

‘Lasting Associations’

The Material Psychology of Anna Letitia Barbauld,
Hannah More, and Elizabeth Hamilton

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Abstract

This thesis uncovers theories and applications of psychology in the work of three women writers of late eighteenth-century Britain: Anna Letitia Barbauld, Hannah More, and Elizabeth Hamilton. It traces their engagement in discourse on the nature of mind through analysis of the texts they produced between 1770 and 1815, and takes an interdisciplinary approach to establish the significance of what I identify as ‘material psychology’ in their cultural and social activity. I argue that their textual and material uses of philosophy transformed disciplines, shaping early psychology in far more thoughtful, varied, and influential ways than has been acknowledged.

The introduction outlines feminist applications of John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), and discusses the challenges facing women who sought to harness the potential of his *tabula rasa* hypothesis. It maps out the increasingly contested politics of psychology in the years following the French Revolution, considering misogynistic representations of the ‘Female Philosopher’ in the context of Mary Hays’ materialist feminism. I demarcate the often vexed or unclear gender politics of Barbauld, More and Hamilton, and propose a material and sensory reassessment of their domestic strategies for reform.

This study contributes to the literary history of women by re-evaluating their place in the Enlightenment ‘science of man’, a full understanding of which demands innovative reinterpretation of interdisciplinary perspectives on gender and science in the late eighteenth century. My argument challenges the notion that women’s engagement with medical and philosophical discourse at this time was contained by the gendered nervous paradigm, and rethinks the potential for women writers in the culture of sensibility. It resists notions of uniformity in women’s writing by providing a comprehensive account of the continuities, divergences and conflicts between them, and opens up a richly discursive philosophical field for closer investigation.

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Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of York or any other institution. An early version of Chapter One was published as ‘Inscribing on the Mind: Anna Letitia Barbauld’s “Sensible Objects”’ (*Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Winter, 2012). A substantial part of Chapter Two appears as “‘The Things Themselves’: Anna Letitia Barbauld’s *Lessons and Hymns*”, in William McCarthy and Olivia Murphy (eds.), *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives* (Lewisburg: Bucknell, 2013).

All of this danced up and down, like a company of gnats, each separate,
but all marvellously controlled in an invisible elastic net – danced up and
down in Lily's mind, in and about the branches of the pear tree...

—*Woolf, To The Lighthouse*

Introduction

I want you to propose a metaphysical question to your Society, which Mr. B. and I have had great debates upon; and I want to know your opinion and my sister's. It is this: If you were now told that in a future state of existence you should be entirely deprived of your consciousness, so as not to be sensible you were the same being who existed here, — should you, or should you not, be now interested in your future happiness or misery? or, in other words, is continued consciousness the essence of identity?¹

The conundrum presented by Anna Letitia Barbauld is familiar in more than one sense. Writing from her home in Hampstead to her brother, Dr John Aikin, living over a hundred miles distant in Great Yarmouth, Barbauld encourages enactment of philosophical debate outside of, within and between marital households. In her letter and through the epistolary act itself, she inscribes associations from one home to another, as well as to her brother's Society, drawing imagined and material links between domestic spaces of exchange and a more formal and typically male space for deliberation. This is not to suggest Barbauld was excluded from debate in similarly social environments; for one thing, she regularly participated in vigorous intellectual conversation at the dinner parties of her (by that time) radical publisher, Joseph Johnson. Nor was Barbauld's philosophical thought confined to private correspondence; quite the reverse, the enthusiasm for Enlightenment debate she demonstrates in her letter informed and spurred on her radical print publications, and her ideas are often boldly advanced in her writing for children and her poetry. The letter instead

¹ Barbauld to Aikin, 1791, *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld: with a Memoir*, ed. Lucy Aikin, (London: Longman, 1825), 2:160.

communicates her sense of inclusivity in sociable exchange, something she sees as inherent to the human condition; as she put it in her *Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship* (1792), people are ‘prone [...] to associate together, and communicate the electric fire of correspondent feeling.’²

But if this strikingly precise formulation of contemporary scientific and technological thinking helps us to understand the proximity, for Barbauld, of public and social association, her missive to Aikin signals the tensions, fractures and collisions within and between spheres of debate. Barbauld’s ‘metaphysical question’ has a particular connection to her Dissenting circle, a social network that was distinctly, and in some ways perhaps paradigmatically associational. It hinged on John Locke’s notion of personal identity as the ‘same continued consciousness’,³ a topic that had recently been debated in the published correspondence of Joseph Priestley and Richard Price, prominent progressive Unitarians with close ties to the Aikin-Barbauld circle.

Priestley’s position in *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity* (1777) was theologically contentious. He believed human beings to be wholly material, and held that after death the activity of the mind would be suspended until the Resurrection, when the parts of the body essential to personhood would be ‘re-arranged, in the same, or similar manner, as before, and the powers of perception would be restored.’⁴ Price contended to the contrary that personal identity would be lost in the destruction of the body; under Priestley’s argument, ‘the

² Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's 'Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship'* (London: J. Johnson, 1792), 7.

³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 346.

