ways in which polite moral philosophy was embodied in the practicalities of Scottish Enlightenment thought, and the ways in which this moral philosophy was adapted in Virginia. The Virginia elites sought to emulate the lifestyles of British aristocrats in their plantation homes. These wealthy planters saw themselves as the “inheritors of British Civilization,” at least before the American Revolution, and “on that pattern they fashioned their manners, their homes, their diversions; and with similar aim they sought to acquire and instruct their *sons* [italics mine] in every branch of knowledge useful to a gentleman.”<sup>353</sup>

As has been discussed, some Virginia families sent their sons to be educated in Scotland. In writing to her niece Eliza Whiting, Anne Banister, of a wealthy Virginia family, described the anguish, but also the necessity, of sending her son across the Atlantic to be educated in Edinburgh. “I wrote you sometime since I expected my Theodorick to go soon to Scotland & that I could [sic] not quit this spot until [sic] he did - he is gone my Betsey - I have seen him perhaps for the last time -

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<sup>353</sup> See the Introduction to *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, with an introduction by Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., (published in Williamsburg, Virginia by Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 1957), p xvi. See also Rhys Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina), 1982. For more on Virginia society among the gentry, see Jan Lewis, “Domestic Tranquility and the Management of Emotion among the Gentry of Pre-Revolutionary Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 39, no 1 The Family in Early American History and Culture (Jan., 1982): 135-49; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, “Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake,” in *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Gary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 59-166.

nevertheless, there is no sacrifice that I would not make for the advantage of my Children."<sup>354</sup> Also in many circumstances, young men who had been educated abroad in Scotland – or by Scots abroad in America – came to the Southern colonies to provide instruction to the sons and daughters of planter elites. Such was the case with Philip Vickers Fithian, who was educated by a Scot (Dr. John Witherspoon) and then acted as a tutor to the children of Robert Carter of Virginia.

Further evidence of this connection can be seen in the fact that many Virginia families corresponded with relatives and friends in Scotland.<sup>355</sup> In these letters they described social practices such as courtship and manners on both sides of the Atlantic, providing their readers with sources of reference, but also a basis for comparison. These transatlantic links ensured that elements of polite culture were exchanged between Scotland and Virginia as cultural peripheries of London, and more importantly, these elements continued to linger in respectable society, long after the Enlightenment, and with it, the ideas of eighteenth-century politeness, had come to an end. It has been argued by historians that ideas of politeness, as well as the courtesy guides that provided guidance in polite manners, came to be regarded as false. Polite manners were thought to be a superficial code of morality, which evangelicals rejected in favor of genuine salvation, and Romantics rejected in favor of individualism over social uniformity.<sup>356</sup> The writings of individual women from Virginia and Scotland throughout the 1830s and 1840s, however, reveal a more complicated reality.

It is also essential to address the question of women's role as passive enforcers of a strand of Scottish Enlightenment thought through their mastery of the codes of politeness and civility. Unlike in previous eras, particularly the seventeenth

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<sup>354</sup> Letter, Anne Banister to Eliza Whiting, August 15, 1802. Blair, Banister, Braxton, Horner, Whiting Papers, 1760-1890. Photocopies of these letters are available at CW, PH 25. The original letters are held in the Special Collections Research Center of the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. Will hereafter be referred to as the Anne Blair Papers.

<sup>355</sup> See the Anne Blair Papers; two letters from Sarah Trebell in Williamsburg to John Galt, in London and Edinburgh, MS 1989.12.1; the Smith-Digges Papers, MS 1931.7; the Alexander Spotswood Papers, MS 48.2. All of these are available in their original forms (with the exception of the Anne Blair Papers) at CW. For more on women's friendship groups within Virginia, see Joan R. Gundersen, "Kith and Kin: Women's Networks in Colonial Virginia," *The Devils Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds., (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 90-108.

<sup>356</sup> Michael Curtin, "A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy," *The Journal of Modern History* 57, no 3 (Sept., 1985): 396, 408.



century in Britain and America which was influenced by a Puritan-inspired belief in the inherently sinful nature of women, women of the eighteenth century were viewed as morally superior, and capable of inspiring moral reform in men. This supposed moral superiority placed women at the epitome of polite, genteel behavior.<sup>357</sup> Evidence of this moral philosophy can be found in contemporary sources from the eighteenth century.

David Hume wrote that there is no “better school for manners than the company of virtuous women,”<sup>358</sup> while the authors of popular didactic works for women, Dr. John Gregory and Mrs. Hester Chapone further supported the belief that it was women who were the masters of polite behavior. In *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), Edinburgh physician Dr. John Gregory laments to his daughters that he could not teach them the intricacies of polite society so well as their mother could have done since he is lacking her feminine expertise in such matters.<sup>359</sup> Mrs. Hester Chapone advises her readers in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773) that they should find a respected, older woman to emulate in regards to manners and polite behavior.<sup>360</sup> Both of these works, primarily directed to young female readers, emphasized the designated role of women as keepers of politeness and polite society. This was because they possessed “a natural refinement of manner,” but also, and more importantly, an “instinctive tenderness of sympathy for others – attributes characteristic of all good Christians but present in women to an exceptional degree.”<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Ruth H. Bloch, “American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815,” *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California; London, England: California University Press, 2003). For more information on the Puritan family, see Gerald F. Moran, and Maris A. Vinovskis, “The Puritan Family and Religion: A Critical Reappraisal,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 39, no 1, *The Family in Early American History and Culture*, (Jan, 1982): 29-63.

<sup>358</sup> David Hume, “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences,” *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects, By David Hume, Esq.*, (A new edition, London, 1758, currently available in *ECCO*), 83.

<sup>359</sup> John Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters, By John Gregory, M.D.*, (Originally published in London, 1774, currently available through *ECCO*), 3.

<sup>360</sup> Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady, by Mrs. Chapone*, (Originally published, 1773, this version published, London, 1793, currently available through *ECCO*), 160-1. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

<sup>361</sup> Barbara Taylor, “Feminists versus Gallants: Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain,” *Women, Gender and the Enlightenment*, Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, eds., (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 37.

It must be acknowledged that despite the fact that many of the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment emphasized a moral code in which “good manners, civility and sympathetic relations opened up new possibilities for women in the domestic sphere...the female duty and virtue of sympathy [was] to be cultivated according to the needs and the desires of husbands.”<sup>362</sup> In other words, it was possible that, by placing women on a pedestal, the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment and the rules of politeness restricted the roles of women. As the previous chapter has asserted, despite the fact that the moral woman served as a standard for public virtue in a civilized society, this influence became increasingly relegated to the household in both Britain and America. Furthermore, the standards for the ideal woman were still largely defined by men, and placing the burden of civilizing and refining the character of men in the hands of supposedly moral women could be seen as justifying all degrees of male behavior. If women had the power to reform men and failed to do so, it could be seen as failure on the part of feminine virtue as much, if not more, than on the part of masculine courtesy.<sup>363</sup>

Although these notions defining the polite gentlewoman first took hold in Britain, specifically becoming part of moral philosophy in Scotland, the aspiration to be genteel and civilized was especially prominent in early America. Particularly in Virginia, the letters and diaries of young, Virginia ladies reveal a concern with what was considered polite behavior. The letters of Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler of an elite Virginia family revealed her continued preoccupation with women’s politeness and morality throughout the duration of her life, with her letters to friends and relatives extending from before the American Revolution to the middle of the nineteenth century. While she was a young, unmarried woman, reminders and warnings about the importance of female conduct, particularly regarding the opposite sex, can be seen in her correspondence with other female friends.

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<sup>362</sup> Lesley A. Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland 1830 to 1930*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 2000), 27.

<sup>363</sup> For contemporary criticism of politeness and conduct books, see Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, (Originally published Dublin, 1793, currently available through *ECCO*, particularly her criticism of Gregory and Fordyce; see also Jenny Davidson, “‘Professed Enemies of Politeness’: Sincerity and the Problem of Gender in Godwin’s ‘Enquiry concerning Political Justice’ and Wollstonecraft’s ‘Vindication of the Rights of Woman,’” *Studies in Romanticism* 39, no 4 William Godwin (Winter, 2000): 599-615.

Apparently, given the content of the letters, Ambler had not always behaved with perfect politeness or morality, but she was coming to see the error of her ways and was determined to improve. As she wrote in a letter to her more somber companion Mildred Smith, “Cease dearest friend with your lectures, all former follies are done away and now I am about to take a new character entirely - really I must be acknowledged I have behaved very badly, but hereafter you shall have no cause to blame me.”<sup>364</sup> What is significant about this exchange, aside from Ambler’s attempt to improve her character, is the fact that she had clearly been lectured on the subject of feminine behavior and morality by her friend, indicating that this was a topic regularly discussed among these young women. As Ambler aged, moreover, she wrote several letters for the benefit of her nieces (she herself never had children) stressing the importance of genteel, moral behavior for young women, and providing them with the examples of virtuous women from within their own family.

Ambler’s writings also shed light on the competitive views of politeness and manners exchanged between London and the periphery. As the American Revolution approached and in the years that followed, many Americans felt that they were the true possessors of moral politeness, and the idle aristocrats of British society had lost sight of the true nature of genteel behavior.<sup>365</sup> Elizabeth Ambler described the arrival of some English acquaintances who were modestly placed on the social scale in Britain but, at least in the view of their Virginia hosts, behaved as though they thought themselves superior to Virginians. Their servant, for instance, was “uppity” to one of the family’s slaves and instructed her, “When you attend on the lady turn your head another way and make sure you keep your hands covered

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<sup>364</sup> Letter, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Mildred Smith, from 1785. Contained within the Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers at CW, DMS 54.5.

<sup>365</sup> For specific examples see, the *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon) March, 8, 1770, 2: 2, about divorces, and the *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon) May 24, 1770, 1:1, about married men and women in London openly having extramarital lovers. There are several other articles in the *Virginia Gazette* which report on London with a negative view of their morals, courtship practices, frequency of divorces, etc. These periodicals also contained examples of virtuous, moral behavior of American men and women, indicating a negative comparison of British to American morals. Copies of original *Gazettes* are available at CW. See also Richard A. Ryerson, “John Adams in Europe: A Provincial Cosmopolitan Confronts the Metropolitan World, 1778-1788,” *Old World, New World: America and Europe in the age of Jefferson*, Leonard J. Sadosky, Peter Nicolaisen, Peter S. Onuf, and Andrew O’Shaughnessey, eds., (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 132; Michael Curtin, “A Question of Manners,” 400, for more information on how first the royal court, and then the London elites came to be viewed as immoral with false manners. For more information on London newspapers and the manners of the English court, see, Ann C. Dean, “Court Culture and Political News in London’s Eighteenth-Century Newspapers,” *EHL* 73, no 3 (Fall 2006): 631-49.

(my mistress) will take nothing touched by black hands.”” As one of Ambler’s companions reported, “they gave us a very poor specimen of English manners and were very little better bred than Ann their waiting woman.”<sup>366</sup>

The Virginia aristocracy was one of wealth and land, not of blood.<sup>367</sup> Although many Virginians took pride in this, it was this element that also gave them a position of inferiority to many English visitors, who believed that politeness could be adapted outside of the metropolitan core, but never fully mastered.<sup>368</sup> Most likely due to English attitudes of Virginia’s colonial inferiority, many Virginians abroad were also shocked by English ignorance about the location, geography and character of their state, and frequently faced condescension and prejudice.<sup>369</sup>

It was not only Virginians who were considered to be peripheral to London society.<sup>370</sup> Scottish society was also viewed as provincial and inferior. This was true of attitudes towards manners in Edinburgh and was more pronounced with regards to Highland life. Elizabeth Grant was informed by relatives living just outside of London that her mother – a Highland lady who frequently resided in London and Edinburgh – “was by no means a model of elegance, a sort of heresy in our ears.”<sup>371</sup> She also wrote angrily that her governess, a middle-class, English woman, found many aspects of Highland life to be savage and wild. [VI, 208] Although Grant and the rest of her family considered this woman and others of her social status to be “much their inferiours [sic],” there were clearly aspects of Scottish, Highland life that were viewed as backward by those living in closer proximity to the London epicenter. [VI, 219]

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<sup>366</sup> Letter, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Mildred Smith, January 10, 1786. Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers.

<sup>367</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, “Hospitality, Sociability, and Gender in the Southern Colonies,” *The Journal of Southern History* 62, no 3 (Aug., 1996): 458.

<sup>368</sup> David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 148.

<sup>369</sup> J. A. Leo Lemay, “Introduction,” to Robert Bolling’s courtship journal, *Robert Bolling Woos Anne Miller: Love and Courtship in Colonial Virginia, 1760*, (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1990), 18.

<sup>370</sup> For more information on Scotland’s status as a cultural periphery to London, particularly with regards to fashionable consumption, see Stana Nenadic, “Middle-Rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720-1840,” *Past and Present* 145 (Nov., 1994): 122-56.

<sup>371</sup> Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady, Volumes One and Two*, with an introduction by Andrew Tod, ed., (First published 1898 by John Murray. First published Canongate Classics in 1988 by Canongate Publishing Ltd. This edition published in 1992 by Canongate Press: Edinburgh), VI, 158. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

Grant herself admitted, however, “temperance in man, and in woman chastity are not in the Highland code of morality...There was certainly some reform required in the very primitive manners of our society.” [VI, 251, 268] Furthermore, it was the view of some Scots that polite society and modernization should be kept away from the Highlands to preserve its distinct culture. As Grant as explained regarding her aunt’s opinion, “It was all very correct, the encrease [sic] of comfort and the gradual enlightenment etc., but it was not the highlands.” Her aunt preferred the Highlands to remain picturesque and natural, rather than attempt to become fashionable and modern.[VI, 330] Virginia was linked to Scotland, therefore, in that both locations embraced their distance and uniqueness from the cultural core, yet were sensitive to the criticism of outsiders. Particularly in the eighteenth century, Virginians as well as the Scottish gentry were trying to escape the assumption that their manners were provincial or inferior to those in London.

## **Part II: Rejecting False Politeness: Romantic and Evangelical Reactions against Polite Behavior**

This thesis has presented the argument that young, genteel women in both Scotland and Virginia learned the standards of polite behavior, at least in part, from their reading of didactic literature – conduct books and instructional novels that provided guidance in the rules of polite morality. From this literature, politeness is best defined for curious young readers by Mrs. Hester Chapone, author of one of the most popular conduct books for women of the day, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773). Rather than treating politeness as an abstract ideal, Chapone directly defined the term for her readers: “To be perfectly polite one must have great presence of mind, with a delicate and quick sense of propriety, or, in other words, one should be able to form an instantaneous judgment of what is fitted to be said or done, on every occasion as it offers.” She further defined the polite individual by stating:

It must every where be good-breeding, to set your companions in the most advantageous point of light, by giving each the opportunity of displaying their most agreeable talents, and by carefully avoiding all occasions of exposing their defects; - to exert your own endeavours to please and to amuse, but not to outshine them; - to give each their due share of attention and

notice – not engrossing the talk...not to push your advantages in argument so far that your antagonist cannot retreat with honour; - In short; it is an universal duty in society to consider others more than yourself. [160-1]

This description of politeness is in keeping with the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment; it encourages the notion that the ultimate goal of politeness was personal, moral improvement, and to render society permanently agreeable and civilized.

Another important detail of politeness was that it was meant to embody more than only the outward appearance of gentility or respectability. The truly polite would display elevated social sensitivity, and an upstanding moral character. Aside from all of this, the polite individual was meant to be concerned with his or her own internal, moral improvement. Although the mastery of the codes of politeness would undoubtedly allow for social advancement, men and women who were genuinely polite would reject the manners and affectations that served for “social lubrication,” in favor of the development of their internal character.<sup>372</sup> A distinction came to be made between polite manners that were displayed to enhance sociability and morality, and those manners that were shown with no higher purpose than to flatter the individual.

Female authors of journals and letters from the nineteenth century displayed a disdain for what they termed, “affected” behavior. Writing in 1820, Eliza Fletcher was an English-born author of biographies and travel narratives who resided for the majority of her life in Scotland. In writing to her recent acquaintance, the Scottish poet Allan Cunningham, she told him that, “of all the persons I saw in my last summer’s visit to London I knew no one whose temper of mind and condition altogether, pleased me so much as yours did.” She then remarked that he was “unsophisticated” in his manners. Rather than meaning this as an insult, her writings reflect that she believed this gentleman to be unaffected and natural in his manners, without aspiring to any unnatural sophistication.<sup>373</sup> Reflecting on her childhood in the early 1800s, Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus remembered sadly that her

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<sup>372</sup> Roy Porter and Leslie Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>373</sup> Letter to Alan Cunningham, April 15, 1820, Letters of Eliza Fletcher – part of Presented Manuscripts: Single Manuscripts and Small Collections, available at the NLS, GB233/MS.2617

shyness as a girl was often misinterpreted as affectation, and a flaw in her character. [VI, 97] Later, in 1843, Hannah Hope Vere, a wealthy young woman of Scottish descent living in London, wrote in her diary regarding a newly met acquaintance that she was “beautiful, but eaten up with affectation.”<sup>374</sup>

This thesis has already explored the reading habits, particularly of didactic literature, of Vere’s mother, Elizabeth Hay, and explored Vere’s own direct connection to the didactic novels of Maria Edgeworth. Although Vere’s writings are reflective of London standards of politeness in the middle of the nineteenth century, Vere, as well as Elizabeth Grant and Eliza Fletcher, were advocating the belief espoused in didactic literature that politeness was meant to be reflective of internal character, rather than merely polished outward manners. As Fordyce explained, “Politeness in you will be the offspring of the heart. How much preferable to that specious but hollow complaisance, studied by the fashionable and the false, which consists in an artful disguising of their own passions, and a flattering application to those of others...in professing the greatest respect without feeling the least, and in hiding very often the worst designs under the smile of familiarity, and the show of friendship.”<sup>375</sup>

It is important to take note of when the previous examples were written. Although the true nature of politeness was based around manners which were reflective of genuine morality, by the mid-nineteenth century, particularly with the continued rise of evangelical religious movements in Britain and America, it was not uncommon to see a backlash against the teachings of politeness.<sup>376</sup> Rather than

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<sup>374</sup> Hannah Hope Vere was the daughter of Lady Elizabeth Hay by her marriage to James Joseph Hope Vere. Both of her parents were member of the Scottish aristocracy and Lady Hay lived for a time in Edinburgh. “Hannah Charlotte Hope-Vere.” *The Peerage*, accessed online. Person Page 3664. Compiler, Daryl Lundy. Site last updated July 9, 2012. <http://thepeerage.com/p3664.htm#i36638>. See the Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, contained within the Papers of the Mackenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth (Seaforth Papers), available at the NRAS, GD46/15/286. This is an undated entry, but it is probably from February or March of 1843.

<sup>375</sup> James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women. Two Volumes in One*, (Originally published, London, 1766. Published by M. Carey, Philadelphia: and I. Riley, New York. 1809), VII, 127, Available at CW. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

<sup>376</sup> For more on eighteenth-century rejections of politeness, see Helen Berry “Rethinking Politeness in Eighteenth Century England: Moll King’s Coffee House and the Significance of ‘Flash Talk,’” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series*, 11 (2001): 65-81. This article is primarily focused on the aristocracy and the lower orders, however, and those groups are not the focus of this particular study. For an analysis of non-polite literature and crude humor among the English reading

viewing polite codes as ideal standards of behavior, it was the attitude of some individuals that politeness reflected false, studied manners that were not genuine or sincere. Evangelicals felt that politeness represented a morality that was incompatible with true, Christian salvation, while those influenced by Romantic ideas believed that individuals should not aspire to a single set of collective manners.<sup>377</sup> It can be argued that these views foretold the death of conduct books, and, to a certain extent, instructive novels, but this does not mean that the ideals of politeness disappeared so quickly, or that they could not be reconciled with new evangelical or Romantic philosophies.

This is apparent in the writings of Nancy Johns Turner Hall, a Virginia woman who recorded her never-published memoirs in the 1840s. She spent a great many years of her life as a teacher at female academies throughout the South, and she described her encounter with a rebellious student who she believed had been raised to practice false politeness. Hall described this young woman as being, “Brought up in the school of worldly politeness, she was used to unmeaning compliments.”<sup>378</sup>

Despite this negative view of politeness, Hall also described positive examples of polite manners – often in her own behavior. While acting as a school mistress in various locations in Virginia, Turner Hall felt it was her duty to acquaint herself with the society from which her pupils came. This socialization, in some respects, went against Turner’s Hall devout evangelical views. As she explained, however, “My serious Christian reader may be surprised to hear, that I accepted many invitations to dine & take tea with fashionable folks in order, as they said, that I might become acquainted with the parents of my charge, and other persons my own age. Had you been there, you might have seen me dressed in a style within the confines of the fashion (at least) but equally remote from the two extremes. When I was at these parties I tried to make myself as agreeable as I could without departing from the simplicity of Christianity.” [O, 197] This represented Turner Hall’s

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public, see, Simon Dickie, “Hilarity and Pitilessness in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: English Jestbook Humor,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no 1 Exploring Sentiment (Fall, 2003): 1-22.

<sup>377</sup> For the decline of politeness, and through this, the decline of the conduct book, see Michael Curtin, “A Question of Manners.”

<sup>378</sup> Nancy Johns Turner Hall, *The Imaginist*, from the Original Document, 79. Both the typed transcript and the original document are available at the VHS, Mss5:9H1405:1. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with an O for original document or T for transcript.



behavior as a polite guest, but she also described genuine politeness – meaning manners that were natural, rather than studied or insincere – displayed by her hosts. In describing her opinion of Mrs. Courtney, a new acquaintance, Turner Hall related how this lady always assured that “When I was invited to a party of any kind, great pains was [sic] taken, not to introduce any thing they thought calculated to hurt my feelings. Cards, dancing, and even foolish plays, were never engaged in, in my presence; though quite common on other occasions.” [O, 199] Turner Hall, in fact, described Mrs. Courtney as “a model of politeness.” [O, 200-1]

With regards to the duty of the host or hostess, the practice of hospitality, a domestic form of politeness valued in Scotland but heightened to a greater extent in Virginia, could contain dual messages about the intent of the host or hostess. It was possible to communicate an aura of power and status designed to intimidate one’s guests through lavish displays of hospitality, but also to show genuine benevolence and charity.<sup>379</sup> Like so many aspects of politeness, the meaning of polite acts was up to the will of the individual who displayed them.

Similar attitudes can be seen in the writings of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. Writing in the 1840s about her childhood in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Grant seemed conflicted between the influences of polite sociability and Romantic sensibility. For instance, she considered the manners in approximately 1803 to 1804 to be primitive compared to contemporary standards. “Temper was very uncontrolled in those days,” she wrote. “People, moving little, got into a set of prejudices they had no means of shaking by intercourse either with men or books, the reading of the period being of the most limited kind.” [VI, 32, 20] She also described a slightly wild way of the life in the Highlands and a freedom between the sexes. “When a lad took a lass out to dance,” she explained, “he led her to her place in the reel and...kissed her, she holding up her face quite frankly though with modesty to receive the customary salute, and he giving a good resounding smack when the girl was bonnie that could be heard generally above the warning scrape of the fiddler's bow.” [VI, 268] Grant was irritated when these informal aspects of Highland life were critically pointed out to her by her English governess, but readily admitted to them herself in her memoirs. [VI, 158, 208, 219]

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<sup>379</sup> Kierner, “Hospitality, Sociability, and Gender in the Southern Colonies,” 453, 455.

Grant also expressed a view, like Turner Hall, that she considered many polite manners to be false. As she described of the early nineteenth century, “sincerity was not in fashion in those times.” [VI, 220] In relating the social interactions of her Aunt Mary, she wrote, “She had company manners and company temper and company conversation like my Mother...We were never certain that either of them meant what they said on these state occasions, even though a smile of softness preceding sweet gentle words were part of the pantomime.” [VI, 101] Of her social education in childhood, she reflected, “We were never to annoy others with any excess of emotion, probably a good rule for such very excitable children, and yet it made us appear artificial, and it did afterwards make me appear affected, the struggle between feeling and fearing.” [VI, 146-7] And finally, she described the disservice an acquaintance had done to the servant she had trained to be her companion and accustomed her to genteel manners and company. “She [the companion] was in her element only when with refined people, and unless Lady Milbanke took her entirely and provided for her, she had done her irremediable injury by raising her ideas beyond her home.” [VI, 94]

At the same time, Grant also expressed admiration for many of the manners she had previously dismissed. In writing her memoirs for the benefit of her niece, she both discouraged and yet strongly encouraged the young lady to aspire to politeness and gentility. Grant’s definition of politeness was defined by her father in the early nineteenth century. Following what he considered Grant’s impertinent behavior towards her governess, Grant’s father informed her, “What he did expect, however, was that his children should act as became the children of a gentleman...and not by rude, unfeeling remarks, impertinence and insubordination prove themselves to be more ill bred than those much their inferiours [sic].” Furthermore, “A gentleman and a gentlewoman he told us were studious to the feelings of all around them; they were characterised by that perfect good breeding which would avoid inflicting the slightest annoyance on any human being.” [VI, 219] Grant also praised the manners and open hospitality of the Highlanders. “A highlander never forgets his place,” she wrote, “never loses his native inborn politeness, never presumes upon favour.” She also referred to the improving power of social interactions upon the individual, but also on society as a whole. [VI, 214, 48; VII, 41]

Like Turner Hall, Grant was appreciative of manners that were unstudied in nature. Despite condemning her mother for her falseness, she also praised her for her ability to graciously entertain any visitor to Rothiemurchus, regardless of rank. [VI, 235] In her social interactions, Grant preferred manners that were “simple,” and enjoyed the company of “really nice natural girls.” [VII, 177] Of a male acquaintance, she remarked, “A finer, simpler, handsomer, more attractive young man was...ruined,” by flattery and false manners.[VII, 77]

Both Grant and Turner Hall, therefore, had come to consider the polite codes of the eighteenth century as false, and preferred the genuine gentility of manners that they believed were unique to their era. In reality, both women were aspiring to both be and surround themselves with practitioners of true politeness as defined by the eighteenth-century ideal. Many polite codes became corrupted in practice, but the measuring standard was still one of sincerity, and genuine sympathy with one’s fellow individuals rather than the arts “studied by the fashionable and false” that Fordyce despised. [VII, 127]

This ambivalent attitude about politeness reflects the changing views about manners with the progression of the nineteenth century, as eighteenth-century manners came into conflict with nineteenth-century religion. Furthermore, the “high ideals”<sup>380</sup> of polite behavior were often, in reality, diminished to the collection of material possessions and the rigid enforcement of trivial social codes.<sup>381</sup> Although in certain circumstances the pretence and affectations of false politeness were frowned upon, it was often possible to attain the appearance of politeness by the consumption of material goods commonly associated with gentility. The level of income required to participate in the rampant consumption that came to outwardly symbolize polite society was high, and many middling-level families faced financial ruin in their quest to appear genteel.<sup>382</sup>

This was the situation faced by the family of Elizabeth Grant. The family had for years lived beyond their means in their habits of travelling and entertaining.

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<sup>380</sup> Philip Carter, “Polite ‘Persons’: Character, Biography and the Gentleman,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series*, 12 (2002): 336.

<sup>381</sup> Langford, “British Politeness,” 54.

<sup>382</sup> Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, (First published, 1989. Current edition, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 6. See also Stana Nenadic, “Middle-Rank Consumers,” 126, for more information about the practice of purchasing fashionable, polite goods second-hand.

Eventually they had to flee to India to escape her father's ruinous debts in 1827. Reflecting on the situation later in life, Grant remarked, "My father said the finery of the Margate ladies had excited my Mother's envy, for she set about smuggling vigorous at this time, very much to his annoyance... 'tis so easy for the man who lavishes thousands on *his* whistle, to lift his eyebrows at the cost of his Wife's. My dear mother found it hard to resist those...silks, laces, gloves and other beautiful French goods so immeasurably superiour to any in those days fabricated at home." [VI, 91-2]

A similar situation was faced by many elite Virginians, specifically the powerful Randolph family, of which Thomas Jefferson was a relative. Although the devastation of war and a poor economy had certainly taken their toll, the family had also lived beyond their means. The hospitality, parties and visiting required to participate in the polite world of colonial and early republican Virginia had caused the Randolphs to amass ruinous debt from which they never fully recovered.<sup>383</sup> In the case of both the Grant and Randolph families, their daughters were forced to enter the commercial world, but under a gender-appropriate occupation. Elizabeth Grant penned several small pieces for publication to supplement her family's income [VII, 196], while several of the Randolph girls became writers, including Virginia Randolph (married name Cary) who authored a conduct book for Southern American women.<sup>384</sup>

Aside from the corrupted material culture of politeness, many of the principles of polite behavior became further corrupted when put into practice. Despite the fact that British manners were ideally associated with the liberty of the British people, manners and politeness, along with other elements of fashionable life, soon came in practice to be defined and regulated by a small, select group of elites.<sup>385</sup> As Elizabeth Grant explained, "it was a bad system that divided us into small coteries; the bounds were not strictly defined, and far from strictly kept; still, the various little sections were all there, apart, each small set overvaluing itself and

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<sup>383</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, "'The Dark and Dense Cloud Perpetually Lowering over Us': Gender and the Decline of Gentry in Postrevolutionary Virginia," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no 2 (Summer, 2000): 190-1, 194.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid. For more information on women and work in Scotland, see Elizabeth C. Sanderson, *Women and Work in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh*, (Published in the United Kingdom by Macmillan Press, Ltd., and in the United States by St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1996).

<sup>385</sup> Langford, "British Politeness," 59-61.

undervaluing its neighbours.” [VII, 41] Regarding specifically English politeness, despite the fact that London was the cultural center of the English-speaking world, and this was something that was lorded over the Scots and Virginians regarding manners and fashion, many continental Europeans believed that the English focus on domesticity and modesty, particularly among women, restricted social freedoms and true civility. How could women guide polite society if they were relegated to the home and stifled in their conversation and interactions with the opposite sex?<sup>386</sup>

Despite the downfalls of sociability, politeness remained a defining factor in eighteenth and nineteenth-century society. As this thesis has argued, there were many practical applications for politeness; it was not something limited to moral philosophy, conduct literature, or instructive fiction. Both men and women could demonstrate their levels of politeness in the education they received, as has been discussed, and in their methods of courtship – a topic that will be explored in-depth in the following chapter. Furthermore, despite the rejection of polite morality, the final section of this chapter will explore the ways in which politeness, as defined by eighteenth-century standards, continued to be practiced in Scotland, but especially in Virginia through the nineteenth century. Continuing in the vein of the apparent rejection of politeness, this chapter will next explore challenges to the Enlightenment and Enlightenment thought through the rise of evangelical religion.

### **Part III: Revolution and Religion: The Decline of the Enlightenment?**

Regardless of the contested nature of the Enlightenment, or the role of Enlightenment politeness, historians tend to be in agreement that the Enlightenment and the moral philosophy associated with it came to an end.<sup>387</sup> The Age of Revolutions, beginning with the American and French Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, and culminating in the Napoleonic Wars in the first decades of the nineteenth century led

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<sup>386</sup> Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character 1650-1850*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159-60, 184-98.

<sup>387</sup> See Robert Darnton, *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century*, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003); John Robertson, “The Scottish Contribution to the Enlightenment,” 37-62, Richard B. Sher, “Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment: Lessons of Book History,” 99-112 in *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation*, Paul Wood, ed. (Rochester, New York: Rochester University Press, 2000); Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth Century Britain, Ireland and America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

to a conservative backlash against the ideas of those perceived to be radicals and free-thinkers. This reactionary response was prevalent to a certain extent in America but was especially strong in Britain, and many Britons were afraid about the possibility of popular uprisings in Britain similar to those in France. Primary documents from the nineteenth century reveal a lingering distrust of radicalism and fears of further revolution and bloodshed.

A Scottish woman reflected the immediate fears of the power of Napoleon in a letter to her mother-in-law in Virginia. As she wrote, “we are in daily expectation of the return of the fleet of Nelson to our coast to protect us from...our implacable foe the great Buonparte [sic].” “Would thank to God this horrible war were at an end,” she pleaded, “we have almost every day the loss of some friend or relation to lament.” This letter was written in 1801, in the earliest days of the ongoing conflict with Napoleon.<sup>388</sup> Upon his defeat, the concern that such another terrible series of wars and revolts would occur did not disappear. Instead, it remained in public consciousness for decades.

No where is this more evident than in the journal of Hannah Hope Vere. Being a well-connected, genteel woman in London, Vere frequently socialized with the major political and social figures of the day. She was acquainted with both Lord Melbourne and Sir Robert Peel, and she was introduced to the Duke of Wellington.<sup>389</sup> She was interested in political events of the day, and her journal was filled with fears and predictions of a revolution occurring in England, similar to that which took place in France. In describing the likelihood of such an uprising, she wrote, “Certainly the state of the finances, trade and distress of the poor added to the party spirit displayed by the rulers and partisans of each side are enough to bring any state to a revolution.”<sup>390</sup>

The threat of revolution was not something with which only Vere herself was concerned. She also recorded on several occasions the public reception of the 75

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<sup>388</sup> Rachel (Forbes-Mitchell) Scott Masquerier to Elizabeth Gordon Scott, Section 5, in the Peyton Family Papers, specifically Sections 5 and 29, the correspondence of Correspondence of Elizabeth (Gordon) Scott (of “Gordonsdale,” Fauquier County, Va., and at “Ripon Lodge,” Prince William County, Va.) Available at the VHS, Mss1P4686c.

<sup>389</sup> See the Journal of Hannah Hope Vere. Her family received a letter from Lord Melbourne on August 10, 1841, and she saw Sir Robert Peel socially and discussed his government with another minister on July 14, 1841. She also first met the Duke of Wellington by riding with him in carriage to the opening of Parliament on February 1, 1844.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., entry from Tuesday, August 10, 1841.

year old Duke of Wellington and the lingering adoration that the people had for him. Vere had a discussion with a man in April of 1844, for instance, who argued that the Duke of Wellington was “the greatest man the World ever saw and is superior to Julius Caesar,” because he was a hero who was doing his duty in defending Britain, while Caesar was a conqueror. On May 2, 1844, she wrote that it was the Duke’s seventy-fifth birthday, and the emotional, public celebrations that followed indicated not only that he was viewed as a hero, but that his deeds were fresh in the minds of the people. It is evident that many Britons were still concerned regarding the overflow of radical sentiment and revolution from the continent, and remembered the man who saved them from the threat of Napoleon with fondness.

Aside from sharing the public’s fears of a popular uprising, Vere made several statements in her journal to indicate that she directly linked the violence in France with the philosophy that would later come to be termed Enlightenment thought. As she wrote regarding her reading practices, “I began the article on [Bertrand] Barère the Girondist first and lastly the most horrible fiend that ever walked the earth it appears to me that the Girondist party had been the work of Philosophers and freethinkers and that they were erroneous enough in their views to suppose that human nature could be governed by the laws of reason (so called) and justice without the necessary restraints of religion and diplomatic law, forgetting that when those bounds are broken thro’ the aggregate of human minds have not elevation of character enough to be bearable without those restraints.”<sup>391</sup>

These fears were not restricted to Britain. Documents from Virginia also indicate a connection made between the skepticism of intellectuals and the decline of morality, which was responsible for sowing the seeds of violence and discontent. Writing to her sister Nancy [Ann Fisher], Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler described the state of society during her girlhood in the late eighteenth century, during the American Revolution. “At the time alluded to our country was thrown into great confusion by the long continuance of the War and afterwards seemed to imbibe too much of that infidelity that so much prevailed, when Paine and Godwin deseminated

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid., Tuesday (undated) April(?), 1844.

[sic] their writings abroad.” Furthermore, as she described, “The Churches in Virginia were almost entirely shut up and...ordinances unobserved.”<sup>392</sup>

This description from Elizabeth Ambler about the closing of the churches and the statement from Vere regarding the “restraints of religion” provide a transition into yet another reason why many historians feel the Enlightenment began to decline by the turn of the nineteenth century. Aside from the conservative reaction to the Age of Revolutions, both Britain and America saw a rise in popular religious practice with unprecedented levels of religious enthusiasm. By the nineteenth century, the trend of rational, Enlightenment-inspired religion practiced by many in Scotland in the form of Moderate Presbyterians and Virginia in the form of deists had largely fallen out of fashion, and it was religious evangelicalism that took hold in parts of Scotland, England, and America.<sup>393</sup> As one study defines this particular religious movement:

Evangelicalism was a religion of personal commitment and actions. Its emphasis was on the saving grace of Christ and the perfectability of the redeemed life, through the exercise of self-discipline and benevolence. It was not much concerned with the doctrinal disputes which had exercised Scotland’s leading Presbyterians, but it preached the validity and possibility of personal advancement to the individual who sought to overcome sin. It was a creed that owed much to the transposition of Enlightenment values – individualism,

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<sup>392</sup> Elizabeth Ambler to her sister Nancy, undated but probably from 1810 or after, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers. For more information on a conservative response in America and its effect on women, see Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>393</sup> See Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Stewart J. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland and Scotland, 1801-1846*, (Oxford, UK and New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990); Marilyn Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America: 1600-1850 The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions*, part of Christianity and Society in the Modern World (London and New York, Routledge, 1999). For more information on evangelical religion in Britain, see, Marilyn Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Luke Brekke, Heretics in the Pulpit, Inquisitors in the Pews: The Long Reformation and the Scottish Enlightenment,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no 1 (Fall, 2010): 79-98; W. R. Ward, Evangelical Awakenings in the North Atlantic World,” 329-47 and Stewart J. Brown, “Evangelical Awakenings in the North Atlantic World,” 575-95, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815*, Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For more on the relationship between American Presidents and religion, see John Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*, (New York, New York: Random House, 2006). For a cultural interpretation of evangelicalism, see Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, (Croom Helm: London and Canberra, 1984).



autonomy, liberty, benevolence, progress – into a religious mode, supported by Scripture.<sup>394</sup>

As this quote demonstrates, the Enlightenment and religion were not mutually exclusive.<sup>395</sup> Benjamin Franklin, for instance, believed that the church played an important role in teaching moral improvement to the masses, while other Founding Fathers, like Thomas Jefferson, were deists who believed in the power of “Nature’s God” rather than any particular religious creed. They were linked, nevertheless, in their view that the new republic could not survive if its citizens were not moral.<sup>396</sup>

After the founding of the new nation, there were fears among the devout, non-deist practitioners of religion that the lack of an established church would lead to a Christian decline.<sup>397</sup> In reality, religious denominations and religious revivals exploded in popularity with the new, unprecedented degrees of toleration for religious dissent. These revivals and dissenting denominations, according to the views of some historians, were originally inspired by Enlightenment thought in that they were meant to be a leveling, social equalizer. In theory, if not always in practice, religious revivals provided a type of equality in taking religious truths from the hands of elite, educated ministers and placing it in the hands of the poor and the uneducated.<sup>398</sup> Evangelicalism took a firm hold in Virginia, where religious observance had been lax since the colony’s founding. The religious enthusiasm

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<sup>394</sup> Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 43.

<sup>395</sup> For more information on religion and the French Enlightenment, see Timothy Tackett, “The French Revolution and Religion to 1794,” *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII*, 536-55.

<sup>396</sup> Martin E. Marty, “The American Revolution and Religion,” *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII*, 506.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> For instance, Both Martin E. Marty in “The American Revolution and Religion,” 497-516, and Jon Butler in “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *Journal of American History* 69 (1982-3): 305-25, have argued that, in reality, revivals did not completely level the hierarchy between the preachers and the parishioners, nor were they particularly radical. In the case of America, according to Butler, many of the dissenting revivalist churches only formed due to too much liberalism among the Established Churches. See also, John H. Wigger, “Taking Heaven by Storm: Enthusiasm and Early American Methodism, 1780-1820,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 14, no 2 (Summer, 1994): 170; John L. Hammond, “Revivals, Consensus, and American Political Culture,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46, no 3 (Sep., 1978): 293-314; Cedric B. Cowing, *The Great Awakening and the American Revolution: Colonial Thought in the 18th Century*, The Rand McNally Series on the History of American Thought and Culture. Series Editor, David D. Van Tassel, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1971); Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965. Originally published by Duke University Press, 1930); S. Scott Rohrer, “Evangelism and Acculturation in the Backcountry: The Case of Wachovia, North Carolina, 1753-1830,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 21, no 2 (Summer, 2001): 199-229; Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, “Passion, Desire and Ecstasy: The Experiential Religion of Southern Methodist Women, 1770-1810,” *The Devils Lane*, 168-86.

inspired by the Second Great Awakening in the late eighteenth century resulted in many Virginians becoming associated with a religious denomination for the first time.<sup>399</sup>

It was in the Scottish Enlightenment that religion and philosophy were the most closely linked. Some of the most prominent minds of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as William Robertson, were equally prominent members of the Church of Scotland. Robertson, for instance, was a member of the Moderate faction of the Church of Scotland. Moderate Presbyterians diminished the ideas of predestination and favored the idea, similar to the ideals of polite sociability, that individual morality and personal salvation were beneficial to society as a whole. Furthermore, Moderates embraced a rational interpretation of religion, and rejected religious enthusiasm.<sup>400</sup>

This view was reflected in the personal correspondence of a woman whose family connections linked both Scotland and Virginia, as well as the ideas of the Enlightenment with the teachings of Christianity. Elizabeth Gordon Scott was born in Scotland to Thomas Gordon, a professor at King's College at Aberdeen. He was also a friend of Enlightenment thinker and moralist, Dr. John Gregory. Moreover, Elizabeth's husband was a minister, and she moved with him to Virginia, and remained there for the duration of her life. As she wrote to her daughter on December 12, 1800, "It was my peculiar good fortune to be educated by a Father & for 15 years to enjoy the conversation of a Husband, who were philosophers as well as Christians." Religion and philosophy, therefore, were closely linked in the minds of many intellectual Scots, as well as Scottish immigrants to Virginia.<sup>401</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Moderate faction in Scotland was opposed by the larger, but less organized and less socially powerful evangelical faction. Partially as a reaction against the skepticism of the Enlightenment era, evangelicals called for a rejection of rationalism in their faith, and advocated instead

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<sup>399</sup> Butler, "Enthusiasm," 312. For more on the First and Second Great Awakenings in America, see Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*. See also, Donald G. Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly* 21, no 1 (Spring 1969): 23-43.

<sup>400</sup> Henry F. Henderson, M.A., D.D., *Religion in Scotland: Its Influence on National Life and Character*, (London: Paisley, Alexander Gardner, 1920); Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society*, 19.

<sup>401</sup> Elizabeth Gordon Scott to Margaret Christian (Scott), December 12, 1800, Peyton Family Papers, Section 5.

the experience of faith by emotion.<sup>402</sup> Moderates in Scotland, with their emphasis on rational religion, were perceived to be too similar to the Godless intellectuals who led to the violence and lawlessness that had taken hold in France. These differences were exacerbated by social divides between Moderates and evangelicals, as well as disputes over the governing of the church hierarchy and the issue of patronage.<sup>403</sup> It was these divides that led to a schism between the Established and Dissenting Churches, and supposedly to an end of Enlightenment thought.

Although religious dissent took different forms in Scotland and Virginia,<sup>404</sup> the practical implications of religious practice, as revealed in the journals and letters of genteel women, reflect that religious ideas held a similar place in both societies. Like the ideas of politeness, and Enlightenment-inspired codes of genteel civility, religious shifts did not mean that the old ideas immediately disappeared. The analysis of personal documents from Edinburgh, London, and Virginia extending from the early to mid-nineteenth century reveal that while the influence of religious enthusiasm and evangelical tendencies is evident, the remaining ideas of rational, Enlightenment Christianity can also be detected. It is evident that women often did not adhere solely to one religious principle. Instead, they blended the various interpretations of Christianity and Enlightenment sociability to form their own version of morality.

Some of the best evidence of the prominence of evangelical practice in Scotland at the end of the long eighteenth century comes from the anonymous journal of a genteel woman living in Edinburgh in 1813, particularly with regards to the importance of conversion and spreading Christian teachings amongst the poor.<sup>405</sup> On February 24, 1813, she wrote, "I afterwards went to a Poor sick woman with some tracts...and found her express less aversion to sacred subjects than the last time

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<sup>402</sup> Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society*, 20; Martin E. Marty, "American Revolution and Religion," 498.

<sup>403</sup> For more information on the trajectory of evangelical religion in Scotland, including the issues of patronage, the Disruption, and the statistical percentages of churchgoers in the Established and Dissenting Churches by 1851, see Brown, *Religion and Society*, 17-21.

<sup>404</sup> For the trajectory of evangelical religion in America, see Susan O'Brien, "A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755," *The American Historical Review* 91, no 4 (Oct 1986): 811-32; Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm," 308, 312; for information on the rise of evangelical religion in colonial and early republican Virginia, see Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Chapter 6, "The Plural Origins of American Revivalism."

<sup>405</sup> Diary – (Probably of a Lady) Related Mainly to Religious Themes, Written in Edinburgh, 1813 – Available at the NLS, GB223/MS.1658.

I visited her.” Later, on February 26, 1813, she made a charitable visit to a poor family, in which the husband was ruining their finances with his drinking habits. She tried to use the teachings of religion to inspire him, and shame him, into stopping.

Although the temperance movement in both Scotland and America would not gain momentum until the end of the nineteenth century, the evangelical interpretation of Christian faith called for social reform, particularly in the cities, where the dangers of drinking, gambling, and lawlessness seemed most dangerous, and most capable of undermining the moral teachings of the church.<sup>406</sup> Much of this social reform was spearheaded by women, giving women unprecedented levels of social power, although still in a very limited, gender-specific role.<sup>407</sup> As women in both Scotland and Virginia had been looked upon to uphold genteel codes of civility in polite society, they were also called through evangelical religion to serve as the moral, Christian center of a rapidly industrializing world.

In Virginia and the American interpretation of evangelical thought, indirect references to the culture of religious revivals, and the powerful, individual experience of conversion can be seen in letters contained within the Eleanor Hall Douglas papers, from Lynchburg, Virginia. One letter in the collection of correspondence comes from a woman who signed her name as only “P.M” on May 28, 1816. Of religion, this woman wrote “this I believe to be the only true comfort we poor mortals can enjoy.”<sup>408</sup> She then went on to describe the many comforts offered to her and others through their religious beliefs, although she then confessed, “Though I can’t tell you that I have experienced it in the manner that grate [sic]

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<sup>406</sup> C. Brown, *Religion and Society*, 103-4.

<sup>407</sup> Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society*, 106; Marilyn Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America*, 180; Merry Weisher-Hanks, “Christianity and Gender,” *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII*, 166-84. There is some discrepancy among historians, however, on whether or not the evangelical movement represented social advancements for women. Catherine Clinton in *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*, A Revised Edition, (New York: Hill and Wang, first published in 1984, this edition published in 1999), 43, wrote about the active role of women in evangelical Christianity, while Anne Firor Scott in *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 7, cites that evangelicalism was used to enforce the ideal of feminine submissive behavior in the American South. For more on women’s religious activities in America, see Joan R. Gundersen, “The Non-Institutional Church: The Religious Role of Women in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 51 (1982), 347-57. For more information on men’s interpretation of evangelical religion, see Janet Moore Lindman, “Acting the Manly Christian: White Evangelical Masculinity in Revolutionary Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 57, no 2 (April 2000): 393-416.

<sup>408</sup> Letter from May 28, 1816, from “P.M” to her brother, Eleanor Hall Douglas Papers – papers range from 1798-1845, Virginia. Available at the SBC, OCLC Number: 207371177.

numbers profess to have done.” This was most likely a reference to popular conversion and revivalist movements taking place in Virginia at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Despite the popularity of religious evangelicalism in America, not everyone agreed with this so-called enthusiasm. Yale University student John Buchanan responded to such negative opinions in his letter to his mother, Ann [Nancy] Fisher of Virginia, dated 1815. John desired to enter the clergy after completing his studies, but his parents disapproved of both his career decision and his religious inclinations. As he wrote, “I am puzzled to find out what then was in my last letter to my Father which has induced you both to call it enthusiasm...Is it because I feel more than ever I did the sinfulness of the former part of my life?...‘We have gone far from Original righteousness’ and after acknowledging this is it enthusiastic to attempt turning from the error of my ways and to request the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to change my heart and to implant that love to God...I cannot be willing to confess there is anything enthusiastic in this.”<sup>409</sup>

It is evident that John Buchanan had fully embraced evangelical doctrines, including the belief in the need to repent his sins and spread the word of God to others. “Must I put off my present feelings until a future season when my judgment shall be more mature?” He asked. “Perhaps that season may never arrive; Perhaps there is now lurking in my veins some disease which may prove deadly fatal...and what an awful thing would it be for me to be hurried into eternity with the vain hope that I may live a few years longer...God has declared, ‘My spirit shall not always strive with man’ Behold NOW is the accepted time NOW is the day of salvation.” From this letter, is evident that religious opinion was still divided in early republican Virginia.

The progression of the nineteenth century did not simplify religious matters in Britain or America. Hannah Hope Vere’s journal from London in the 1840’s further revealed the ambiguous state of religion in Britain by the mid-nineteenth century, reflecting the juxtaposing views of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, Enlightenment rationality, and religious evangelicalism. Vere’s writings indicate that she had been taught to reject the ideas of Calvinism and predestination

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<sup>409</sup> J. A. B. Fisher [John Buchanan] to Mother [Ann Fisher], Yale College, May 1, 1815, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers.

within the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. As she wrote on November 13, 1841 she heard what she considered a “very good” sermon arguing against the Doctrine of the Elect which stated that “if a certain Number of People were preordained to succeed to the Kingdom of Heaven a perusal of the Scriptures by them would be useless and to those who were excluded preaching the precepts of the Sacred Volume would be a pious fraud.” Furthermore, in what seemed to be a commentary on the religious divides taking place in Scotland at this time, Vere also heard a sermon on March 17, 1844 which argued “against Schism’s [sic] in religion sensibly pointing out that the great points of our Faith are all alike.”<sup>410</sup>

It is evident that Vere rejected many of the tenants of Calvinism, but her religious views were unclear in other respects. In favor of Enlightenment rationalism, for instance, she wrote upon reading a work on religious philosophy that she “was struck particularly with one remark vis: that God has given us sufficient strength and reason to keep us in the right path without his daily interference,”<sup>411</sup> and showed her approval of this vein of thinking.

Vere did not consistently agree with the rational interpretation of religion, and sometimes she favored the emotionalism of evangelical religious doctrine. She wrote in April of 1842 that her father was very much impressed with the sermon of a Mr. Fox, a clergyman who offered, “more a lecture than a sermon, but one showing the connection between religious revelation and Moral philosophy promised to take me next Sunday.”<sup>412</sup> The following Sunday, Vere wrote a detailed description of Mr. Fox’s sermon, as well as her religious and intellectual interpretation of it:

Got in at last among an assemblage of men almost all coiffe a la Jeune France with eager intellectual [sic] countenances. Mr. Fox presented entered a sort of Rostrum and after a beautifully poetical but peculiar prayer in which he thanked the Almighty for the Capacities of the mind as the Highest gifts bestowed on Man Begun a lecture on what he called ‘Theological Morality’...I listened with unwearied interest...to the most poetically enticing and eloquent arguments showing the superiority of the Religion of reason over that the blind believes in the Theological Dogmas of the Clergy. I was particularly struck with the beauty of one argument he made us of to prove that the religion of nature points out the principal of

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<sup>410</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, November 13, 1841, March 17, 1844.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., July 22, 1842. Hope Vere made a similar comment on October 30, 1841.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., April 3, 1842.

universal love and charity among Brethren in a quotation from a saying or precept in the Hindoo [sic] creed, ‘A man while struck to death by his enemy ought to bless him in the face of Heaven...’ He told us our beings end and aim should be to discover glory in and cultivate the noble gifts and mind and intellect. That it was the attention to the conventional forms of religion that produced the hypocrisy of the Pharisee whereas from childhood universal love and charity to each other should be taught as the religion of happiness of the Spirit of God...this lecture impressed me very deeply I felt I was listening to the arguments of a most powerfully poetical and well directed mind...this mode of religion would be admirable in a Eutopia [sic] where none are great and none are poor but in the present state of society when the lives of the poorer classes are almost a daily struggle to keep death from the door how can the intellect [sic] where only desire is food and coin be enlarged and cultivated... This is I suppose the mode of religion Robespierre intended to erect after France had been thinned by the Reign of Terror!!!\_ The mind must be noble and superior indeed that does not find itself attracted [sic] and awed sometimes by form and ceremonie [sic] even in Religion.<sup>413</sup>

This interpretation of Fox’s sermon represented a clash of Vere’s appreciation for Enlightenment rationality, with her rejection of social radicalism and fears of revolution.<sup>414</sup>

Similarly, in 1844, Vere went to St. Paul’s for her Sunday service, in order to hear a sermon by Sydney Smith. Smith was a writer and parish curate who was educated at Oxford and worked for a time in Edinburgh. His religious and intellectual views were inspired by the moral philosophy of Dugald Stewart, and he founded and contributed several pieces to the *Edinburgh Review*.<sup>415</sup> As she wrote, “S Smith preached to my mind very well but the Sermon was a moral essay, addressed to sceptics more than to believers in revealed religion, trying to prove from natural causes, feelings and sentiments that there is another World since Man is the only living creature in this World does not satisfy – the imagery and poetical illustrations of the discourse were powerful and pleasing, but I did not feel satisfied that the

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid., April 10, 1842.

<sup>414</sup> For more information on preaching styles in the evangelical movement, see Joris Van Eijnatten, “Reaching Audiences: Sermons and Oratory in Europe.” *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol VII*, 128-46.

<sup>415</sup> “Smith, Sydney (1771–1845),” Peter Virgin in *ODNB*. Vere heard his sermon in London, when he was the canon of St. Paul’s, but his message nevertheless was inspired by Enlightenment rationality.

preacher was a believer.”<sup>416</sup> Although she did not state directly why this particular sermon left her unfulfilled, it can be inferred that she felt an increasing inclination towards enthusiasm rather than the coldness of Enlightenment rationality.

An equally ambiguous combination of Enlightened and evangelical thought are reflected in letters exchanged between two young women in Virginia in 1825. In writing to her friend, Eliza Melville, Julia Cathcart rejected somber and strict religious interpretation in favor of an optimistic view of her own salvation.<sup>417</sup> She expressed her evangelical leanings in a letter from June 23 by saying, “you [Eliza] say there is no unalloyed happiness on the earth; does this not induce you to carry your views to another & better world, but no you have refused all share in the blissful regions of eternity: but it is not too late.” In this letter, she indicated her belief that her skeptical friend could be saved if she came to believe faithfully in the power of redemption. In the same letter, apparently in response to Eliza’s accusations of her friend’s coldness towards her, she proclaimed, “I must confess, I do not possess the impassioned ardour of an Asiatic or African, but I insist on it, I have not the listless apathy that distinguishes a ‘Greenlander or Laplander,’ at all events, whatever may be my natural character, you at least have no reason to complain of coldness.”<sup>418</sup>

The theory that human character was influenced by the climate was espoused by philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, namely David Hume.<sup>419</sup> Although she does not make direct reference to reading Hume or any other philosophy in this correspondence, such a statement reveals that Julia Cathcart was at least acquainted with the notion and uses it to attempt to explain her own character. This sentence, contained in the same letter in which she expressed evangelical enthusiasm, demonstrates the blending of philosophy and religion in early nineteenth-century Virginia.<sup>420</sup>

Aside from the religious enthusiasm advocated by evangelical awakening, there was also a movement towards individual enthusiasm and emotionalism

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<sup>416</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, March, undated, 1844.

<sup>417</sup> Letter, Julia Cathcart to Eliza Melville, June 6, 1825. Contained within the Hopkins Family Papers, available at the VHS, Mss1H7779a.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., June 23, (1825?)

<sup>419</sup> David Hume, “Of National Characters,” *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, (Originally published in 1741, currently available through ECCO).

<sup>420</sup> Julia Cathcart refers in a letter to the teachings of the “Evangelists” in a letter written June 20, 1825, Hopkins Family Papers.



proposed by adherents of the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century. Like Hannah Hope Vere, Romantics rejected the skepticism and rationalism of the Enlightenment – particularly the lengths to which this philosophy was taken in the French Revolution – which they viewed as limiting to the ideas and feelings of the individual. Romantics also turned away from Enlightenment morality, particularly from the teachings of politeness.<sup>421</sup> Politeness, in their view, represented a false code of conduct that was not motivated by genuine feeling. This resulted not only in new standards of behavior, but an entirely new genre of literature which came into conflict with conduct books and novels of manners.

As this thesis has argued, the new society which emerged as the nineteenth century progressed under the influence of evangelicalism and Romanticism still practiced a code of morality that was not a complete rejection of Enlightenment thought, but rather a combination of lingering, polite sociability with the social and cultural influence of increasing religious enthusiasm and emotionalism. This was evident to a certain extent in Scotland, but was more evident with the continued preoccupation of polite gentility among the Virginia elites.

#### **Part IV: The Continuation of Eighteenth-Century Politeness in the Nineteenth Century**

This thesis has explored the rise of Enlightenment-inspired politeness, but also the rejection of politeness due to changing codes of morality based on religion, as well as the conservative backlash against any strand of Enlightenment thought following the Age of Revolution and the rise of the Romantic era. Based on an examination of letters and diaries from women in Scotland and Virginia, however, it can be argued that Enlightenment-inspired codes of civility, specifically standards for women's behavior, education and courtship as taught by didactic literature, were too deeply entrenched in society to be so easily rooted out.

The majority of evidence presented in this final section of the chapter comes from documents produced in Scotland and Virginia in the 1820's, 1830's and 1840's. The lingering preoccupation with politeness and its influence on daily activities, like socialization, courtship and reading habits suggests that Enlightenment-inspired

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<sup>421</sup> See Aidan Day, *Romanticism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 6. See also Michael Curtin, "A Question of Manners," 396, 408.

codes of gentility did not disappear from society with the conservative backlash to the Age of Revolutions. Instead, the ideas were further shaped by the changing notions of popular religion and the place of the religious individual in society. While these standards were still present and practiced to a certain extent in Scotland, they were most readily embraced in Virginia where seemingly forgotten eighteenth-century codes of gentility played a role in shaping the image of Virginian politeness and manners.

One way in which this was indicated was the fact that many of these women frequently recorded not only their social interactions, but also the benefits they gained from them. According to the rules of politeness, conversation was an important part of polite sociability, but it could also be a method through which personal improvement was attained.<sup>422</sup> Fordyce for instance, wrote that young ladies should “endeavour to enliven and support the conversation,” in order that social interactions might help girls learn to “acquit themselves properly” in company. [VI, 99]

Writing in the 1840s about society after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus reflected that she knew many individuals “who would have improved by mixing more with one another.” [VII, 41] Although she was describing an event which would have been dictated by eighteenth-century manners, her reflections on the subject nearly forty years later indicate that she still believed in the beneficial elements of social interactions both for the individual and for society as a whole.

Elizabeth Grant was writing her memoirs as an elderly woman, however. It is to be expected that she would retain the morals and values in which she had been brought up. Another, more appropriate, example of this, therefore, comes from Virginia. Eleanor Hall Douglas, from a middling family in Lynchburg, Virginia maintained a lengthy correspondence with her family after her marriage. Douglas was still a young woman at the time this correspondence was exchanged. As she

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<sup>422</sup> Michele Cohen, “‘Familiar Conversation’: The Role of the ‘Familiar Format’ in Education in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England,” *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, with an introduction by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin, eds., (Surrey, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 99-116. See also, Norma Clarke, “Bluestocking Fictions: Devotional Writings, Didactic Literature and the Imperative of Female Improvement,” *Women, Gender and the Enlightenment*, Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, eds., (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 46-73.

wrote to one of her younger sisters on May 1, 1820, “I am anxiously interested in all your actions, your conduct in your work and conversation.” As she also wrote in August of 1821, “My dear Sister I earnestly beseech you to beware of vain jesting, light laughing and talking, in short all frivolous conversation it will draw your attention from study and poison your mind besides disgusting any genteel person you meet with.” She also encouraged her young sister to try to “improve” her manners and morality “every spare hour that you are not assisting Mother.”<sup>423</sup> In Scotland, but especially in Virginia, the diaries and personal family letters exchanged between women in the middle of the nineteenth century indicate not only that polite manners and conversation were valued aspects of behavior, but also that improvement could be attained by the social interactions.

Another skill which became a fixture of polite society into the mid-nineteenth century and beyond was the practice of visiting. The paying of domestic visits was popular in fashionable urban centers like London or Edinburgh, despite the fact that in these cities there were many other *public* opportunities for social interaction and polite display. Regardless, examples of domestic politeness are demonstrated in the journal of Hannah Hope Vere in London, and Elizabeth Grant described that it was common for ladies in Edinburgh to go calling.<sup>424</sup> Politeness, therefore, was largely an urban, public performance, but it was not restricted to the public sphere.

Visiting was a form of sociability popular in many locations and in many eras, furthermore, and was certainly not limited to the display of codes of eighteenth-century politeness. Where this practice was more prominent and most closely related to the standards of civil society created in the Scottish Enlightenment was in nineteenth-century Virginia. In Virginia, politeness, rather than being set in a fashionable urban center, since there were so few to be found, was instead displayed in the paying of social visits, and codes of hospitality.<sup>425</sup> As Hannah Philippa Hopkins of Virginia described to her sister in a letter dated from 1831, when she was

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<sup>423</sup> Eleanor Hall Douglas, Letters to her Sister, dated May 1, 1820 and August, 1821, Eleanor Hall Douglas Papers.

<sup>424</sup> One such example of this can be found in an entry dated February 3, 1844, in the Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, and in Elizabeth Grant, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, VII, 15. More secondary analysis of polite, urban life in Britain, see John Walton, “The Pleasures of Urbanity,” *The English Urban Landscape*, Philip Waller, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 269-89.

<sup>425</sup> For more on the divides between women’s sociability and urban and domestic space in the South, see Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 182.

approximately twenty years old, “Since I last wrote, my time has been entirely engrossed visiting & receiving visits...I have already paid upwards of 40 & I have yet 10 or 12 to make and these are merely the first and introductory calls for there are many who have returned my first visits, & to whom consequently I am indebted.” Furthermore, as a result of these visits, “I have made some very pleasant acquaintances - indeed the society here is delightful...there is so little of form & ceremony & so much of genuine politeness and hospitality.”<sup>426</sup>

Visiting to Virginians meant more than just a pleasant opportunity to interact with one’s neighbors, although that was certainly important in areas where women often found themselves isolated on rural farms.<sup>427</sup> More importantly, it was also closely related to the standards of genteel society, and provided the opportunities for polite display on the part of both the guest and the hostess. These polite ideals became a staple of Virginian identity in the nineteenth century due to the fact that Virginians pictured themselves as unique among Americans and among other Southerners by displaying the highest level of politeness and hospitality.<sup>428</sup>

Finally, the memoirs of Elizabeth Grant of Scotland and Nancy Johns Turner Hall of Virginia indicate the role of women as the purveyors of polite culture, sociability and conversation, originally a staple of eighteenth-century didactic literature, in the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Grant described the skills of her mother as she hosted visitors in their Highland estate at Rothiemurchus. As Grant reflected in her memoirs, even if the guests were far below the family in social status, her mother hosted them with gentility and politeness. In her hosting skills, Grant’s mother followed the advice of Hester Chapone to put her “companions in the most advantageous point of light, by giving each the opportunity of displaying their most agreeable talents, and by carefully avoiding all occasions of exposing their defects.” [162] She prepared herself to address each specific guest, learning details about their lives and speaking to them about these subjects. [VI, 235]

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<sup>426</sup> Letter from Hannah Philippa Ludwell Hopkins to her sister, Mary Anna Hopkins, May 6, 1831, Hopkins Family Papers.

<sup>427</sup> For more information on the isolation faced by plantation mistresses and how this fit with the control of Southern patriarchy, see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*, specifically Chapter IX.

<sup>428</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 114-5, 356.

Once again, it is important to acknowledge that Grant was reflecting as an elderly lady on events that took place in the early nineteenth century. Nancy Johns Turner Hall, however, writing in 1844, described a woman of her acquaintance who directed most social engagements in an undated time in Virginia, but probably in the 1820's.<sup>429</sup> "Mrs Gen'l Courtney was a Lady of remarkably fine person and manners. Her natural disposition was so amiable & her manners so very kind and obliging that everybody, rich and poor admired and loved her...a universal favorite." When Turner Hall was encouraged to socialize in activities that gave offense her religious sensibilities, it was the guiding presence of Mrs. Courtney that assured such offensive activities were never again proposed. "She was a model of politeness...When I was invited to a party of any kind, great pains [sic] was taken, not to introduce any thing they thought calculated to hurt my feelings. Cards, dancing, and even foolish plays, were never engaged in, in my presence." [O, 199]

It must be stressed that polite visits, skillful conversation, and graceful manners as a hostess were considered valuable social assets by many individuals in many different locations and were certainly not unique to Enlightenment-inspired civility. The notions of improvement and instruction gained by social intercourse for both the individual and for the greater good of society, however, were directly related to Enlightenment thought and to the polite morality of didactic literature.<sup>430</sup> These values were originally instilled by strands of Scottish Enlightenment moral philosophy, and became engrained within Virginian society by the turn of the nineteenth century in part through the teachings of conduct books and instructive novels. While still present in Scotland to a certain extent, polite moral philosophy especially shaped Virginian perceptions of their own gentility and manners by the middle of the nineteenth century. The culture of Southern hospitality and the graceful manners on which Virginians so prided themselves were not necessarily

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<sup>429</sup> Nancy Johns Turner Hall was married and divorced in approximately 1808, and then afterwards spent several years at home and then attending school and several more teaching, so it is feasible to infer that her acquaintance with this lady was sometime around 1820.

<sup>430</sup> For more on women and polite conversation, see Lawrence Klein, "Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, Judith Still and Michael Worton, ed., (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 100-15; Mary Catherine Moran, "The Commerce of the Sexes: Gender and the Social Sphere in Scottish Enlightenment Accounts of Civil Society." *Paradoxes of Civil Society: new Perspectives on Modern German and British History*, Frank Trentman, ed., (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 61-84.

unique to Virginia. Instead, the polite codes practiced by many Virginia ladies and gentlemen leading up to the American Civil War had deep roots connected to the polite morality originally practiced in eighteenth-century Scotland, and still valued there among genteel ladies of the Victorian era.

## **Conclusion**

These examples of polite practice among genteel young women in Scotland, and particularly in Virginia, were reflective of mostly public, social interactions. It can be assumed that the rules of politeness and the dictates of morality as instilled in conduct books and novels of manners would have been easier to follow in public, largely supervised settings in which the stakes were relatively low. To what extent did these young women continue to adhere to polite teachings in intimate and emotional concerns, such as matters of courtship and romance?

This study has presented evidence to support the notion that young women in both Virginia and Scotland from 1750 to 1850 were well versed in polite teachings, particularly those presented to them in conduct books and novels of manners. Such materials were easily accessible through personal or circulating libraries, and their correspondence indicates that if such works were not directly available, young women often received strictures on politeness and morality from older friends and relatives. Aside from guidance in polite behavior in public, this advice was often directed towards matters of the heart. As the following chapter will demonstrate, one of the most frequent topics of correspondence among women was news of courtships, love affairs and marriages. The following chapter will also explore the ways in which didactic teachings affected the rules of romance for young, eligible women.

In many aspects of their lives, from their reading habits to their social graces and their education, genteel Virginia ladies were aspiring to a code of ideal, womanly politeness similar to and beyond that which was practiced in eighteenth-century Scotland and Virginia identity was shaped by attitudes about morality and politeness into the middle decades of the nineteenth century. But what about courtship? Did Virginian women adhere any more strongly to polite teachings than their Scottish counterparts in matters of courtship? Did sexual standards become more lax in either

Scotland or Virginia with the formulation of the early republic? The final chapter of this study will assess the messages presented in polite literature regarding matters of love and romance, and then compare these idealized standards with the realities of young women's behavior in Scotland and Virginia.

## VI. Chapter V: Manners and Morality: The Influence of Didactic Literature on Women's Polite Courtship

### Introduction

Aside from the statistical popularity of conduct books, novels of manners, and other didactic pieces in Virginia and Scottish society, it is possible to see the preoccupation with polite behavior among personal correspondence and journals written by women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These personal documents demonstrate the extent to which these women in Virginia attempted to adapt their lives around the codes of politeness instilled in moralistic literature as compared to young women in similar social positions in Scotland. Evidence has revealed that some women adhered closely to the social rules presented didactic works such as Reverend Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), or Susan Ferrier's novel *Marriage* (1818), while others neglected the rules of politeness completely. More common than either of these extremes were women who chose to adapt genteel, polite codes in certain areas of their life, while disregarding them in others.

It is apparent from the writings of women in Virginia from 1750 to 1850 that politeness was an important feature to which many women aspired, and it was also a standard by which individuals and situations were judged. As Anne Blair [Banister] of Virginia wrote in a letter to her sister in 1768, "Balls both by Land and by Water in abundance: the Gentlemen of the Rippon are I think the most agreeable, affable I have ever met with...pleasing Countenances, such profiles, yet easy Behaviour [sic]...this Family received a great many Civility's from all the Gentlemen present."<sup>431</sup> The terms civility and politeness were often used interchangeably in describing agreeable manners, and Anne Blair was also observant of when such behavior was

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<sup>431</sup> Anne Blair to her sister, Mrs. Mary Braxton, at Newington, 1768, Blair, Banister, Braxton, Horner, and Whiting Papers, 1765-1890, 108 items. Hereafter referred to as the Anne Blair Papers, photocopies of the original documents are available at CW, PH 25. Original Documents are available at Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

neglected.<sup>432</sup> As she wrote in another letter, also to her sister, “did I tell you Major Watson's Family was arriv'd...but they were not so polite as I was.”<sup>433</sup> It is apparent by this exchange, that Anne Blair believed herself skilled enough in the codes of politeness to judge the manners, or the lack thereof, in others.

A more apt demonstration of polite behavior, and the changes that politeness underwent in Virginia as compared to Scotland, comes in the form of courtship practices. It was one thing to aspire to an ideal of polite morality, but it was another to practice the teachings of politeness in all aspects of life – particularly with regards to the courtships of genteel young women. It has been proven in this study that many of the women whose lives have been profiled in both Scotland and Virginia were familiar with didactic messages regarding their manners and morality as presented in conduct books and instructive novels, but was this reading only theoretical?

This chapter will explore the extent to which the principles instilled in conduct books and instructional novels affected the behavior of Virginia belles as they conducted their romantic relationships, and question if they adhered to these teachings differently than their counterparts in Scotland. Because women wrote so frequently about romantic attachments in their journals and letters, it is possible to compare the courtship experiences of Scottish and Virginian women after the American Revolution and into the nineteenth century to see if attitudes towards sex and love for women were still shaped by the teachings of didactic morality, or if women in Virginia found greater freedom in their romances when compared to young women in Scotland after the liberating influence of the American Revolution.

## **Part I: Polite Courtship: Romantic and Sexual Dynamics in Didactic Literature**

Polite courtship was a common topic for conduct books and novels of manners, with didactic literature setting the ideal standards which young women should maintain in their romantic interactions with the opposite sex. Conduct books often offered advice about the behaviors in women that were most appealing to men. As Reverend James Fordyce writes in his conduct book *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), “There

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<sup>432</sup> For more on civility in the Enlightenment, see Jennifer Mori, “Hosting the Grand Tour: Civility, Enlightenment and Culture, c. 1740-1790,” *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, with an introduction by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin, eds., (Surrey, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 117-30.

<sup>433</sup> Letter from Anne Blair to her sister, Mrs. Mary Braxton, August 21, 1769. Anne Blair Papers.



is nothing so engaging as bashful beauty...[men] refuse their admiration, where it is courted: where it seems rather shunned, they love to bestow it. The retiring graces have always been the most attractive."<sup>434</sup> Furthermore, instructive novels often involved an appropriate romance and demonstrated the ideal behaviors and characteristics that both sexes should be seeking in a marriage partner. This can be seen in earlier examples of the genre, such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), and later novels of manners like Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* and *The Inheritance* (1824). Once Richardson's Mr. B is reformed and happily married to Pamela, he reflects on the duties expected of married men and women. Pamela, and presumably the reader, is then to take these reflections as rules for married life.<sup>435</sup> In *The Inheritance*, Susan Ferrier contrasts Colonel Delmour and Mr. Lyndsay to examine the standards for ideal male behavior in matrimony, while the heroine Mary in *Marriage* demonstrates the ideal feminine behavior and morality.<sup>436</sup>

There was a strict code of conduct for both sexes, but these social rules were more rigid for genteel women.<sup>437</sup> Women were inundated with advice literature that demonstrated both the ideal standards for women's behavior regarding their interactions with the opposite sex, but also examples of behaviors that were to be avoided. Unlike the trajectory of women's education, patterns of courtship and

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<sup>434</sup> James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women. Two Volumes in One*, (Originally published, London, 1766. Published by M. Carey, Philadelphia: and I. Riley, New York. 1809), VI, 48-9, Available at CW. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

<sup>435</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; Or, Virtue Rewarded*, (Originally published in 1740, this edition published in 1741, London. Currently available in ECCO), 206-20.

<sup>436</sup> See Susan Ferrier, *The Inheritance*, (First Published in 1824 by William Blackwood and T. Cadell,). See also, Susan Ferrier, *Marriage*, (First Published in 1818 by William Blackwood and John Murray). Both works reprinted with an introduction by James E. M. Irvine in Bampton, Oxfordshire: Three Rivers Books, Ltd., 1984), all future page numbers relate to the 1984 editions. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

<sup>437</sup> For more on gender dynamics in Britain and America, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Jenni Calder, *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1976); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Suzanne Lebsock, "A Share of Honour", *Virginia Women 1600-1945*, (Richmond, Virginia: W. M. Brown & Son, 1984); Kathleen M. Brown, "Changed...into the Fashion of Man: The Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement," *The Devils Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds., (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 39-56; Joan R. Gundersen, *To Be Useful in the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790*, (New York: Twayne, 1996).

sexual expectations showed similarities not only between Virginia and Scotland, but also across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This chapter will challenge the notion put forward by several historians of the early republic that American women earned more romantic and sexual freedom following the American Revolution and finally, this chapter will prove that while both Scottish and Virginian women adhered to some aspects of didactic teachings regarding love and romance, they rejected other idealized standards of behavior.<sup>438</sup> As a result, this chapter will be organized thematically rather than chronologically. The most important themes of didactic texts will be analyzed regarding courtship and marriage, and these ideals will then be compared to the real life situations of women in Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

### **Part I.I: Before the Marriage: Women's Conduct and Appealing to Men**

The most important attribute that all genteel, marriageable young women were to possess in Scotland and Virginia was their sexual purity. In didactic literature, this was referred to as their virtue. It was possible for men to be virtuous as well. For men, virtue represented honorable participation in public society, and specifically for American men, this meant participation in the new republic.<sup>439</sup> For Virginian and Scottish women, the meanings were primarily related to sexual morality.<sup>440</sup> Richardson's *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded*, for instance, presents the inspirational story of a young woman who so adamantly defends her virtue against the advances of her employer that her purity reforms him, and she is rewarded with marriage. Susannah Rowson's *Charlotte Temple, or Charlotte: A Tale of Truth* (first published

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<sup>438</sup> For the historical argument that women gained increasing freedom with regards to marriage and courtship following the American Revolution, see Linda K. Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28, no 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment, (Summer, 1776): 187-205; see also Rosemarie Zagari, in "Manners, Morals, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44, no 2, (June, 1992): 192-215. For the ways in which literature supported the idealized image of the Republican Mother in the Northern states, rather than the South, see Sarah Robbins, "'The Future Good and Great of Our Land': Republican Mothers, Female Authors, and Domesticated Literacy in Antebellum New England," *New England Quarterly* 75, no 4 (2002): 562-91.

<sup>439</sup> For more information on Benjamin Franklin and the ideals of virtue, see, Jeff Osborn, "Benjamin Franklin and the Rhetoric of Virtuous Self-Fashioning in Eighteenth-Century America," *Literature & History* 17, no 2 (2008): 14-30.

<sup>440</sup> See Ruth H. Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs* 13, no 1 Women and the Political Process in the United States (Autumn, 1987): 37-58. For secondary analysis of the dangers of women's sexual desire in early America, and the role of fiction in restraining that desire, see Karen J. Renner, "Prostitution and the Control of Female Desire in Popular Antebellum Fiction." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65, no 2 (Sept., 2010): 166-91.

in Britain in 1791) demonstrates the reverse situation for readers as young Charlotte Temple is led away from her family and seduced following the false promises of marriage by her lover, and her story ends with abandonment and early death. Charlotte is a sympathetic fallen woman, but she has fallen all the same and must pay the consequences.<sup>441</sup> These stories mirrored the messages written in conduct books and advice manuals for young women.

It is important to note that – like most aspects of politeness – the idealized standards applied to genteel women and in the case of Virginia and the other Southern states, it applied only to white women. Philip Vickers Fithian wrote in his journal that he suspected his pupil Ben, the oldest son of Robert Carter, was sleeping with one of the slave women. He summarized the account given by those residing with the young woman, describing the appearance of “a Man or a Spirit...if it was Flesh & blood they are pretty confident that the design was either to rob the House or commit fornication with Sukey (a...Negro Girl about sixteen).”

Initially, Fithian wrote, “It is whispered to Day that B...is the Ghost that walk’d in the Nursery the other night, but I think the report is false,” but finally he conceded, “I begin to suspect him [Ben Carter] of being actually engaged what several allege against him – But I will keep off so long as I possibly can...so unwelcome & so Base a thought of its Reality.”<sup>442</sup> Shortly afterwards, Fithian wrote a letter to Ben Carter reprimanding him, presumably for this behavior, but the remains of the letter have been lost to history. Unlike Fithian, there were other men who justified the practice of sleeping with slaves as a way for men to engage in their natural urges with black women while protecting the chastity of white women.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> For reader responses to *Charlotte Temple*, see Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 70-9. For more information on the desire of authors to create sympathy for their fictional characters or fictional accounts, see Mark S. Phillips, “‘If Mrs. Mure Be Not Sorry for Poor King Charles’: History, the Novel and the Sentimental Reader,” *History Workshop Journal* 43, (1997): 101-31. See also Marion Rust, “What’s Wrong with ‘Charlotte Temple?’” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 60, no 1 Sexuality in Early America (Jan 2003): 99-118.

<sup>442</sup> See Philip Vickers Fithian’s journal entries from September 5, 6, and 11, 1774 in *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774*, Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1947).

<sup>443</sup> See also the letter written to Ben Carter on September 29, 1774. It is not obvious that Fithian reprimanded his pupil necessarily for this behavior, but the timing and content suggests the letter is related to this incident. For more information on the role of miscegenation in Southern, patriarchal society, see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of*

There were also different standards for poor white women in both Britain and America.

Among the lower orders, although sexual standards became more rigid as the nineteenth-century progressed, there remained an inherent assumption that men and women among the working poor were more likely to be sexually impure.<sup>444</sup> In her journal from 1793, Jane Innes of Edinburgh recounted a situation in which a genteel lady's servant girl was physically assaulted by men in Edinburgh's Cowgate. Rather than receiving sympathy, the servant girl was called by another women (not her employer) a "good for nothing slut" and told that such an assault "would make her more cautious in the future of what company she kept." Both Jane Innes and the maid's employer found the assault and the accusation groundless, but it is evident that at least one member of the party assumed the maid had behaved impurely with these men and was therefore deserving of such treatment.<sup>445</sup>

Returning to the standards for wealthy women, as Fordyce warns, "Remember how tender a thing a Woman's reputation is, how hard to preserve, and when lost how impossible to recover." [VI, 22] Fordyce assures his readers that these fallen women, who have foolishly surrendered their virtue, or at least allowed their modesty to be called into question are, "Forsaken... by the wretches that ruined them, abandoned by their relations, if any they have, commonly dreading the scorn of their own sex, and often too little considered by the virtuous part of ours." As he asks, "what can be expected, in general, from creatures who have put off the modesty of nature, and are propelled by evil habits, co-operating often with base associates...?"

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*Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also, Paul Finkelman, "Crimes of Love, Misdemeanors of Passion: The Regulation of Race and Sex in the Colonial South," 124-35, Kirsten Fischer, "'False, Feigned, and Scandalous Words': Sexual Slander and Racial Ideology among Whites in Colonial North Carolina," 139-53, Diane Miller Sommerville, "Rape, Race and Castration in Slave Law in the Colonial and Early South," 74-89, Peter Wallenstein, "Indian Foremothers: Race, Sex, Slavery, and Freedom in Early Virginia," in Clinton and Gillespie, eds., *The Devils Lane*, 57-73, for more information on race and sex and the eighteenth and nineteenth-century South.

<sup>444</sup> For more information about the sexual standards and stereotypes regarding primarily rural, working women, see Robin Ganev, "Milkmaids, Ploughmen, and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no 1 (Jan., 2007): 40-67. For more information on marriage laws in England, particularly as those laws impacted the lives of the laboring elements of society, see Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Marriage Act of 1753: 'A Most Cruel Law for the Fair Sex.'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no 3 (Spring, 1997): 233-54.

<sup>445</sup> Extracts from Jane Innes' Journal, June 27, 1793, Innes of Stowe Papers, available at the NRAS, GD113/5/46/1-6. For more information on premarital sex and illegitimacy in rural, early modern Scotland, see Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, *Girls in Trouble: Sexuality and Social Control in Rural Scotland 1660-1780*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press, 1998).

[26] It was not only the young woman who suffered following the loss of her virtue. As Fordyce further warns, “one young lady going astray shall subject her relations to such discredit and distress, as the united good conduct of all her brothers and sisters...shall scarce ever be able to repair.” [17]

The realistic consequences of the loss of a genteel young woman’s virtue were directly reflected in the letters exchanged between Mildred Smith and Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler, two young women just entering Virginia society in the late eighteenth century. Mildred wrote several letters to her friend Betsey (Elizabeth’s nickname as a girl), who was a self-confessed flirt. As Mildred wrote from Yorktown in a letter dated from 1780 about the influence of militia men on the young ladies, “You know well what it was with our own Officers but since the arrival of [the French troops] commanded by the Viscount and Cap'n. R - their heads seem turned.” She also assured Betsey, who had been forced to leave the excitement of Yorktown and the French officers to visit family in another part of Virginia, “thousand times have I said that it is well for my loved Betsy that she is removed from these scenes of amusement and dissipation, her giddy [head]...would also be turned were she here there is something so flattering in the attentions of these elegant French officers... that almost every girl of 16 w'd be [attracted].”<sup>446</sup>

Both Elizabeth Ambler and Mildred Smith soon saw first-hand the consequences of too much freedom with the opposite sex. As Mildred wrote to Betsey in 1782 about their mutual acquaintance, Rachel Warrington, “She is - Oh how shall I repeat, she is indeed lost to every thing that is dear to woman.”<sup>447</sup> Rachel Warrington became pregnant by one of the French officers who, despite being informed of her misfortune, returned to France and never saw her again.<sup>448</sup> In keeping with Fordyce’s warning, Rachel’s family was also included in her disgrace. As Elizabeth wrote to Mildred in 1786, Rachel’s aunt, who had been her guardian after the death of her parents, was, “Mortified and chagrined...at the conduct of her eldest ward Rachel.” Rachel’s sister Camilla was also affected by her sister’s loss of virtue. As quoted in another letter, “tho Camilla has not departed from [the] path of honour

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<sup>446</sup> Mildred Smith to Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler, 1780, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers, DMS 54.5, available at CW.

<sup>447</sup> Mildred Smith to Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler, 1782, Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Miss Caines, 1786, Ibid.

as her sister has yet in her conduct far from being dutiful and affectionate...poor thing, her sisters disgrace no doubt has soured her temper and time alone can reconcile her to the shock.”<sup>449</sup>

Although Rachel Warrington clearly suffered from her seduction and resulting pregnancy, she did not suffer the utter ruination and death of fictional heroines like Charlotte Temple. Although her situation was hardly enviable, and her many female acquaintances held her as an example to avoid, she was not forever ruined by the scandal. As Elizabeth Ambler wrote to her friend Miss Caines in England, Rachel was nevertheless, “treated kindly by her friends - and the Boy [her son] will under the direction of your Aunts Executors my Father & Mr A receive every advantage that can be given him.”<sup>450</sup> Furthermore, after several years, when her illegitimate son had nearly reached manhood, Rachel, “married an obscure man in her neighborhood, perhaps, this was the wisest [path?] she could take.”<sup>451</sup> Admittedly, this union was made with a man who, under normal circumstances, would have been considered inferior to her due to his position in life, but the fact that she was able to marry again at all differed from the fate of such fallen women in didactic literature. Rachel’s son also did not appear to suffer from his illegitimate birth and embarked on a successful career in the military.<sup>452</sup>

## **Part II: Living up to the Standards: Direct Comparisons of Women’s Behavior to Didactic Teachings**

Further in defiance of the conduct literature of the day, Elizabeth Ambler did not abandon her friend Rachel after this misfortune. In a work originally published in Britain but available to Williamsburg readers through the Williamsburg print shop, Lord Halifax’s *Advice to a Daughter* (1688), it is advised that young women of unstained reputations should not continue to associate with their friends who have surrendered their virtue.<sup>453</sup> “If it happeneth that your *Friend* should fall from the

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<sup>449</sup> Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Mildred Smith, January 10, 1786, Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Elizabeth Jacquelin Amber to Miss Caines, 1786, Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 1792.

<sup>452</sup> Ambler wrote in the introduction to her unfinished, semi-autobiographical novel, *Variety, or the Vicissitudes of Life* (undated), about Louis’ success.

<sup>453</sup> According to the sales catalogue advertised in the *Virginia Gazette*, a copy of Halifax’s *Advice to a Daughter* was available in September and November of 1770 and sold in January of 1771. Copies of the *Virginia Gazette* are available at CW.

State of *Innocence* after your Kindness was engaged to her...as soon as you are convinced by a *Rational Evidence*, you must, without breaking too *roughly*, make a far and quick *Retreat* from such from such a *Mistaken Acquaintance*: Else by moving *too slowly* from one that is so tainted, the Contagion may reach you so far as to give you part of the *Scandal*, though not of the *Guilt*.<sup>454</sup> As Mildred Smith wrote to Elizabeth Ambler when she heard of Rachel's disgrace, "I much fear intimate as your father is in the family...that he will break off all connection with them."<sup>455</sup>

In reality, neither Elizabeth's father nor Elizabeth herself distanced themselves from Rachel Warrington or any of her connections. Instead, Elizabeth wrote, "the former friendship that subsisted between us induces me to do every thing in my power to lessen her mortification."<sup>456</sup> While it does appear from her phrasing that she no longer considered Rachel Warrington an intimate friend, she did not abandon her. Rachel Warrington's views on the treatment she received from her friends can never be fully known, but Elizabeth Ambler's refusal to break off all connection with Warrington was nevertheless one of the many examples in which women went *against* the moral teachings put forward in didactic literature regarding ideas about virtue and courtship.<sup>457</sup>

As this example indicates, the rules dictating polite culture and presented in didactic literature represented the ideal, not necessarily the reality. Just as there were many displays of false politeness and individuals who neglected polite behavior entirely, there were also those who broke the rules of polite behavior during courtship, and yet still managed to avoid the fate of fictional Charlotte Temple, or the less dire, but still unfortunate fate of Rachel Warrington.

Closely related to women's virtue, conduct books and novels of politeness frowned upon women who schemed to draw the attention of the opposite sex. As Mrs. Virginia Cary states in her conduct book, *Letters on Female Character*,

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<sup>454</sup> Lord Marquess of Halifax, *The Lady's New-Year's-Gift or: Advice to a Daughter*, Originally Printed in London 1688, (This edition printed in 1934 by The Overbrook Press, Stamford: Connecticut), 77-8. Will hereafter be referred to in brackets within the text.

<sup>455</sup> Mildred Smith to Elizabeth Jacquelin Amber, 1782, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers.

<sup>456</sup> Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Miss Caines, 1786, Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> For more information about American women and premarital sex, see Ellen K. Rothman, *Hearts and Hands: A History of Courtship in America*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984), 54-5, 122-3. This work is focused on primarily Northern women, however, and the bulk of the evidence comes from the 1850's and 1860's. For more information on sex in the early republican era, see, Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 44, no 4 (Oct 1987): 689-721.

published in Richmond, Virginia in 1828, “Nothing can be more repulsive to the male sex, than an insight into the stratagems and devices of those pattern *ladies*.” As she further proclaims, “An honourable man is filled with disgust, when he sees the various manoeuvres [sic].”<sup>458</sup> Mrs. Cary was only repeating the advice of British moralists from the mid-eighteenth century. As Fordyce warns, “To gain men's affections, women in general are naturally desirous...But how much are you deceived, my fair friends, if you dream of taking that fort by storm!” He asserts that men were often charmed by the gentle, modest nature of women, “But if at any time by a forward appearance you betray a confidence in your charms, and by throwing them out upon us all at once, you seem resolved, as it were, to force our admiration; that moment we are on our guard, and your assaults are vain.” [VI, 27-8]

As part of their modesty, there were certain activities that women could appropriately engage in with their suitors, such as reading, walking and riding together,<sup>459</sup> but women were never to appear interested in marriage. Furthermore, women were not to show too obvious a regard or a preference for a man until she knew his feelings.<sup>460</sup> In her memoir, Elizabeth Grant in Scotland never admitted that she knew of her first lover's designs on marriage or that she was receptive to them. Although it is apparent that they spent a great deal of time together and that she was actively involved in the progression of their affair, Grant only began writing of her feelings when the romance was thwarted, not during the early stages of courtship.<sup>461</sup> Although she confessed that he paid her “serious attentions,” her own role in encouraging the courtship was never discussed.[VII, 15] Most likely with this anecdote, which was written years later, Grant was self-fashioning the ideal expectation of passive feminine behavior regarding the attentions of the opposite sex.

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<sup>458</sup> Virginia Cary, *Letters on Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother*, (Richmond, Virginia: A. Works, 1828), 44, available at CW. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

<sup>459</sup> Robert E. L. Debutts, Jr. “Lee in Love: Courtship and Correspondence in Antebellum Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 115, no 4 (2007): 490. Debutts has also transcribed Robert E. Lee's courtship letters to Mary Custis, and evidence of courtship behavior in the original letter comes on March 8, 1831.

<sup>460</sup> Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 34.

<sup>461</sup> Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady, Volumes One and Two*, with an introduction by Andrew Tod, ed., (First published 1898 by John Murray. First published Canongate Classics in 1988 by Canongate Publishing Ltd. This edition published in 1992 by Canongate Press: Edinburgh), VII, 14-6. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.



Other women were more forward in their acknowledgement that marriage was not only desirable, but also a crucial part of their future financial security. As Anne Blair of Virginia wrote in an undated letter to her sister in 1768, “Nothing my Dr Sis'r: (a Husband excepted) could give...more...satisfaction to [the] Happiness we now enjoy.”<sup>462</sup> Although this was undoubtedly meant as a humorous remark, it was also a shrewd observation regarding the realities of the role of marriage in a woman's life.

It was possible for a woman to become ridiculous in her scheming desires for marriage, as Elizabeth Grant described of a silly, aging, female acquaintance who imagined she had a romance with any man who gave her attention. As Grant wrote, “if anyone danced twice with her, she wriggles about like an eel when his name was mentioned. Every now and then we were informed in confidence that she was going to be married, or try to make up her mind to marry - that was the form. However, these affairs never progressed.”[VII, 82]

Similarly, according to the authors of didactic literature, women were not to take an aggressive role in their courtships. Once selected by a gentleman as the recipient of his attentions, they had the power to say “yes” or “no.” It was never considered that women should be able to select the man whose addresses they wished to hear. Instead, if they acknowledged the attentions at all, which could seem immodest, they should be flattered to have earned the notice of any man. Bachelorhood for men was a viable lifestyle, while a marriage for women, even a miserable one, was almost always preferable to spinsterhood.<sup>463</sup> As Gregory writes in *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, “What is commonly called love among you [women], is rather gratitude, and a partiality for the man who prefers you to the rest of your sex.”<sup>464</sup> The privilege of selection, therefore, lay almost entirely with the man, and women were to accept this selection with gratitude.

As diaries and letters from both Virginia reveal, this was not always the case. Rather than being grateful of men's attentions, some women openly mocked the

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<sup>462</sup> Anne Blair to Mrs. Mary Braxton, 1768, Anne Blair Papers.

<sup>463</sup> See Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980).

<sup>464</sup> John Gregory, “A Father's Legacy to his Daughters,” *The Lady's Pocket Library*, (Published in New York, by L. and F. Lockwood, no. 110 Chatham-Street, J&J. Harper, Fifth American Edition, 1818). Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text.

efforts of their suitors in their diaries or correspondence with friends.<sup>465</sup> Elizabeth Ambler boasted of the fact that she had two men competing for her hand. As she wrote to Mildred Smith in 1785, “just at this moment are at my entire disposal two of the very smartest Beaux this country can boast of - what think you of G & B both at my feet at once...there is much speculation going on as to the preference I shall give and tho I do not intend to practice one Coquettish air as you are pleased to call my little innocent gaieties yet for my own amusement do I intend to leave these speculative geniuses to their own conjectures for some time at least till I have made up my mind.”<sup>466</sup>

In another example, Anne Blair wrote to her sister Mrs. Mary Braxton of two female acquaintances fighting over a suitor in 1768, suggesting that they felt they had more power in the courtship process than serving the object of male selection. As she wrote, “Betsey gave for her Toast at Supper Mr. S[?] (a Liet: on Board y. Rippon) Miss Sally...disputed it with her.” Eventually, “it was agreed between them to decide it with Pistoles [sic] when they should go to Bed; no sooner had they got up Stairs then they advanced up close to each other, then turning short round Back to Back marched three steps forward [and] Fired.”<sup>467</sup> The details of this duel are unclear. As Blair described the scene, “so great was y. explosions, so suffocating the smell of Powder that I quitted ? Room, till by repeated Shouts I soon learned she had got (?) better of her Antagonist: - don't be alarm'd at the name of Pistol - they were themselves the Pistols, and their Ammunition nothing more then [sic] Wind.” Furthermore, Anne Blair did not appear to be surprised by the matter, suggesting that it was not uncommon for women to fight over the attentions of men.

Despite the potential to look foolish, immodest or both, young women still aspired to capture and felt possessive of male attention and this suggests that some women had, or at least believed they had, the typically male power of selection in their courtships. Elizabeth Lavalette [Barksdale], a young woman who kept a diary in 1836 Virginia, recorded a list of men that she had titled, “My boys,” and threatened,

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<sup>465</sup> For evidence of this, see Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 128-34.

<sup>466</sup> Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Mildred Smith, 1785, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers.

<sup>467</sup> Anne Blair to Mrs. Mary Braxton, 1768, Anne Blair Papers.

“All of these are my boys by right & if any body dares dispute the fact, let them come forward and do it to my face that I may give them what they deserve.”<sup>468</sup>

As she also recorded with on August 21, 1836, “Isaac Cole says to sister ‘look at Miss Lavalette how hard she is trying to take in that Mr Berkeley, although you see her looking so innocent- she is trying her very best to take him in’ but I say that was as grand a mistake as he ever told for I was trying to take him in.” In another display of her confidence in her charms over the opposite sex, she wrote in an entry from October, 1836, that she “had an introduction to Willie thought him the finest piece of flesh I had ever seen for a long time thought of one time of falling in love with him, but concluded as I had so many boys it would be my best plan to desist - at least for a time.” Finally, Elizabeth Lavalette confessed, “I found myself kneedeep [sic] in love with Isaac Cole *wanted to kiss him so bad I didn't know what do to.*” [Italics mine.]<sup>469</sup>

Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus wrote of a similar challenge to the standards of women’s virtue in describing her acquaintance Amelia. As she described of Amelia’s behavior with the opposite sex, “by her account, extraordinary personal liberties seemed to be taken with these young men with those young ladies without giving much offence, though she confessed she did not approve of all proceedings. She ‘hated,’ she said, ‘pawing men...it was quite unpleasant,’ she thought, ‘to have a great hot hand feeling all over one.’” [VII, 93] These confessions were not made in the manner of one who regretted her behavior. Instead, it almost appeared as though – at least from the perspective of Elizabeth Grant – that Amelia was boasting about her level of intimacy with these men.

Elizabeth Grant never again mentioned Amelia, so her fate is unknown. Regarding Elizabeth Lavalette, evidence would suggest Lavalette lived a relatively scandal-free life, and eventually married.<sup>470</sup> Also, despite Lavalette’s admissions of scheming to get male attention, as well as an acknowledgement of her own sexual urges, she nevertheless was careful to preserve her virtue. In the same entry in which

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<sup>468</sup> Elizabeth Lavalette Barksdale Diary, available at the VHS, Mss5:1B2475:1.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., entry from August 20, 1836. For more information on sexual passion in American women in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in the Northern states, see Ellen K. Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 52-3, 125.

<sup>470</sup> She also mentions a Charles Barksdale (her married name) as one of the many beaux who comes calling, although it is not made clear in this diary if he becomes her husband.

she described her introduction to Willie Wilson, she also mentioned walking alone with him, and said, “it was with the greatest difficulty I could keep my poor little fluttering heart from bounding to him.”<sup>471</sup> It can be concluded, therefore, that despite Elizabeth Lavalette’s freedom with her pen, she was not necessarily so free with her person.

While Elizabeth Lavalette recorded her desire to stray from traditional conduct book advice regarding courtship, the majority of women who kept diaries and letters in Scotland and Virginia from the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries adhered strictly to moralistic teachings. This can be seen in the journal of Hannah Hope Vere from London, writing in the 1840’s and thus further demonstrating the spread of polite morality. Although Vere was of Scottish descent and eventually married a Scot, she considered London to be her home.<sup>472</sup> As such, her entries can best be viewed as a London interpretation of didactic politeness. Vere was one of several young, unmarried women from a wealthy family, although this fact was apparently upsetting to her mother. As she wrote on November 7, 1841, “Mama not very well prophecied [sic] we should none of us marry.” In fact, the concern with finding a husband for Hannah Hope Vere was not just the preoccupation of her mother. As she recorded in early 1842, “Lady C Somerset talked to me a long time about le marriage de Lord H begging me to do more possible to catch him.”<sup>473</sup>

Despite such pressure from friends and relatives, Hannah Hope Vere managed to avoid resorting to a mercenary marriage or a marriage of convenience. She also took a practical and level-headed approach towards marriage and courtship, and did not allow herself to be misled by the promises of men, an idea fully in keeping with the teaching of didactic literature. Lord Halifax, for instance, advised young women to guard against men who would seek to mislead them. “You must be very cautious,” he warns, “not to gratifie [sic] these *Cameleons* [sic] at the price of bringing a *Cloud* upon your *Reputation*.” [64] Evidence of this in fictional form can

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid., entry from October, 1836, undated.

<sup>472</sup> “Hannah Charlotte Hope-Vere.” *The Peerage*, accessed online. Person Page 3664. Compiler, Daryl Lundy. Site last updated July 9, 2012. <http://thepeerage.com/p3664.htm#i36638>.

<sup>473</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, contained within the Papers of the Mackenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth (Seaforth Papers), available at the NRAS, GD46/15/286. This entry is undated, but probably from February or March.

be seen in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), when the character of Willoughby confesses that he originally set out to seduce Marianne, one of the novel's heroines. He later comes to regret this behavior, because he admits that he genuinely fell in love with Marianne, but this does not erase the fact that his original intention was to ruin her honor.<sup>474</sup> Fitting with this sense of self-preservation, Hope Vere wrote on October 2, 1841, "Mrs. Stevenson told me she saw Mrs. Grote on Saturday who told her SWM would certainly have proposed to me had he not been obliged to leave Town for the C. election. Told her said he admired me more than any woman he had ever seen and thought me the sweetest creature in the World...in spite of all this I think he will marry Miss Price before next year."<sup>475</sup>

Hannah Hope Vere had also been unlucky in love with a broken engagement, which remained painful. As a result, Vere had come to several conclusions due to her moral and religious views that were similar to the advice of didactic literature. Like Susan Ferrier's heroine Gertrude of *The Inheritance*, or Lady Emily of *Marriage*, Hannah Hope Vere took steps to minimize her disappointment in matters of the heart. Gertrude was forced to reevaluate what she sought in a romantic partner and change her own character to be worthy of such a man. [Vol III] Lady Emily was forced to accept that her attachment to the hero, Charles Lennox, was impossible because he already loved the morally superior heroine, Mary, and content herself with a respectable, though not necessarily ideal, marriage to her cousin. [529]

Similarly, Hannah Hope Vere recorded her efforts to avoid dwelling in her unhappiness in an exchange between herself and her friend's mother, Lady Hamlyn by stating, "She [Lady Hamlyn] said I have heard from your Mother that you have seen a good deal of you old lover again. Then went on to say I ought to forget and forgive. That love is such a rare possession it can not be too much prized."<sup>476</sup> She then wrote, "I answered her that I now felt dispassionately on this subject when my first acquaintance began with [her former fiancé] I was younger in romance and knowledge of the world than girls of my age. I endowed those who interested me with perfection perhaps beyond what Human Nature is gifted with. That Friendship

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<sup>474</sup> See also, Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, with a general introduction by Mark Schorer, The Laurel Jane Austen, (Originally published in 1811, this edition published in New York, New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1959), Volume 2, Chapter 8.

<sup>475</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, October 2, 1841.

<sup>476</sup> Journal of Hannah Hope Vere, December, 1841.

and Love are in my heart only durable as long as respect and admiration of is the soil from whence they spring.”

The notion of love based on mutual respect, rather than a romantic sense of passion, was an ideal that was endorsed in advice manuals and especially in the didactic fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The novels of romance so often warned against in didactic literature frequently included scenes of passionate love affairs, seduction and elopements. The authors of didactic and polite novels, particularly the female authors, avoided these themes or included them as negative examples to virtuous young women in order to distinguish themselves and their works from the novels of romance. “Women novelists especially seemed to have been conscious of their obligations to social and moral norms,” one study explains, and this is indicative in many of the themes of didactic fiction when portraying interactions between the sexes.<sup>477</sup>

### **Part II.I: Measuring the Impact of Didactic Literature: Did a Woman’s Reading Shape her Behavior?**

Some of the women explored in this study, like Frances Baylor Hill and Nancy Johns Turner Hall of Virginia, and Elizabeth Grant of Scotland, directly mentioned their reading of didactic texts in their letters, memoirs and diaries. Although they did not explicitly state that their behavior was guided by such standards, it can at least be inferred that their readings helped to shape what they viewed as appropriate, moral behavior for young women. In other instances, there is no direct mention of the influence of conduct books or instructive novels. Hannah Hope Vere did not specifically state in her journal that she had been influenced by conduct books or novels of manners, or that she ever read them.

The fact that she does not mention such reading does not necessarily mean that it did not take place.<sup>478</sup> For instance, after becoming acquainted with Maria Edgeworth, she wrote several complimentary statements regarding the author’s witty writing style, indicating familiarity with her works.<sup>479</sup> More importantly, her

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<sup>477</sup> Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, *Women’s Lives and the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Novel*, (Tampa: University of Florida Press, 1991), 93.

<sup>478</sup> For more on this reasoning regarding the reading of Southern women, see Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 111.

<sup>479</sup> See Chapter I for evidence of Hannah Hope Vere’s introduction to Maria Edgeworth and her familiarity with her work.

behavior was clearly in keeping with the ideals of didactic literature. Although Hope Vere was living in an era when many of these conduct books were considered outdated, and residing in London which would have given her a unique interpretation of polite codes, it is possible to infer that such views were so firmly rooted in British society, not only in Scottish society, that many women molded their behavior around the example set by eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century didactic literature that had become part of the public moral consciousness.

Other women in Virginia also appeared to have been influenced by didactic teachings, despite never recording their reading of such texts. Eleanor Hall Douglas of Virginia, for instance, practiced the appropriate behavior of the polite, modest lady in her correspondence with her fiancé John, who she eventually married. In one letter, John declared that he missed her dearly, but that they could not yet be together due to work and family commitments. As he wrote in this letter, dated from December 26, and 27, probably in 1817, “I have said your love would excuse me, heart gladdening thought! Yes, I indulge the belief that you love me, and I would not barter the pleasure arising from that belief for any earthly consideration.”<sup>480</sup> It is apparent from his phrasing that his fiancé Eleanor had not yet told him that she loved him, despite the fact that they were engaged.

There could be several reasons for this. It has been argued by historians that the only small measure of power held by women in their interactions with men was in the courtship phase and there were often jarring realities that went along with the shift from being a courted belle to a respectable wife.<sup>481</sup> It was in this time that women had their only means of authority in their ability to accept or refuse suitors. Many women viewed the shift from the household of their fathers or other male guardians to the household of their husbands as being a complete loss of freedom. This was demonstrated, for instance, in a letter written to Mrs. Mary Braxton of Virginia from John Williams upon the marriage of her daughter Betsey. As he wrote on October 3, 1780 his daughter wanted to attend the wedding in order to watch the

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<sup>480</sup> Eleanor Hall Douglas Papers, available at SBC, OCLC Number: 20737177, Letter is undated, but another courtship letter is dated from 1817, and other letters reveal that they were married by the 1820s.

<sup>481</sup> Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 27; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 87.

“last Act of Betsey’s Liberty.”<sup>482</sup> It was possible, therefore, that Eleanor Hall’s reluctance to declare her love was a demonstration of her continued state of freedom, until her wedding day.

Equally likely, however, was the influence of didactic literature. As Lord Halifax suggests in *Advice to a Daughter*, “To the Men you are to have a *Behaviour* which may secure you, without offending them...prevent all coarse *Railleries* or *unmannerly Freedoms*; *Looks* that forbid without *Rudeness*, and oblige without *Invitation*, or leaving room for the sawcy [sic] Inferences Men’s Vanity suggesteth to them upon the least Encouragements.”[65-6] It was possible for a woman to encourage a man to take liberties if she did not guard her virtue carefully enough. Such danger still existed for a woman who was engaged, due to the fact that engagements were easily broken.

If Eleanor Hall was perceived to have been too free with her affection towards John Douglas before they were married, and the engagement fell through, she might have found her reputation called into question and her prospects for another marriage limited.<sup>483</sup> Although Eleanor Hall did not record reading a conduct book or instructive novel, her other correspondence reveals a familiarity with their teachings. She was concerned with the idea of improvement, writing to her mother on January 8, 1820 that she wanted to start keeping a daily diary to record of her improvement over the course of a year, and also advised her younger sister in August of 1821, “I hope you will set at your book with double diligence and improve every spare hour that you are not assisting Mother.”<sup>484</sup>

This focus on moral diligence and civil improvement, rather than religious improvement, combined with her conduct in courtship, suggests Eleanor Hall Douglas was an advocate of polite morality similar to that demonstrated in conduct books. In describing the ideal woman, for instance, aside from his strictures on virtue, Fordyce described a lady who, “noble by her birth, but more noble by her

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<sup>482</sup> John Williams to Mrs. Mary Braxton, Anne Blair Papers, October 3, 1780. For secondary information, see Catherine Kerrison’s *Claiming the Pen*, Catherine Clinton’s *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) and Anne Firor Scott’s *The Southern Lady*, see Chapter 1; Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle: From Accomplished Lady to Confederate Composer*, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press), 158.

<sup>483</sup> See Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen*, 147.

<sup>484</sup> Eleanor Hall Douglas to her mother, January 8, 1820, and Eleanor Hall Douglas to her sister, August, 1821, Eleanor Hall Douglas Papers.



virtues...never sat idle in company, unless when compelled to it by the punctilio of ceremony, which she took care should happen as rarely as possible.” Furthermore, “at the same time she assisted in supporting the conversation, with an attention and capacity I have never seen exceeded. For the sake of variety and improvement, when in her own house, some one of the company would often read aloud, while she and her female visitants were thus employed.” [VI, 127] By aspiring to be virtuous, and to seek regular improvement through moral, social intercourse, Eleanor Hall Douglas was also aspiring to the didactic ideal.

More direct evidence of the impact of didactic literature comes from the mysterious love letters copied at the end of the diary of Frances Baylor Hill of Virginia.<sup>485</sup> The diary was written in 1797 when Frances was a young woman, most likely in her teens.<sup>486</sup> She was an avid reader, particularly of didactic literature. She described her delight in reading instructive novels like *Evelina*, but also conduct books such as Robert Dodsley’s *Oeconomy of Human Life* (1750) and Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters*. In later love letters, written or copied presumably by Francis Baylor Hill and exchanged with an anonymous admirer known only as R. R., the ardent suitor begged a moment alone with his beloved.

As he wrote, “Suffer me then, lovely Arbitress of my fate, to approach you in person, to breath [sic] in soft murmurs my passion to your ear, and offer the sacrifice of a heart overflowing with the most genuine & disinterest'd love; to gaze with extacy [sic] on the divine object of my wishes, to hear the music of her enchanting tongue!” The author of the responding letter was unwilling to allow such impropriety. As she wrote, “To say I look upon you with indifference, would be a piece of dissimulation, which I think, no decorum requires, & no custom can justify.” Furthermore, she promised that she was, “confident of your integrity, and so well convinced of my own discretion, that I shall not hesitate in granting you the interview you desire.” Her desires were outweighed, however, by her fears of the “prying curiosity of a malicious [sic] world, the censure of which might be fatally prejudicial to the reputation of... Your Narcissa.”

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<sup>485</sup> Diary of Frances Baylor Hill, available on microfilm at CW, M-1988. Also a transcript was published by William K. Bortorff and Roy C. Flannagan, eds., for Ohio University.

<sup>486</sup> The letters appear to have been written later, and there is some uncertainty as to who wrote them. The publishers of the diary think Frances Baylor Hill perhaps died two years after writing her journal, and probably did not write the letters.

There has been some speculation that Baylor Hill herself did not write these letters, as they seem more mature than her previous journal entries. Perhaps, these were the love letters of an older acquaintance or relative of Baylor Hill's, and she copied them over in her diary out of respect for their messages about love and conduct.<sup>487</sup> These mysteries aside, Baylor Hill expressed herself to be a fond reader of didactic literature, and the response of the female in the love letters also reveal a woman who was well aware of the consequences faced by a woman who was suspected to have allowed too much liberty with her person. If Frances Baylor Hill did write these letters herself, she demonstrated an adherence to the teachings of moralistic literature over her own passions.

This detail naturally leads to the question of why young women in Virginia indicated a more direct connection between their reading and their behavior towards the opposite sex when compared to their counterparts in Scotland. One possible reason for this could be based around the desire of elite Virginians to emulate aristocratic British behaviors, and that the only indications they had of such behaviors came from conduct books and other didactic texts. Virginia in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries was also lacking in fashionable urban centers when compared to Pennsylvania or Massachusetts, much less with England or Scotland. This distance from the cultural core seemed to strengthen the desire for gentility and respectability rather than to diminish it.<sup>488</sup> It is possible, therefore, that young women in London or Edinburgh were able to learn polite codes through their interactions in fashionable society, while young women in Virginia had no choice but to look to their didactic texts for guidance.

### **Part II.II: Marriage and the Marriage Partner: Solid Foundations for Matrimony**

Less common in didactic literature was advice about women's conduct after marriage.<sup>489</sup> Women were more often given lessons about ideal behavior before their marriage, and then instructed in the rearing and education of their children, with the

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<sup>487</sup> See the editors' notes on pages 4 and 52 of the transcribed and published version.

<sup>488</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), see Chapter VII.

<sup>489</sup> For secondary analysis of marriage in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see, Ingrid H. Tague, "Love, Honor, and Obedience: Fashionable Women and the Discourse of Marriage in the Early Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of British Studies* 40, no 1 (Jan. 2001): 76-106. Secondary analysis of American marriages was explored in greater detail later in the chapter.

expectation that this combination would result in a successful union. Women were also encouraged to marry gentlemen of respectable character, and this was thought to result in successful married life.

Women's writings from the eighteenth century, for instance, show the connections between the skills of politeness and happiness in marriage. In recording the memoirs of the Fletcher family of Saltoun, a prominent Scottish family with influence among Edinburgh's eighteenth-century, literary elite, Elizabeth Halkett recorded the successful marriage of one of the daughters of Lord Milton. As she wrote, "Margaret Eldest daughter to Lord Milton has been surpassed by none or any other family in delicacy of sentiment, Elegance of taste, or Politeness of Address, Adorned with all the grace of a pleasing countenance & that wit or genuine good sense could bestow, she won and Captivated the Hearts of all who were honoured with her friendship, & gained the esteem & respect of every one with whom she had any Connection."

Of Margaret's marriage, Halkett related that never was a pairing "Attended by a closer union sentiments or a more Compleat [sic] harmony of the best Affections of the Heart...Both [husband and wife] excelled in mental and polite accomplishments - in Elegance of taste, quickness of apprehension & all those graces which dignify & embelish [sic] superior station."<sup>490</sup> Part of the reason that this was such a successful match was the fact that both partners were equally genteel, and skilled in polite graces.

The motivations for marriage were another factor thought to determine a satisfying match. John Gregory in his *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* writes, "I wish you to marry for no other reason but to make yourself happier."<sup>491</sup> The notion that marriage should result in personal happiness and contentment was a code that applied to both men and women. In 1797, Elizabeth Gordon Scott of Virginia, the daughter of Dr. Gregory's friend Thomas Gordon, received happy news from her son, Robert Eden Scott, who had lived his whole life with his grandfather in Scotland. As he related, "My last letter to you written about a month ago was to

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<sup>490</sup> Elizabeth Halkett, *Memoir of the Fletchers of Saltoun*, contained at EUMML, La III, 95-6. Margaret Fletcher appears to have married in the mid-eighteenth century.

<sup>491</sup> John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, By John Gregory, M.D, (Originally published in London, 1774, currently available through ECCO), 49. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with page numbers referencing this specific edition.

inform you of the agreeable news of my having become a married man & being united to a lady possessed of every qualification calculated to ensure my happiness.”<sup>492</sup>

Furthermore, it was acknowledged by authors of didactic literature that one of the worst reasons to induce young people to marry was a desire for greater wealth. Of course, prospective couples were to be sensible in marriage and economic security was important, but advice literature warned against what was known against the mercenary marriage – a marriage made to increase or maintain a family’s wealth. As Gregory wrote, to “marry from vulgar and mercenary views” would “embitter all your married days.”[1774 edition, 52] Didactic novels, no doubt inspired by real situations, also contained examples of fortune seekers who broke the hearts of young women by abandoning them for richer prospects. In Scottish author Susan Ferrier’s novel, *The Inheritance*, for instance, the heroine, Gertrude St. Clair, is initially disappointed in love for that very reason.<sup>493</sup>

This fear is further reflected in correspondence of Jane Innes of Edinburgh with her fiancé Captain John Row in 1780. She had, apparently, been vague with him in the early stages of their courtship regarding her finances. As she wrote, “I am notwithstanding a little uneasy upon account of the empty state in which your pockets must necessarily be, from your late fees of Commission...In regards to my fortunes, I wrote of things darkly having been enjoined to silence with respect to family settlements.” But, “seeing that we are so near parting & that I shall have no other opportunity perhaps of being safely Explicit I shall set such reserve aside just so far as to inform you of my being fix'd in £5400 & this without any burthen of my mothers jointers & intirely [sic] at my Command.”<sup>494</sup> This suggests that Jane Innes had been careful in revealing her financial state to an impoverished suitor, to assure herself of his motives, and that is only his departure for service in the colonies that has encouraged her to reveal such details.

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<sup>492</sup> Robert Eden Scott to Elizabeth Gordon Scott, Peyton Family Papers, Section 29, March 29, 1797, available at the VHS, Mss1P4686.

<sup>493</sup> Gertrude’s relationship with Colonel Delmour ends in Volume III of the novel when her fortune disappears.

<sup>494</sup> Jane Innes to Captain Rowe, Innes of Stowe Papers, GD113/5/73b, specifically letters from March 2, 1780.

Although marriage was supposed to be based on love, young people were warned against confusing passion and lust for a sensible, moderate love. As Reverend James Fordyce assures his young readers, attraction based on physical appearances and external beauty will only lead young people astray. For those lovely features will fade, he promises, and there must be something more substantial to make a happy marriage. This was achieved therefore, by basing attraction and desire for marriage on a person's inner character, rather than outer good looks.[52-3]

This admonition was mirrored in the writings of Nancy Johns Turner Hall of Virginia. In describing her introduction to a man she admired, she consulted her father on the matter, and recorded his views on marriage: "Most young people fall violently in love with somebody, they don't know why or wherefore; only the fates have decreed that it shall be so. Marry this somebody they must, right or wrong...and to this identical first love or be ruined forever." Like Fordyce, he warned his daughter that attachments based only on passion will fade with time, but attraction based on the solid foundations of reason and respect, will only increase.<sup>495</sup> Ironically, Nancy Johns Turner Hall would have done better to have taken this advice as a girl of fifteen. For the union she was considering when her father gave her these lessons about love and matrimony was actually to be her second marriage.

Hall recorded her story as a warning to other young women, including how she was foolishly led into a marriage when she was only fifteen years old, and divorced in less than a year. Hall believed that it was her reading of inappropriate books, particularly novels, which skewed her ideas of romance, and led her to develop affection for an inappropriate young man.[T, 18-20] As she explained, "At the early age of fourteen I became acquainted with one (a stranger) to whom I attributed everything great & noble and excellent which my most sanguine imagination had painted... he used every art to decoy me from the oath of my duty to my parents; and a scene followed in which I encountered as many trials as the best of novel writers could wish for: and far more than even my disordered imagination could desire." [T, 20] Upon achieving her parent's consent for such a match, "As might have been expected I was disappointed...I was in love with a creature of my

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<sup>495</sup> Nancy Johns Turner Hall, *The Imaginist*, from the Original Document, 245, 242, both the typed transcript and the original document are available at the VHS, Mss5:9H1405:1. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with O for original document or T for transcript.

own imagination while the real being soon proved false, and altogether unworthy of my affections.” As a result, “In less than one short year, the Legislature of my State delivered me from my tormentor in answer to a petition signed...by five hundred of our best citizens.” [T, 21]

Although upon maturing, Turner Hall came to see the error of her ways, she continued to be humiliated by this unfortunate mistake, which affected a later opportunity for courtship. While a student at her brother’s school, Hall found herself the object of affection for another young man, a clergyman. Although she was not interested in any romantic attachments, she was humiliated when he discovered her prior indiscretion. As she wrote:

Mr. B. had seated himself by my side...he without seeming to be conscious of what he was doing, disengaged [sic] one of my hands and clasped it in both of his. I turned pale as death & endeavoured to withdraw my hand when the following conversation took place. My brother. Mr. B. do you know what you are doing? Mr. B. Why yes: I have got hold of this little girl’s hand. Brother (seriously) and did you know sir that little girl had been married? Mr. B. (relinquishing the hand I could not before withdraw.) No Sir I did not. I knew you had a sister...who was unfortunate but I thought this too young to be the one’...I could hold out no longer, and being unable to stir from my seat I covered my face with both my hands and burst into tears. [T, 29]

Years later, she found herself becoming attached to another man. As she explained, “On comparing our feelings and sentiments in regards to each other, after a lapse of a little less than two years, we found they were entirely the same.” Furthermore, in contrast to her previous attachment, “From this my young reader will learn that though, as may plainly be seen, we were sufficiently pleased with each other to make it very desirable that we should be...companions; there was no such desperate love between us, as to destroy us, if we had any how failed of the accomplishment of our wishes.” [O, 242] This was a partnership based on mutual respect and shared ideals, something the authors of didactic fiction would have deemed a harmonious and sensible union. As Susan Ferrier described of the hero of her novel, *The Inheritance*, “That he [Mr. Lyndsay] loved Gertrude he could no longer conceal from himself; but his love was not of that violent yet contracted nature, which seeks to engross and appropriate the affections exclusively to itself.

He had proposed a nobler aim – a purer gratification; his love was without idolatry, so it was free from selfishness.” [VII, 343]

A similar situation of youthful passion can be found in Scotland in the experience of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. Grant found that there was a long-standing disagreement between her father and the father of the young man she hoped to marry and that her family did not approve of the match. As her mother told her, “this disagreeable young man had no attaching qualities; he was neither good looking, nor well bred, nor clever, nor much considered by persons of judgment, and certainly by birth no way the equal of a Grant of Rothiemurchus.”[VII, 16]

Although Grant did not openly defy her family, she refused to relinquish her hopes of attachment. Finally, she was dissuaded by her lover’s mother, who she considered to be an “excellent and most sensible woman.” This lady “rationally and truthfully laid all the circumstances of our unhappy case before me, and bade me judge for my self [sic] on what was fitting for me to do.” The fact that both fathers would disapprove the match made it nearly impossible and this reminder of their familial obligations, “called forth feelings of duty, of self respect, of proper self sacrifice, in the place of mere passion that had hitherto governed me.”[VII, 21, 19-20]

Because the pair never married, it is evident that Grant did not consider a connection in which there was discord between their families to be a solid foundation for marriage. Furthermore, obedience to the will of parents was a common theme in didactic literature. In Susan Ferrier’s novel *Marriage*, when the heroine, Mary, is forbidden from marrying her true love, she defers to the wishes of her mother, unjust as they might have been, and waits until she is given permission.[586-94]

Grant broke off this romantic connection, although she suffered from melancholy for many months afterwards, much to the annoyance of her mother. While her father pitied her situation, her mother “would get angry and say such affectation was unendurable - girls in her day did as they were bid without fancying themselves heroines.”[VII, 21] Grant was eventually married at age thirty-two to a civil servant.[VII, 265] Grant’s previous experience and the level of influence on the part of both families of the young couple in love was one of the many criticisms leveled against British society by Americans who believed that they possessed more

freedom with regards to love and matrimony, and that parents had no place showing such control over their children's marriages.

### **Part III: After Independence: Revolutionary Changes in Courtship?**

From the evidence provided in personal documents, it can be concluded that didactic teachings about the selection of a suitable husband were similar across the Atlantic, and did not much vary over time. Furthermore, ideas surrounding women's virtue and sexual purity did not become less restrictive with the dawn of the new century in Scotland or Virginia. Despite the fact that the rejection of royal patriarchy in the American Revolution meant that many familial relationships in the new republic began to be reexamined, particularly between parents and children, the freedoms of girls was still restricted in order to protect their sexual reputation.<sup>496</sup> Also, the tradition of patriarchal dominance still existed in much of the new republic, particularly in the South.<sup>497</sup> Following the American Revolution, standards for women's sexual purity became more important with the newly designated role of women as the moral center of the new republic. This can be seen to be comparable to the situation in Britain, as the image of the sexually pure domestic angel became prominent with the turn of the nineteenth century.

From the contemporary, American point of view, however, there was a perception of one significant difference. It was believed by many Americans that they had more freedom and liberality of mind by the turn of the nineteenth century than their British counterparts, and this was expressed in American editions of British didactic literature. Analysis of an edition of a work entitled *The Lady's Pocket Library*, which was published in 1818 in New York, reveals an editor's comment which reflected supposedly conflicting views between America and Britain regarding marriage in the early nineteenth century.

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<sup>496</sup> Cynthia Kierner, "Introduction," *The Contrast: Manners, Morals and Authority in the Early American Republic*, Cynthia Kierner, ed., (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 6-7, 8.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*; See also, Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*, A Revised Edition, (New York: Hill and Wang, first published in 1984, this edition published in 1999), see Chapter I, "Edging Toward Equality," for more on the continued system of patriarchy in the new republic, particularly in the South. See also, Anne Firor Scott, "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy in the 1850s," *The Journal of American History* 61, no 1 (June, 1974): 52-64.



*The Lady's Pocket Library* includes several didactic pieces published into one text, including Hannah More's *Essays*, Hester Chapone's "Letter on the Government of the Temper," which was originally part of her 1773 publication *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, and Gregory's *Legacy*. As Gregory writes to his daughters about the selection of a husband, "you often marry, with little of either personal esteem or affection. Indeed, without an unusual share of natural sensibility, and very peculiar good fortune, a woman in this country has very little probability of marrying for love.\*" As the asterisk indicates, the editor has made a note to this sentence in which he states, "\*These observations are happily inapplicable in America, although perfectly just in Great Britain." [135]

Such a statement is indicative of wider American attitudes about their own relative liberties and freedoms, as compared to their perceptions of British tyranny.<sup>498</sup> For early republican readers, equally important to marrying for love was the notion that love was a matter of independent choice. Truly republican parents would never force their children into matrimony against their will and certainly not for material gain. Direct evidence of this comes from a letter printed in the *Virginia Gazette* on February 22, 1770. The letter, which was probably fictional, nevertheless detailed the plight of a young, presumably English, woman who had eloped with her lover to France to avoid the fate of being sold in marriage to a wealthy, titled man that she did not love. Although she apologized for the sin of elopement, she felt that it was less morally reprehensible than committing herself in matrimony to a man she did not love or respect.<sup>499</sup> This letter, whether it was indeed genuine or not, was written during a time of escalation in ideological conflicts between America and Britain and was undoubtedly published to emphasize the increasing American sentiment towards liberty and a rejection of British oppression. That Americans perceived this discrepancy between independence and subjugation, in all matters of life including the state of matrimony, between themselves and the British is apparent. Whether or not this was indeed the reality is less clear.

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<sup>498</sup> See the *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie & Dixon), June 7, 1770 about a woman killing herself over her father's harsh treatment of her lover. The story is sympathetic to her, implying her father was cruel, and can be read as a critique of the lack of freedom in this woman's marriage. See also the *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie & Dixon), June 14, 1770, an extract from a letter written to a London paper, supporting American virtue and praising their early struggles for independence.

<sup>499</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), February 22, 1770, 3:1, 2.

The historiography tends to support the early republican view.<sup>500</sup> It has been suggested by eminent historians that new republican values shaped ideas about matrimony and courtship following the American War for Independence. This is usually supported by evidence of parents refusing to impart their will regarding the marriage of their daughters. Liberty meant freedom of choice, and that was to prevail at all costs. It is important to note that while such ideas were indeed prevalent in America, they were not entirely foreign to moralists in Britain. Fordyce, for instance, originally writing in 1766, condemns the contemporary practice of parents selling their sons and daughters in marriage for material gain by stating that such parents are “Barbarous wretches, and base to offer thus to dispose of your children, as you would your cattle, to the highest bidder.”<sup>501</sup> Furthermore, in the memoirs of Elizabeth Grant, she wrote that another reason that her mother resented her despair following her broken engagement was that she feared being seen as having been cruel and heartless to her daughter. [VII, 32] This indicates that Grant’s mother knew that her actions would not have necessarily been approved of by many in their acquaintance, suggesting that the belief was common in Britain as well as America that parents should not have too much power over the marriages of their children.

It was also possible to marry in eighteenth-century Scotland without parental consent. This was often frowned against, and parents had various means of showing their displeasure when children married against their wishes, but they did not have the power to stop a marriage from taking place if both participants were of age.<sup>502</sup> Along the same lines, in America, parental consent, or at least a parental blessing, was still an important step in making the transition from courting to marriage. In his courting of seventeen year old Anne Miller in 1760, Robert Bolling was obliged to ask for Hugh Miller’s, Anne’s father, consent. He recorded that he “informed Mr.

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<sup>500</sup> See Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother;” see also Rosemarie Zagari, in “Manners, Morals, and the Republican Mother.” Catherine Clinton, however, in *The Other Civil War*, 3, acknowledges that most advances advocated for women during the Revolutionary War were mostly rhetoric and never fully came about.

<sup>501</sup> James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women, in Two Volumes*, (Originally published, London, 1766. Currently available through *ECCO*), VII, 191. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with page numbers specific to this edition with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second.

<sup>502</sup> Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, *Girls in Trouble*, 41.

Miller, by Message, of my Intentions.”<sup>503</sup> This courtship took place before the Revolution, but several decades later, while courting Mary Custis in the 1830’s, the future Civil War General Robert E. Lee was reluctant to view marriage as a certainty, even after his proposal had been accepted, until Custis’s father gave his consent.<sup>504</sup>

In the opposite circumstance, Nancy Johns Turner Hall’s parents refused to allow her to retreat from her engagement when she was only fifteen, most likely for fear that her behavior would lead to a scandal if she was not safely married. [T, 21] The notion that early republican parents allowed their children complete freedom with regards to marriage appears to have been inaccurate, at least in the case of Virginia. While it is true that parents did not often refuse their consent and in many instances it was merely a formality, this was in part because they had possessed control over the courtship process.<sup>505</sup>

Equally important, the assertions of early republican Americans and later historians that republican views shaped for the better interactions between men and women in America is not necessarily supported in examinations of other aspects of women's married lives. Coverture, a part of English Common Law and to a certain extent a part of Scottish Law<sup>506</sup> was also present in the early American republic. Coverture was the claiming of a woman's property and financial assets by her husband upon their marriage. Neither British or American women had the right to preserve all of their own property once bound in matrimony, and this practice lingered in both locations into the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>507</sup> Also, the

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<sup>503</sup> Robert Bolling’s account of the event is described in *Robert Bolling Woos Anne Miller: Love and Courtship in Colonial Virginia, 1760*, with an introduction by J. A. Leo Lemay, ed., (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1990), 53. For J. A. Leo Lemay’s analysis of the proposal, see “Introduction,” 8.

<sup>504</sup> Robert E. L. Debutts, Jr. “Lee in Love: Courtship and Correspondence in Antebellum Virginia,” 498. Ellen K. Rothman presents a contradictory argument in *Hearts and Hands*, page 25, however, her material is limited to Northern states.

<sup>505</sup> Jabour, *Scarlett’s Sisters*, 164.

<sup>506</sup> According to the article by Katie Barclay, “Negotiating Patriarchy: The Marriage of Anna Potts and Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk, 1731-1744,” *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 28, (Nov., 2008): 97, coverture in Scotland did not necessarily deprive a woman of every item she brought to the marriage.

<sup>507</sup> For more information on coverture in England, see Margot Finn, “Women, Consumption and Coverture in England, c. 1760-1860,” *The Historical Journal*, 39, no 3 (Sept., 1996): 703-22. For more information about women’s rights in marriage in America, versus in Britain, and work on the American practice of coverture, see Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, 45-50. See also Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), Chapter V. for more on women and property in America,

ideals of the Revolution did not result in increased opportunities for women to end unhappy or abusive marriages. Linda Kerber's examination of early republican divorce petitions was only applicable to the Northern states, specifically Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Divorces in the Southern states remained difficult to attain, and therefore rare.<sup>508</sup> In fact, between Scotland, England, and the newly formed United States, the country with the most favorable divorce laws to all individuals, including women, was Scotland. America was similar to England regarding divorce laws and both nations fell behind other Protestant countries.<sup>509</sup>

Equally important, secondary literature by historians of the nineteenth-century American South suggests a heavily patriarchal social system.<sup>510</sup> In Virginia, women were most able to exercise their liberty of choice in the courtship phases of matrimony. After a couple were officially married, direct comparison reveals that in both a republic and in a monarchy and even in happy and affectionate marriages, women were equally inferior in the eyes of society and of the law.

Finally, an important term in the historiography that has emerged in the twentieth century relating to domestic and marital relations between men and women of the American republic that made them distinct trajectory from Great Britain is Linda Kerber's definition of Republican Motherhood. Under the theory of Republican Motherhood, women's traditional domestic roles of wife and mother were re-evaluated after the American Revolution. In order for a republic to survive, its citizens had to be virtuous. For men, virtue was a public obligation. For women, virtue was instead a domestic obligation, including sexual fidelity, but it was by no means private or apolitical. Women were designated as the keepers of virtue, responsible for preserving the republic by maintaining a strict eye on the virtue of their husbands and brothers, and indoctrinating their children with virtuous, republican principles to assure to continued survival of the new government beyond

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see Marylyn Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

<sup>508</sup> Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, Chapter VI.

<sup>509</sup> See Leah Leneman, "'Disregarding the Matrimonial Vows': Divorce in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century Scotland," *Journal of Social History* 30, no 2. (Winter, 1996): 465-482; Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England, 1530-1987*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>510</sup> For such a description of the South, see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*; Anne Firor Scott, *Southern Lady*; Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen*. Contemporary evidence for a male-dominated social system can also be seen in writings of Virginia Cary, *Letters on Female Character*, 23 (1828).

the current generation. This ideology resulted in the politicization of what had previously been women's private roles in the domestic sphere and also emerged as a direct result of the American Revolution.

The idea that women were the regulators of social morals, however, was also a part of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy.<sup>511</sup> Scottish Enlightenment thinkers believed that it was essential for any civilized society that its participants be able to engage in polite sociability and women were considered to be the moral stronghold of this civilized new society. They were by nature sympathetic to the human plight and the suffering of others. It was under the influence of women that men moderated their own behavior to publicly participate in genteel society, and women were believed to have the power to morally reform the objectionable, uncivilized behaviors of men.<sup>512</sup>

Furthermore, Scottish moral philosophers regarded the morality and sympathy of virtuous and genteel women as the standard by which civilized society was measured. Summarizing the views of Lord Kames, historian Mary Catherine Moran remarks that he believed women were, “characterized by general and apparently universal qualities and faculties – a talent for conversation, delicate sentiments, and gentle manners – that may or may not be perceived by men, depending on their particular stage of development.”<sup>513</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed, women in Scotland held a similar power to their early republican sisters in that they were seen as the source of morality in the home. Also like their American sisters, their virtue became domesticated as the moral woman and the moral household came to be seen as a haven, removed from the increasing pressures and immoralities of a newly emerging urban, industrial Scotland.<sup>514</sup>

This idea was also embraced by Scottish didactic moralists like John Gregory and Reverend Fordyce. Gregory writes to his daughters that he cannot instruct them

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<sup>511</sup> For more information, see the arguments of Zagari, “Manners, Morals, and the Republican Mother.”

<sup>512</sup> David Hume, “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences,” *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects, By David Hume, Esq.*, (A new edition, London, 1758. Currently available through ECCO), 83.

<sup>513</sup> Mary Catherine Moran, “The Commerce of the Sexes: Gender and the Social Sphere in Scottish Enlightenment Accounts of Civil Society,” *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History*, Frank Trentman, ed., (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 70.

<sup>514</sup> Lesley A. Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland 1830 to 1930*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 2000), 45, 30.

in the rules of polite society so well as their late mother might have done,[1774 edition, 3] while Fordyce argues the ability of women to refine the mannerisms of men. “Their sentiments and deportment,” he writes, “will contract a grace.”[12] Fordyce also emphasized the moral role of the mother and the importance of her virtuous example on her children: “You insinuate knowledge and piety by your conversation and example.” [1766 edition, VII, 36] This example benefitted not only individual families, but society as a whole.

What was unique to the early American republic, however, was the increasingly political nature of women's domestic role. Fordyce was offering advice on a general social good, while American theorists like Judith Sargent Murray and Benjamin Rush argued that the future of the republic was at stake, and virtue was in the hands of its mothers.<sup>515</sup> With the progression of the nineteenth century, particularly in the South in the decades before the Civil War, the image of the republican mother culminated in the plantation mistress, who was idealized throughout her courtship as a belle to her role as wife, mother, and household manager, as a paragon of morality, virtue, femininity and economy.<sup>516</sup> While this image was heightened by early republican notions that a society's survival depended on the genteel morality of its women, such ideas had root in eighteenth century, Scottish standards of polite, feminine gentility which acted as the measure of true politeness and sociability.

#### **Part IV: Against the Ideal: Unhappy Marriages**

Didactic literature was mostly silent on how a woman should endure a marriage that was less than satisfactory. Despite being full of examples of young couples who foolishly rushed into matrimony, few didactic novels or conduct books then told how to make the most of what was almost certain to be an unhappy marriage. The closest most came was to advise women to try to avoid marital problems before they could begin – and this often came in the form of encouraging wives to be obedient and submissive to the will of their husbands.

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<sup>515</sup> See Kerber's analysis of the view of Judith Sargent Murray and Benjamin Rush in *Women of the Republic*, Chapter VII.

<sup>516</sup> This argument is presented in Cynthia A. Kierner, “Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies,” *The Journal of Southern History* 62, no 3 (Aug., 1996): 450.

The message put forward in most didactic literature was that men should be the guides of even the most educated women. Basing her views on the Biblical tale of Eve, who led Adam astray and caused the fall of man, author Virginia Cary instructs her female readers, “Without entering into the often contested subject of the relative moral strength of the two sexes, I can safely declare to women, with the Bible in my hand, that her husband is to have rule over her...I never knew an instance of female supremacy in conjugal life, that did not eventuate in misfortune.”[23] As she explains, “The present age has sanctioned an opinion, that women are equal to men in mental capacity. This is a mistake...there is a decided inferiority of intellectual strength in women. Their proper sphere in social life, requires different qualities, and may be filled with propriety, without entering into collision with the stronger sex.”[43]

Even didactic literature which acknowledged that certain women were more intelligent than their husbands still conceded that it was the natural order for men to rule women. As a British conduct book, written by Lady Sarah Pennington, urged, “If, unfortunately, the superiority of understanding is on her side, the apparent consciousness of that superiority...renders her contemptible...” she writes. “When he [the husband] judges wrong, never flatly contradict, but lead him...into another opinion, in so discreet a manner that it may appear entirely his own...”<sup>517</sup> In her view, a man’s authority should at least appear to be superior to that of his wife. Any woman who did rule her husband must do so discreetly, for to be obvious in her power was to incur social disapproval and marital discord.

In an example from Scotland in the early nineteenth century, Elizabeth Grant described a real life account of such a match, a couple she referred to as Laird and Lady Logie. Of Laird Logie, she wrote that he was wealthy and kind, but not intelligent. Despite this, “He had married rather late in life one of the cleverest women of the age.” The match was a happy one, however, due to the fact that “he looked up to her without being afraid of her, for she gave herself no superior airs, indeed she set out so resolutely on St Paul's advice to be subject to her husband.” This woman was so devoted to her husband and so blind to his mental defects that, according to Grant, “she actually got into the habit of thinking he had judgment; and

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<sup>517</sup> Lady Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters, in a Letter to Miss Pennington*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1773, currently available through ECCO), 112-3.

my Mother remembered a whole roomful of people hardly able to keep their countenances, when she, giving her opinion on some disputed matter, clinched the argument as she supposed, by adding, 'It's not my own conviction only, but...[her husband] says so.'" [VI, 126] The reaction of her social circle when Lady Logie expressed her willingness to yield to her husband's judgment reflected yet another discrepancy between the advice given in didactic literature and the realities of marriage and society. Although Lady Logie was following the dictates of polite, moral teachings, others viewed her blindness on her husband's account as ridiculous.

Another earlier example relating to the expectation that women would submit willingly to the dictates of their husbands, comes from the correspondence of Jane Innes of Stowe of Edinburgh, and her letters to her fiancé, Captain John Row, written from 1778 to 1780. Captain Row was an officer stationed first in England, and then later in the colonies with the escalation of the American conflict. In these exchanges, Jane Innes frequently told her fiancé how she expected him to behave while acting as an officer abroad. In a letter dated, September 12, 1778 she demanded of him why he wanted to be stationed abroad and told him not only that she thought this was a mistake because of the danger and risk to his life, but also that she believed it to be a selfish act on his part to leave his friends and family voluntarily.<sup>518</sup>

When it became apparent that he was indeed going to serve, she gave instructions regarding his moral behavior. "There is another Evil which I am informed has insinuated itself & become very prevalent amongst people of your profession," she wrote in a letter dated March 2, 1780, "I mean gaming than which nothing can prove more dangerous to a man's fortune or even principles, let me then intreat [sic] you to keep yourself clear of this contagion to which Leisure, & the men of Rank, & fortune of which your Regiment is composed will no doubt combine to tempt you."<sup>519</sup> Jane Innes expected Captain Row to sacrifice the expected social customs of his rank and his sex in order to obey her wishes. By interfering in the affairs of her husband-to-be Jane was going directly against didactic teachings.

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<sup>518</sup> Jane Innes to Captain John Row, September 12, 1778, Innes of Stowe Papers, GD113/5/73b.

<sup>519</sup> Jane Innes to Captain John Row, March 2, 1780, Ibid.



Jane and Captain Row never married due to the fact that he died while serving in Jamaica.<sup>520</sup> It is possible, therefore, that relations between John and Jane might have changed when they were married due to the fact that, as many didactic authors warned, men would tolerate certain behaviors from mistresses and lovers that they would not tolerate from their wives.<sup>521</sup> Such changing expectations were suggested in the letters of John Row, when it became apparent that Jane's father no longer opposed his suit.<sup>522</sup> No longer the doting lover, he started to address Jane as his future wife and dismissed many of her concerns regarding his safety, welfare and behavior with the assurance that, "I still trust that you would at all times have fortitude sufficient to submit with ease and cheerfulness [sic] to any scheme that might in the end apparently tend to my advantages though disagreeable perhaps in every other particular."<sup>523</sup> He believed that what benefitted him was also beneficial to her and he expected that she would "submit" to what he deemed best for them both. Despite Jane Innes' assertive letters and active interest in her fiancé's affairs, which went against didactic teaching, it appeared that John Row intended to uphold such gendered expectations of behavior when they were married.

In Virginia, both before and after the American Revolution, the dynamic between the sexes was no different, as indicated in a letter written by Elizabeth Gordon Scott to her daughter, Margaret, just before Margaret's marriage. Elizabeth was widowed when Margaret was still a child, and as she wrote, "The giving up at so early a period of life the trust reposed in me by your deceased Father still hangs heavy on my mind - and nothing could console me, but the belief that I have transferred it to one who will faithfully discharge my duties - and prove to his timid Rosina, her Guardian, protector & guide." It is evident that Margaret's future husband was to assume a paternal, authoritative role, as well as a conjugal one. Elizabeth told her daughter how lucky she was to have the opportunity, "of attaining some accomplishments & that outward polish & knowledge of the world which is

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<sup>520</sup> See the biographical information provided in the Innes of Stowe Papers. See also, Alison Duncan, "The Sword and the Pen: The Role of Correspondence in the Advancement Tactics of Eighteenth-Century Military Officers," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 29, (Nov., 2009): 121.

<sup>521</sup> Lord Halifax in *Advice to a Daughter* makes reference to the fact that relations changed between husband and wives after marriage, 94-5. See also Virginia Cary, *Letters on Female Character*, 95-6.

<sup>522</sup> Captain Rowe to Jane Innes, Innes of Stowe Papers, GD113/5/73a, specifically letters from January 20, 1778 and January 21, 1778.

<sup>523</sup> John Row to Jane Innes, May 20, 1778, Ibid.

often too dearly bought - & can no where be so safely attained as under the eye of an affectionate Husband.” Furthermore, she assured her daughter that, “Your affection for him will make you study that behaviour which is most suitable to his taste.”<sup>524</sup> Although not directly stating that her daughter is to be obedient, it is evident from Scott’s writings that she expected men to have the principal position of authority in marriage.

In this same letter she mentioned the education she received from her father, and then from her husband, who were both men of religion and philosophy. Finally, she referred her daughter to the moral and philosophical teachings of Dr. Gregory, a family friend. A friendly relationship was also maintained with Dr. Gregory’s children, most specifically his son James, who saw to the publication of his work.<sup>525</sup> Even though Elizabeth Gordon Scott was residing in Virginia, she was sharing with her daughter views and ideas she was taught in her native Scotland which were shaped by Scottish moral philosophy.

One of the few didactic works to address the pitfalls of married life for women, and offer advice on how to cope with such situations, was Lord Halifax’s *Advice to a Daughter*. In this work, Halifax instructs women on how to make the best of unfortunate circumstances, such as drunken husbands. Although, Halifax concedes that such a man is often a common brute, and that drink is a terrible vice, he also tells women that such a flaw can be used to her advantage. A husband’s drinking, for instance, could “throw a *Veil* over your Mistakes, and will set out and improve every thing you do...Others will like him less, and by that means he may perhaps like you more.” [27]<sup>526</sup>

Halifax fails to acknowledge one of the most tragic consequences of a drunken husband. In a letter written on July 13, 1837, Hannah Philippa Hopkins of Virginia begged her sister, Lucy Lyons Turner, to remove herself from, “the recent disturbances you have experienced,” regarding her marriage. As Hopkins warned,

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<sup>524</sup> Elizabeth Gordon Scott to Margaret Christian Scott Peyton, December 12, 1800, Peyton Family Papers.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid. Information on the publication of *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* is available in “Gregory, John (1724–1773),” Paul Lawrence in *ODNB*.

<sup>526</sup> Ruth Bernard Yeazell, in *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 52-3, asserts that Halifax was somewhat unique and cynical in his views towards marriage and that not all conduct books encouraged such deliberate ignorance on the part of women with regards to their husbands’ infidelity, which he advocates on pages 21-2 of this edition.

“suppose my dear sister that that wretch being urged on & instigated - in a moment of delirium from passion & intemperance, should deprive you of life.” She was further amazed that, facing such a threat, her sister was unwilling to flee the house she shared with this man to the safety of her family.<sup>527</sup> Also in this letter, Hopkins gave her sister advice on how to handle her property and slaves so that she did not have to live in poverty. Apparently, her sister’s main inducement to stay came not from any lingering affection for her abusive husband, but from a fear of losing her source of income and financial security and becoming dependent on relatives.

Finally, after months of pleading from Hopkins, a letter from Turner from January 3, 1838 revealed that she had separated from her husband and still managed to provide for herself – although she was not divorced, supporting earlier assertions that divorce in Southern states was very difficult to attain even in the case of abusive husbands. In this aspect of married life, the didactic literature did not fully mirror the reality, and it never entertained the idea that a wife should think of leaving her husband. If she did – as Lucy Lyons Turner demonstrated – she had to fear her husband’s retribution, social disgrace, and financial ruin.<sup>528</sup>

## Conclusion

Personal documents and letters exchanged between women in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Virginia and Scotland, reveal a clear connection between the rules of politeness in didactic literature and the practical standards of behavior. As the previous chapters have shown, there was a direct correlation between the teachings of didactic literature and the realities of women’s lives relating to their

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<sup>527</sup>Hannah Philippa Hopkins Lee to Lucy Lyons Turner, July 13, 1837, Hopkins Family Papers, contained at the VHS, Mss1H7779a Section 3.

<sup>528</sup> For secondary analysis of domestic abuse in eighteenth-century Britain, see Elizabeth Foyster, “Creating a Veil of Silence? Politeness and Marital Violence in the English Household,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series*, 12 (2002): 395-415. Halifax also, in the final pages of the section entitled “Husband,” gives advice on the state of widowhood. For more information on widows in Scotland, see Stana Nenadic, “The Impact of the Military on Highland Gentry Families, c. 1730-1830,” *Scottish Historical Review* 85 (April, 2006): 75-99. For more on widows and spinsters, see also Stana Nenadic, “Experience and Expectations in the Transformation of the Highland Gentlewoman, 1680 to 1820,” *Scottish History Review* 80, no 2 (Oct., 2001); 214-8. For more on spinsters in Britain and America, see Bridget Hill, *Women Alone: Spinsters in England 1660-1850*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, Chapter 2.

reading habits, their education, and in many cases, in their public behavior and their social interactions.

The aspect of women's lives in both Scotland and Virginia that contradicted this model was their experience of love, romance and courtship. The examination of the personal documents of women from Scotland and Virginia through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicates that the progression of time, the distance of an ocean, and the upheaval of revolutionary conflict did not necessarily result in drastic changes regarding women's experience of courtship and marriage. Polite courtship practices and customs were similar between Scotland and Virginia in the eighteenth century, but the experience of women before and after marriage did not change in many respects with the progression of the nineteenth century. This is surprising given the supposedly liberating influence of the American Revolution.

Although the attitudes of contemporary editors and authors indicate that many Americans *believed* themselves to have more favorable expectations from love and matrimony than young women in Britain, a comparison of Scottish and Virginian documents, as well as the realities of women's legal rights does not reflect this to have been the case. Furthermore, the historiography which suggests drastic social shifts following the ideological implications of Republican Motherhood is incomplete since it largely neglects the experiences of women in the Southern States. It would appear, therefore, that the experience of women as lovers and as wives in Scotland and Virginia through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries had more similarities than differences.

Finally, it does not appear that Virginia women adhered any more or less to didactic teachings than their Scottish cousins in the eighteenth or in the nineteenth century – although, those who did follow polite standards in Virginia directly referenced conduct books and didactic novels in shaping their behavior, while Scottish women did not. While it can be concluded from this chapter that didactic texts were reflective of many of the standards and values of the day concerning women's sexual morality, there were also cases in which both Virginian and Scottish women abandoned these social codes with relatively few consequences. Despite the fact that Anne Blair wrote of witnessing an event which flouted the rules of polite courtship in 1760's Virginia, Hannah Hope Vere reflected didactic attitudes and

Scottish moral philosophy regarding love and marriage in the mid-nineteenth century in London. Despite the fact that Jane Innes of Stowe in Edinburgh was demanding with her fiancé regarding their future and financial matters in 1778, both Eleanor Hall Douglas and the anonymous letters in the Frances Baylor Hill diary demonstrate the image of didactic female virtue and discretion in early republican Virginia.

Given that many of the women profiled in this chapter also wrote about other aspects of their lives in which they did directly attempt to follow didactic morals, it can be inferred that marriage was such an important and personal matter that these women sometimes had no incentive and no desire to follow the strict codes of conduct. It can further be deduced that many conduct books and novels focused on the themes of romance and sexual purity was because so many otherwise polite and genteel young women were willing to ignore those teachings when their hearts or their futures were at stake.

Just as it is important not to assume that all women lived up to the didactic standards, it is also important not to assume that all women deviated from them. Comments such as those made by Robert Bolling in his courtship journal, in which he states that sexual standards in Virginia were known for “permitting many Freedoms,” has led some historians to perhaps overestimate sexual activity before marriage and the lack of parental supervision in courtship, particularly in America.<sup>529</sup> While the example of Rachel Warrington’s pregnancy might support this conclusion of lax sexual standards, the fact that Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler was removed at the command of her family from such inappropriate mixings between the sexes contradicts it.<sup>530</sup>

In both Scotland and Virginia, there were also discrepancies between the expected behavior of women of the lower orders and the genteel women whose lives have been explored in this study, and in Virginia especially, the role of slave women in preserving the image of virtue and chastity in white women is impossible to

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<sup>529</sup> See Robert Bolling, *Robert Bolling Woos Anne Miller*, 52. For historical analysis suggesting widespread sexual freedom and lack of parental involvement, see J. A. Leo Lemay’s introduction to this work on pages 5-6. See also Ellen K. Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 54-5, 122-3.

<sup>530</sup> For references of Elizabeth Ambler’s father removing her from society, see the letter from Mildred Smith from 1780, as well as her own letter to her sister Nancy from 1810. See also Elizabeth Ambler’s unfinished work, *Variety or the Vicissitudes of Life*, for reference to her being removed from potentially dangerous social situations, as well as Rachel Warrington’s lack of guidance.

ignore.<sup>531</sup> It is safest to assume, therefore, that the sexual freedoms and parental restrictions which determined a woman's experience of courtship often varied. The fact that few distinctive conclusions can be drawn regarding women's adherence to the idealized standards indicates that courtship held personal, economic and social consequences that were not unique to Virginia or Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the closely regulated rules of polite courtship among Southern belles and their beaux were entwined with the polite codes of morality originally instilled in Scotland. As a result, the experience of love and romance was similar between many women in Virginia and Scotland in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and was often largely based on individual experience.

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<sup>531</sup> Anya Jabour in *Scarlett's Sisters*, 91; John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 114, 115, 130.

## VII. Conclusion: Final Reflections on the Role of Didactic Politeness in Scotland and Virginia, 1750-1850

It has been the aim of this project to examine the impact of the social ideal known as politeness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Virginia and explore how these codes can be traced back to Scotland and Scottish moral philosophy. Specifically, this project has explored the codes of politeness inspired by notions of sociability and civility stemming from the Scottish Enlightenment, and the ways in which these ideas were instilled to young female readers in Virginia through the use of didactic literature. It has assessed the influence of politeness on women's reading habits, women's education, and women's courtship. This study has also compared the experience of genteel Virginia ladies to their counterparts in Scotland in order to explain the connections between these two locations with regards to the consumption of polite literature, and the application of its teachings to the daily lives of women.

It is the comparative element of this study that lends the strongest contribution to historical knowledge and research. The Southern region of the United States, particularly Virginia, is known to historians as having a long-standing tradition of firmly entrenched rules of politeness, manners, and hospitality. "Traditions of private hospitality in the South are among the best known, the most widely accepted, and of longest standing," one historical study declares, and furthermore, "The tradition of Virginia hospitality arose early."<sup>532</sup> These codes were by no means universal, and travelers were often denied hospitality or asked to pay for so-called hospitality in several Southern states, including Virginia. It has likewise been argued by both historians and social psychologists that polite manners often were used to regulate the culture of violence – closely related to the practice of slave ownership – associated with the equally strong traditions of Southern honor. As one study states, "Because the South possesses a culture of honor with a serious undercurrent of violence, people tread lightly and act in accordance with norms of politeness and hospitality so that they do not offend (and incite violence) from others."<sup>533</sup> Regardless of how these regional manners were viewed, what has been

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<sup>532</sup> Paton Yoder, "Private Hospitality in the South, 1775-1850," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47, no 3 (Dec., 1960): 420.

<sup>533</sup> Dov Cohen, Joseph Vandello, Sylvia Puente and Adrian Rantilla, "'When You Call Me That, Smile!' How Norms for Politeness, Interaction Styles, and Aggression Work Together in Southern Culture," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62, no 3 (Sep, 1999): 258. The same argument has been

less explored by historians is how the rules for politeness and gentility first arrived in the South and their origins.

Rhys Isaac has asserted that Virginians were attempting to emulate the British aristocracy with regards to their lifestyle and education, and historians, like Cynthia Kierner, focused specifically on women have mentioned the role of didactic authors like James Fordyce and John Gregory in defining the standards of feminine morality on which Southern women modulated their behavior.<sup>534</sup> So while it has been established that there was an element of aspiration in Virginia's standards of politeness, and it has been asserted that the rules of gentility among Southern women in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were linked to the instruction offered in primarily British conduct books, this study is unique in comparing polite codes practiced by elite women in Virginia to those practiced by the gentility of Scotland. Politeness was certainly not restricted to Scotland or Virginia. In fact, both locations were frequently dismissed as merely attempting to emulate the fashionable manners of London, and that emulation was only second-rate at best.

Scotland and Virginia share a stronger connection than being only cultural peripheries of London. Chains of communication were high between these two regions in the forms of migration, correspondence and the book trade. As this thesis has established, many Scots settled in Virginia and maintained contact with their families still in Scotland. They later sent their sons to Edinburgh to continue their education, while elite Virginia planters showed a tendency to select Scots or Scottish-educated young men to tutor their children on the plantations. Finally, much of the didactic literature available in libraries and bookshops in Virginia cities like Williamsburg came from Edinburgh, in the form of both original printings and republications.

It has been the trend of historians of politeness not to emphasize the movements' connections back to Scotland. Both Lawrence Klein and Paul Langford

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presented from a historical perspective in Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, (Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>534</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina, 1982); Cynthia A. Kierner, "Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies," *The Journal of Southern History* 62, no 3 (Aug., 1996): 460.



stress the significance of *English* politeness,<sup>535</sup> and letters from Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler of Virginia and the memoirs of Elizabeth Grant of Scotland reflect the contemporary view that London, and by extension England, was the measuring standard for genteel behavior – at least, this was the view among English people.<sup>536</sup> And it is true that it was originally in English publications like the *Tatler* (1709) and *The Spectator* (1711) that manners and politeness became an important feature of civilized, urban life. It was in Scotland, however, that these standards of polite manners became a part of moral philosophy concerned with improving both the individual and society.<sup>537</sup> Scottish writings in the form of personal correspondence and novels, suggest that Scots did not view themselves or their politeness to be inferior to English manners, in fact, some considered themselves superior.<sup>538</sup> Scottish author Susan Ferrier's 1818 novel *Marriage*, for instance, revolves around the theme of a young Scottish woman travelling to London and finding the inherent morality and civility taught to her in Scotland continually challenged by the disadvantages of fashionable life. It can be inferred that this assumption of moral superiority had its roots in the philosophy of the era which stressed polite sociability and urbane manners. These teachings were spread through the publication of polite histories, philosophical texts, and didactic literature embraced by the English reading public,

<sup>535</sup> In his works, "Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *The Historical Journal* 32, no 3 (Sep 1989): 583-605, and "Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, Judith Still and Michael Worton, eds., (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 100-15, Lawrence Klein focuses on England, while he briefly mentions Scotland and Edinburgh in "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journal* 45, no 4 (2002): 869-98, but the piece is mostly focused on English politeness. Paul Langford's work is also mostly focused on England, see especially *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, (First published, 1989. Current edition, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character 1650-1850*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>536</sup> David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 148. See also Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady, Volumes One and Two*, with an introduction by Andrew Tod, ed., (First published 1898 by John Murray. First published Canongate Classics in 1988 by Canongate Publishing Ltd. This edition published in 1992 by Canongate Press: Edinburgh). In this work, she wrote about her father's strict views on gentility, (VI, 219), and her English relatives' snobbery towards her mother, which astonished her, (VI, 158). Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with VI to indicate the first volume and VII to indicate the second. Letter, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Mildred Smith, January 10, 1786. Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers, DMS, 54.5, available at CW.

<sup>537</sup> Colin Kidd, "North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotism," *The Historical Journal* 39, no 2 (Jun., 1996): 366.

<sup>538</sup> See Susan Ferrier's novel *Marriage*, (First Published in 1818 by William Blackwood and John Murray. Reprinted with an introduction by James E. M. Irvine in Bampton, Oxfordshire: Three Rivers Books, Ltd., 1984).

but which originated as moral philosophy, rather than just fashionable manners, in Scotland.<sup>539</sup>

The Virginia elites, by comparison, had always attempted to imitate the lifestyles of the British landed gentry on their plantations. More importantly, they sought to give their children a comparable, polite education to that offered to the children of English and Scottish aristocrats. When advertising to attract wealthy pupils, school teachers and subject masters giving instruction in dancing, French, or other polite skills, emphasized their connection to Britain in their style of teaching and curriculum. The politeness of colonial Virginia could be seen as aspiring to mimic British codes, which acknowledged a provincial inferiority. Also, Virginia was mostly rural with few major cities until latter half of the nineteenth century. It was very difficult to practice urban politeness in the social isolation that resulted from the lifestyle of the Virginia planter, or the Virginia planter's wife or daughter.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution and in the decades of its aftermath, many Americans saw themselves and their dedication to liberty as superior to the supposedly degenerate manners and morals of the British aristocracy.<sup>540</sup> Virginians, in particular, believed that they were a separate entity with manners, customs and levels of gentility that were unique among other Americans.<sup>541</sup> Like many in Scotland, they rejected the idea of the cultural hegemony of London, and asserted that they were the true possessors of morality and genuine politeness. Virginians, as well as other Southerners, also morphed traditional politeness into their own style of hospitality. Although domestic politeness was important in Scotland, the iconic image of Southern manners and hospitality were a unique, regional adaptation of Scottish politeness.<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> For the role of Scottish books in spreading Scottish Enlightenment theories into England see, Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth Century Britain, Ireland and America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>540</sup> For specific examples see, *The Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon) March, 8, 1770, 2:2, about Divorces, and *The Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon) May 24, 1770, 1: 1, about married men and women in London openly having extramarital lovers. Copies of original *Gazettes* are available at CW. See also Chapter V for an analysis of a footnote in an American edition of Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* in which the editor asserts that British women often do not marry for love, while American women do.

<sup>541</sup> Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets: Death and Desire at Monticello*, (New York: Basic Books, A Member of Perseus Books Group, 2005), 91.

<sup>542</sup> Kierner, "Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies," 450.

It is also important to emphasize that, like politeness, didactic literature was not limited to Scotland or Virginia with regards to readership or publication. While some of the major didactic authors of the era were indeed Scottish, and Virginia ladies often authored their own published and unpublished didactic works, polite literature had wide readership and authorship in both Britain and America.<sup>543</sup> As this thesis has also proven, however, there was a direct link between Scotland and Virginia, particularly between Edinburgh and Williamsburg, regarding the publication and consumption of polite texts.

Most historians of British manners have generalized that the rules of politeness, and the didactic literature that advocated politeness, were a phenomenon unique to the eighteenth century. They have concluded that the rise of the Romantic Movement, evangelical religion, and the Age of Revolutions rendered the politeness of the earlier era as obsolete. While this study has contradicted this model to a certain extent in the case of Scotland by arguing that instead of entirely replacing polite codes, the social values of evangelical Christianity and Romanticism blended with polite teachings to form a new type of morality, it was less the case in Virginia.

Certainly in Scotland, most women were no longer reading didactic works such as Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) or Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774) as late as the 1830's or 1840's. But an examination of the letters and journals of young women of means revealed that polite codes were still relevant in dictating appropriate, moral behavior. Despite being shaped by Romantic emotionalism and evangelical faith, the core of polite values had not disappeared. Into the middle of the nineteenth century, Scottish women demonstrated familiarity with the teachings of politeness, even if texts specializing in polite instruction were no longer regularly read. They were taught the skills not only of pleasant conversation, but were taught to improve and be improved by social discourse. This notion of individual and social improvement based on engaging in sociability was a key facet of didactic literature and Scottish Enlightenment thought that remained a fixture in society into the nineteenth century, and this was even more prominent among the genteel women of Virginia.

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<sup>543</sup> Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Chapter 2.

In Virginia, despite the influences of evangelical religion, didactic literature remained available to readers after the end of the long eighteenth-century, and women were still concerned with practicing and teaching polite sociability. Virginia belles still turned to their conduct books and instructive novels to guide their behavior, and authored their own didactic pieces into the nineteenth century. This was the case among elderly women who had come of age in the eighteenth century like Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler, but also among young women of a new generation who should, supposedly, have found such views out of date. The students of Susan Nye Hutchison, for instance, were educated using polite literature as late as 1835 and were all the better for that polite education, according to the *Raleigh Star*.<sup>544</sup> While the influence of Romanticism and religious revivalism cannot be ignored in Virginia, by the middle of the nineteenth century and with the approach of the American Civil War, the image of the Southern belle and the genteel plantation mistress represented the ideal standard of feminine morality.<sup>545</sup> It has been argued by this study, moreover, that while polite femininity might have taken a unique trajectory in Virginia, as well as the other Southern states due to notions of honor, the culture of violence, and the institution of slavery, the origins defining ideal standards of femininity were originally shaped by Scottish Enlightenment-inspired gentility.

This study is unique, therefore, in that it has not only linked the traditions of Virginia politeness for women with the didactic politeness practiced by genteel women in Edinburgh and the Highlands, but it has also argued that in both Scotland and Virginia, the codes of politeness were not restricted to the eighteenth century. Instead, it has traced, to varying degrees, the ways that polite codes were altered and adapted in both locations with the progression of the nineteenth century.

By comparing Virginia to Scotland in the one hundred years between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, this project has come to several conclusions that both connect and yet distinguish between the interpretation of

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<sup>544</sup> This is explored in Chapter III of this thesis. This transcript of the *Raleigh Star* is found in the Susan D. Nye Hutchison Papers. Available at UNCC. This is a transcript, the original document is at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>545</sup> For more information on Southern standards of femininity and the ideal woman, see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

politeness and the impact of polite literature on the lives of women. During the eighteenth century, the reading habits and education of genteel women were similar. They were educated in the same polite graces, they read many of the same polite conduct books and novels of manners and this type of literature was equally available to readers in Williamsburg and Edinburgh. Bookselling records and library catalogues from both locations reveal that didactic literature in various forms made up consistently 8-10% of material available to the reading public until about 1820.

By the nineteenth century, regional distinctions began to emerge, no doubt shaped by the rival social and cultural influences of Romanticism and evangelical Christianity but perhaps more so by the American Revolution. Although many of the ideas in Linda Kerber's theory of Republican Motherhood can be traced back to the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment,<sup>546</sup> these ideas took a different trajectory in practice in Virginia than in Scotland. One result is that there was an increased focus on the education provided for women. Although this can be attributed in large part to a motivation to make women useful for men in the republic as wives and mothers rather than for their own benefit, it cannot be denied that education changed drastically in America from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

Education for Virginian women, as in many of the Southern states, lagged behind this model, which is based mostly on data from the North and certainly not all Virginians were won over to the view that women should be taken from their homes to continue their education for the good of the republic. This thesis has explored the experience of Nancy Johns Turner Hall as she struggled to convince her father to allow her to continue her education.<sup>547</sup> Turner Hall's father did not believe that such instruction was necessary for women, regardless of civic duty. Despite attitudes like these, the educational opportunities in Virginia in the form of ladies academies were available in unprecedented numbers.

Virginia women in the nineteenth century were still attracted to didactic literature. Popular British texts continued to be read and published in new editions into the nineteenth century, and some Southern authors wrote their own, distinctly

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<sup>546</sup> Rosemarie Zagari, "Morals, Manners and the Republican Mother." *American Quarterly* 44, no 2 (Jun, 1992): 192-215.

<sup>547</sup> Nancy Johns Turner Hall, *The Imaginist*, available in an original document and in a transcript at the VHS, Mss5:9H1405:1. Will hereafter be cited in brackets within the text with O for original document and T for transcript.

Southern conduct manuals. More tellingly, several Virginia women sought to use their correspondence and personal writings to act as instructive material for their young, female relatives. Didactic literature in Virginia remained present as a teaching tool to supplement women's education and the self-fashioning of femininity. This was a pattern that continued into the 1830s and 1840s, perhaps because of the new political significance given to the moral woman as the staple of early republican society.

Scottish women, by comparison, were still educated under curricula similar to that advocated in the eighteenth century, at least with regards to their formal instruction. Although there is evidence of women receiving a liberal, scholastic education that branched away from the limited study of polite arts, the majority of this instruction was offered privately and often under the direction of the women themselves once they matured, such as Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. Grant undertook an ambitious reading program, but only after she had finished her formal schooling which was incomplete and mostly ornamental. In her own view, her self-directed learning was more in-depth. [VII, 167] Similar to their Virginia counterparts, this self-directed instruction for women was supplemented by their reading, though by this time traditional didactic texts had fallen out of fashion. That said, these women still demonstrated a familiarity with the codes of didactic texts, though they only rarely referenced their reading of such works in their letters or journals. This suggests that the rules of politeness, originally instilled in conduct books and novels of manners from the long eighteenth-century, were by this point so engrained in society that they still served as the standard of public morality, even if the texts themselves were not still read.

The aspect of women's lives in Virginia that defies a similar categorization across time is that of women's romantic relationships and their courtship practices. It is in this aspect that the lives of Virginia women corresponded most similarly with their Scottish cousins. Although Virginia women cited didactic works more frequently, and although the eighteenth-century messages about love and sex were similarly directed to women in both Scotland and Virginia in the form of didactic literature, their personal writings give little evidence that women in either location adhered any differently to didactic teachings. For every instance of young women

behaving with modest virtue, there were also examples of women losing their virtue or acting with unwomanly assertiveness in their dealings with the opposite sex. Despite the supposed liberating influence of the American Revolution, the courtship dynamics between men and women in Virginia showed little variation with nineteenth-century Scotland or within Virginia itself going back to the eighteenth century. Instead, evidence again shows patterns of some women who still adhered to eighteenth-century virtues and practiced the behavior advocated in didactic texts, while others did not.

Focusing on the reading habits of women in these locations is another way this project has filled a gap in the historiography. Although there is an ample amount of literature on politeness and the morality inspired by the Scottish Enlightenment, this thesis is unique in that it combines the reading of polite literature by Scottish and Virginian women. Although there have been many studies regarding the spread of literature, as well as codes of ethics and behaviors unique to these regions, these are primarily centered on Scottish and Virginian men. Even studies on women's books and reading habits, such as prominent works by Cathy N. Davidson, tend to focus on Britain or America and do not compare the two locations. Historians of British manners rarely trace the trajectory of politeness beyond the cultural core, and while American historians concede that American manners were shaped by elite individuals trying to mimic behaviors originally created in Britain, they do not fully explore the connections between the origins and adaptations of politeness.<sup>548</sup> The idea that codes of morality were shared between Virginian and Scottish women through their reading of a specific genre of books, therefore, is a unique contribution to historical study.

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<sup>548</sup> For the transatlantic spread of books see, see Kevin J. Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, (Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 1996); Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*; Richard B. Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*; for Southern ethics, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*; for Scottish ethics, see J. V. Smith, "Manners, Morals and Mentalities: Reflections on the Popular Enlightenment of Early Nineteenth-Century Scotland," *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education 1800-1980*, Walter M. Humes and Hamish M. Paterson, eds., (Glasgow: Bell & Bain, Ltd., 1983), 25-54. See, however, the work of Mark Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750-1820*, (Leiden, the Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2010), and "All the Partners may be Enlightened and Improved by Reading Them: The Distribution of Enlightenment Books in Scottish Subscription Library Catalogues, 1750-c.1820," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 11 (2008): 20-43, for information on provincial reception of Enlightenment thought.

There are challenges that make it difficult to conduct a balanced comparison between Scotland and Virginia and it is for this reason that the material is more focused on Virginia. As the project has evolved, it became apparent that the role of politeness as defined by the eighteenth century and the standards of gentility played a more prominent role in Virginia as the nineteenth century progressed when compared to Scotland or to London. This project adapted, therefore, to become an exploration of the way that genteel Virginia women were given a polite education shaped by their reading of didactic texts, and then how these polite teachings impacted aspects of their daily lives. This material was then compared to that of ladies in Scotland, and Scottish Enlightenment-inspired standards of gentility, in order to trace the progression of politeness and didactic literature among reading audiences throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While it is evident that Virginia women were originally closely tied to the Scottish gentility with regards to the interpretation of polite texts in the eighteenth century, the relationship shifted after the American Revolution and Napoleonic Wars and this project has addressed the reasons for why this shift occurred.

These challenges regarding the balance of source material indicate further areas for possible inquiry and research. Although both locations were technically provincial to London, even after American independence when London still dominated the fashion and culture for the English speaking world, Virginia society was more peripheral to London than Edinburgh, Aberdeen or the Scottish Highlands. While the reading habits of genteel women are comparable between Scotland and Virginia and to a certain extent their methods of socialization and polite display, life in an urban center like Williamsburg was not directly comparable to Edinburgh, nor was plantation life very similar to life on a Highland estate. One of the main reasons for this has to do with the institution slavery.

Contradictory though the ideas might seem, there have been many studies exploring the ways in which Southern men and women were able to maintain their principles of honor, gentility and Christianity while justifying their role as slaveholders.<sup>549</sup> A potential extension of this study would be an examination of the

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<sup>549</sup> For more information on how slavery could support notions of gentility, at least in the minds of slaveholders, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*; Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 46-53; See also, Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations,*



messages given to slaves as a part of their social education to reinforce their position of inferiority. Although such a study would not necessarily involve an investigation of reading habits, it would still be relevant to explore how slaves were instructed about their own position, if they were instructed at all. It was known that certain slave owners, like Sarah Frew Davidson of North Carolina, provided their slaves with moral and religious instruction and taught basic literacy for the purposes of reading the Bible.<sup>550</sup> Did Davidson provide her slaves with any other type of instruction as well? It can be assumed that she did not teach her slaves anything that might lead them to disrupt the status quo or challenge their captivity. Of what then, did this instruction consist?

It has been argued that many of the didactic works, like those written by Fordyce and Gregory, which placed women as the moral center of society, served the ulterior motive of justifying objectionable male behavior. Implying that women had the ability to correct such behavior suggested a lack of morality – and inherently a lack of femininity – on their part if they failed to do so.<sup>551</sup> There were also objections to the content of polite education, and the suggestion that such theories were designed to keep women as men’s inferiors or to train them only for men’s pleasure and use. These arguments are continually debated in the fields of literature and history, but it is also possible to question if similar, didactic messages were given to slaves and the means through which this was done. Were slaves educated in such a way as to justify racist assumptions and support the institution of slavery, and if so, how was this education conducted?

Moving away from racial discrepancies, many of the young women in both in Scotland and Virginia whose lives have been explored in this study mentioned to

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*and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>550</sup> Private Diary of Sarah Frew Davidson, available at UNCC. Anne Firor Scott also explores the dynamic between female slave-holders and their slaves in *The Southern Lady*, see specifically Chapter 3, “Discontent.”

<sup>551</sup> See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); for contemporary criticism, see Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, (Originally published Dublin, 1793, Currently available in *ECCO*), particularly her criticism of Gregory and Fordyce; see also Jenny Davidson, “‘Professed Enemies of Politeness’: Sincerity and the Problem of Gender in Godwin’s ‘Enquiry concerning Political Justice’ and Wollstonecraft’s ‘Vindication of the Rights of Woman,’” *Studies in Romanticism* 39, no 4 William Godwin (Winter, 2000): 599-615.

role of their fathers in their education. In Virginia, Nancy Johns Turner Hall detailed her father's role in preventing her from continuing beyond basic elementary instruction for several years, [T, 9] while Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler related her father's role in educating his children when her mother was too ill to assume the duties herself. In Scotland, Elizabeth Grant was likewise shaped by her father's views on schooling for women, [VI, 36] while the education of the illegitimate daughters of Gilbert Innes was mostly neglected, with his encouragement.<sup>552</sup>

Both Scottish and Virginian society during the time period in question was patriarchal, and it would be an enlightening extension from this project to explore the impact that fathers had on the education of their daughters. It is the common perception that fathers were concerned with the education of their sons, but showed little regard for the education of their daughters or that their support was part of a greater agenda which pushed their daughters towards matrimony or other beneficial connections.<sup>553</sup> But was this necessarily the case? The women in this study reveal a variety of responses from their fathers towards their instruction for a variety of reasons and these individual responses could be explored in the wake of greater, social constructs.

To conclude, this study has explored the impact of the theoretical teachings of politeness on the education and courtship practices of genteel women in Virginia from 1750 to 1850 through the reading of didactic literature and then compared and contrasted this data with similar information gathered on Scotland in the same era. Whether or not these women chose to adhere to the polite standards set for them in conduct book and instructive novels, original research has indicated that they were aware of these standards and that these polite teachings were a part of public consciousness in both Scotland and Virginia in fashionable, urban centers and in rural, family homes. Accepting the notion that politeness was a strand of Scottish Enlightenment sociability, it can be concluded by extension that the ideas of the

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<sup>552</sup> This is explored in Chapter III. See also, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler to Ann Fisher ("Nancy"), undated letter, Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers; Gilbert Innes to Marion Innes, May 31, 1793, contained within Papers of the Innes Family of Stowe, available at the NRAS, GD113/5/498.

<sup>553</sup> See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*; Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*. Wyatt Brown implies that Southerners were not concerned with intellectualism in general, least of all with the intellectualism of women, and Clinton emphasizes the Southern patriarchy which limited opportunities for women. For more on the discrepancies in women's education in Britain, see Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History*, (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1965).

Scottish Enlightenment had permeated Scottish and Virginian society with regards to the conduct of genteel women and through their reading of didactic texts. Finally, it can also be concluded that the polite standards for Virginia women, long perceived as a unique interpretation of general, British aristocratic life, were closely related to the moral philosophy of politeness inspired by the Scottish Enlightenment. While this philosophy lingered to some extent after the end of the Enlightenment in directing the polite, moral codes of Scottish women, it was especially prominent in Virginia in shaping the image of the ideal Southern lady into the nineteenth century.

## VIII. Archival Sources and Unpublished Materials

### Scotland

#### **National Register of the Archives for Scotland**

##### Bookselling/Library Records

- CS96/1573. Alexander Brown, bookseller, Edinburgh. Catalogue of books for a circulating library, 1786.
- GD154/958. Catalogue of the Books Composing the Library of the Stranraer Sabbath School Society. Dumfries: Printed at the Dumfries and Galloway Courier Office, by J. M'Diarmid and Co., 1825.
- Miscellaneous small collections of family, business and other papers – GD1/575/11. W. Wilson and Co, bookseller and Stationer. Scroll Day Book. July 1814 to September 1815.
- Miscellaneous Papers – TE29/8. Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1834. (This is a published source, but it is only available in the National Register or the Special Collections of the Edinburgh Central Library.)
- Papers of the Hamilton-Bruce family of Grange Hill and Falkland – GD152/80. Printed 'Catalogue of books in Thomas C Jack's Select Circulating Library,' Edinburgh, March 1854.
- Papers of the Montague-Douglass-Scott Family, Dukes of Buccleuch – GD224/627/2. Miscellaneous Letters by Thomas G. Stevenson...as to the Duke of Buccleuch's Book Requirements: With lists of books and accounts, 1832-1840.
- Papers of the Montgomerie Family, Earls of Eglinton – GD3/11/2/20. Cheap Books, Selling at John Sutherland's Circulating Library, no 9, Calton Street, Edinburgh, 1834.

##### Personal Documents – Women's Lives

- Papers of the Innes Family of Stow, Peeblesshire – GD113/5/46, GD113/5/73a, GD113/5/73b, GD113/5/81b, GD113/5/84, GD113/5/86a, GD113/5/409, and GD113/5/498 – Personal Correspondence, Mainly of Jane Innes of Picardy Place, 1792-1831.
- Papers of the Mackenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth (Seaforth Papers) – GD46/15/286 – Journal Kept by Hannah Hope Vere, Later Wife of Keith Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth, 1841-1844.
- The Papers of the Mackenzie Family, Earls of Seaforth – GD46/17/66, Letter from Mary Mackenzie on a girls' school for Stornoway, 1825 – GD46/17/71, Letter from Miss Harriet Howell on a girls' school for Stornoway, 1826.
- Papers of the Montague-Douglass-Scott Family, Dukes of Buccleuch – GD224/517/4 - part two, item 116, 1843-1853.

##### School/Educational Records

- Papers of the Gordon Family, Dukes of Gordon (Gordon Castle Muniments) – GD44/51/325/12 – More of the Young Ladies' Bills, Gordon Family, 1789.
- Papers of the Gordon Family, Dukes of Gordon (Gordon Castle Muniments) – GD44/51/329/18 – London Bills for the Ladies of the Gordon Family, 1791-1792.

- Papers of the Vans Agnew Family of Barnbarroch, Wigtownshire – GD99/229/14 - Monmouth Boarding School list of fees, 1794-1795.
- Papers of the Vans Agnew Family of Barnbarroch, Wigtownshire – GD99/229/14 – Two items for an English School for “Education and Board for Children Born Deaf and Dumb” “By the Abbe Beylot, Late Colleague of the Abbe Sicard in the Direction of the Celebrated Establishment for the Assistance of the Deaf and Dumb at Paris,” and “Letter about Dr. Dupres School at Berkhamsted 1794,” 1794-1795.

## **National Library of Scotland**

### Library/Bookselling Records

- Fletcher of Saltoun Papers – GB233/MS.17861-17866, ff5, ff12, ff39, ff56 – Books – 17<sup>th</sup> century-19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Personal Documents – Women’s Lives

- Fletcher of Saltoun Papers – Correspondence – GB233/MS.16501-16754 – 1737-1738.
- Fletcher of Saltoun papers – Families and Individuals – GB233/MS.17606-17744 – 1637-1760.
- GB223/MS.1658 – Diary – (Probably of a Lady) Related Mainly to Religious Themes, Written in Edinburgh, 1813.
- Letters of Eliza Fletcher – part of Presented Manuscripts: Single Manuscripts and Small Collections – GB233/MS.2617 – 1810-1838.

### School/Educational Records

- Fletcher of Saltoun Papers – Educational Documents – MS 16864 f. 166; MS 16865 ff. 160, 161, 164, 165; MS 16866 ff. 164-5; MS 16868 ff. 175-9, MS 16688 f. 78 – 1734, 1754.

## **Edinburgh Central Library**

### Bookselling/Library Records

- NRAS3563/124/1Edinburgh Subscription Library – Alphabetical List of Shareholders – 1852, 1859.
- NRAS3563/124/2 – Edinburgh Subscription Library – Catalogue of Books Recommended for Purchase, 1806.
- YZ921E23SU – Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1845-1865 with Laws of the Society, List of members, etc, etc. Edinburgh: Printed for the Library, 1866.
- YZ921E23SU – Supplement to the Catalogue of the Edinburgh Subscription Library, 1848-1852.

(These are all published sources but are only available in the Special Collections of the Edinburgh Central Library).

## **Edinburgh University – Main Library, Center for Research Collections**

### Personal Documents – Women’s Lives

- *Memoirs of the Fletchers of Saltoun* – La III 364 – E. Halkett, approximately 1785.

## **Virginia**

### **Virginia Historical Society**

#### **Bookselling/Library Records**

- BJ1681.C45 – Hester Chapone – *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* – printed in Hagerstown by William D. Bell by Gabriel Nourse, 1815. This work is found in the General Collections. This is a published source, but it is included in this list because it contains a list of subscribers in Maryland and Virginia.

#### **Personal Documents – Women’s Lives**

- Hopkins Family Papers – Mss1H7779a – Correspondence mostly of Hannah Philippa Ludwell Lee, 1732-1844.
- Mss5:1B2475:1 – Eliza Lavalette Barksdale Diary – 1836-1837.
- Mss5:1C1482:1 – Angeline Elizabeth Eiland Cammack Memoir – 1810-1884.
- Mss5:5D4454:1 – Margaret Maria Martini DiRieux, *Commonplace Books* – 1806-1823.
- Mss5:9H1405:1 – Nancy Johns Turner Hall – *The Imaginist* – 1844.
- Peyton Family Papers – Mss1P4686 – Section 5 - Correspondence of Elizabeth (Gordon) Scott (of "Gordonsdale," Fauquier County, Va., and at "Ripon Lodge," Prince William County, Va.), Section 29, 1824-1869.

#### **School/Educational Records**

- Cocke Family Papers – Mss1C6458dFA2 – Thomas Lewis Preston Papers, 1794-1812.
- Debutts Family Papers – Mss1 D3545 a 962-967, Section 21 – Julia Beverly Whiting, Alexandria Female Seminary – bill, “For daughter Julia” 1855.
- Debutts Family Papers – Mss1 D3545 a 962-967, Section 21 – Report cards from the Alexandria Female Academy, 1855-1856.
- Mss5:4 AL276:1 – Specimens of the Compositions of the Pupils of the Alexandria Female Seminary, Selected and written by themselves, 1853.

### **John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library – Colonial Williamsburg**

#### **Personal Documents – Women’s Lives**

- Blair, Banister, Braxton, Horner, and Whiting Papers, 1765-1890, 108 items. PH 25 (photocopies of original documents, which are stored at Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Virginia) – 1765-1890.
- Bowdoin and Fairfax Griffith Letters – MS 1942.6 – MS 1942.7 – 1812.
- Elizabeth Jacquelin Ambler Papers – 1780-1832 – DMS 54.5.
- Letter, Sarah Trebell to John Galt, 1766, May 12 and 1767, January 16 – MS 1989.12.a and MS 1989.12.b.
- Microfilm, M-1988 - Frances Baylor Hill Diary – 1797.
- Smith-Digges Papers – MS 31.7 – 1789-1843.

- Spotswood Papers – MS 48.2 – 1646-1830.

School/Educational Records

- Eliza Selden Washington Family Papers – MS 2004.19 – Piedmont Institute, Charlottesville, VA., Monthly Report of Miss Eliza S. Washington, December & January, 1864.

- MS 1929.4 – The Williamsburg Female Academy, Report of Miss F. Hunt, For the month of May 1852.

**North Carolina**

**Duke University – Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture**

Personal Documents – Women’s Lives

- Presley Carter Person Papers – OCLC 20019549 – 1767-1915.

- Eleanor Hall Douglas Papers – OCLC 20737177 – 1798-1845.

**The University of North Carolina at Charlotte – J. Murrey Atkins Library, Special Collections**

Personal Documents – Women’s Lives

- Sarah Frew Davidson Journal – Contained within the Caldwell and Davidson Family Papers, Box 1, Item 9 - 1837.

- Wilkes Family Papers, 1818-1947 – Manuscript Collection 38

School/Educational Records

- Susan Davis Nye Hutchison Papers, 1815-1975 – Manuscript Collection 74.

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