⁴ Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism, and Philosophical Necessity, In a Correspondence between Dr. Price, and Dr. Priestley* (London: J. Johnson, 1778), 88.

resurrection [would] be, not a *resurrection*, but a *creation* of a new set of beings'.⁵ He also made the standard normative claim against Priestley's materialism: because the idea of a wholly embodied spirit seemed incompatible with that of the afterlife, it removed the incentive for virtue in this life for lack of anticipation of reward, or fear of punishment, in the next.

In open dialectic with his friend, Price gave Priestley's argument closer consideration than many of its critics. Though Priestley's view was in fact deistically monist, his disbelief in the immaterial soul provoked serious concern. As he relates in his *Memoirs*:

I expressed some doubt of the immateriality of the sentient principle in man; and the outcry that was made on what I casually expressed on the subject can hardly be imagined. In all the newspapers, and most of the periodical publications, I was represented as an unbeliever in revelation, and no better than an Atheist.⁶

Thirteen years on, Barbauld's 'great debates' on immateriality with her husband, the Presbyterian minister Rochemont Barbauld, took place at a time of even greater opposition to religious heterodoxy. In reviving the discussion, she may well have had its earlier disputants in mind: Price was dangerously ill, and died in April 1791. The events in France in 1789 had reignited and further inflamed fury against Priestley's materialism, and hardened attitudes towards Dissenters in general; 1791 saw the 'Church and King' riots in Birmingham that destroyed Priestley's home and forced his removal to London. Aikin's medical practice in Great Yarmouth was also becoming untenable. His publication of two defences of Dissent and open support of the French

⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶ *Memoirs of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Priestley, to the year 1795* (London: J. Johnson, 1809), 79. For an account of the controversy surrounding Priestley's materialism see John W. Yolton, *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 115-27.

Revolution led to ostracism by the established friends who in 1785 had persuaded him to return with cordial promises of good fortune.⁷ His daughter and biographer Lucy Aikin reports that he lost the company and business of all but one of his Church of England acquaintances, forfeiting patients to a rival physician who ‘with secret machinations’ had been invited to take up residence in the town.⁸ Aikin’s association with radical Dissent had more immediately menacing repercussions for his family. Even late in her life, Lucy Aikin would grievously recount being ‘pushed, hustled, and even struck’ by other children ‘to the cry of Presbyterian.’⁹

The family returned to London in early 1792. Though reeling at the injustice, Aikin was glad to expand his opportunities for intellectual sociability, and to move closer to his sister. Whether under duress or not, his membership of The Monthly Book Club at Great Yarmouth had come to an end in 1791;¹⁰ Barbauld’s letter likely refers to the separate society begun there by Aikin, perhaps as compensation for, or in retaliation against this.¹¹ His growing sense of personal, intellectual and professional isolation must have made correspondence with his sister particularly welcome at the time. She would certainly have sympathised with his frustrations, but the irony of the situation

⁷ *The Spirit of the Constitution and that of the Church of England, Compared* (London: J. Johnson, 1790) and *An Address to the Dissidents of England on their Late Defeat*. (London: J. Johnson, 1790); William McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 301. This text appears as ALBVE in subsequent footnotes.

⁸ *Memoir of John Aikin, M.D*, ed. Lucy Aikin, (London: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1823), 1:131-2.

⁹ *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld*, ed. Anna Letitia Aikin Le Breton (London: G. Bell & Son, 1874), 19.

¹⁰ The Monthly Book Club was founded in 1780 by its first honorary secretary, the Church of England clergyman Richard Turner. His brother, James Turner was the club’s first president, and his nephew another founding member. See Hugh Wiltshire, ed., *The Monthly Book Club* (Gorlston, Norfolk: RPD Printers, 2007), 5.

¹¹ Aikin’s institution of a society at Great Yarmouth is mentioned in his obituary by his son, Arthur Aikin (*The Gentleman’s Magazine*, January 1823, 87), and in J. Ewing Ritchie’s *East Anglia: Personal Recollections and Historical Associations*, Ebook of 2nd Edition, trans. David Price (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1893), 207. I have so far been unable to ascertain the dates and membership of this society.

cannot have escaped her: as a young woman, she had struggled to remain ‘content’ within her ‘bounded sphere’,¹² when Aikin left Warrington Academy to study medicine at Edinburgh. As a woman, she would have been excluded from membership of the Yarmouth book club and other male-led societies,¹³ including the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, of which Aikin was an honorary member.¹⁴ Women were eligible to attend lectures at the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society from 1799,¹⁵ which were continued at the insistence of William Turner (secundus), an ex-student of Warrington Academy and friend of the Barbauld-Aikins, but could not participate in the inner debating club.¹⁶ By drawing her brother into philosophical conversation, then, Barbauld was providing consolation by reaffirming the value of familiar domestic exchange.

The reinforcement of limitations to the rights of Dissenters brought Barbauld and Aikin together in common purpose.¹⁷ Their contemporaneous pamphlets on the third failed repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts demonstrate how close to home

¹² Barbauld, ‘To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she neglected him, October 26th 1768’, in *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 19.

¹³ Women’s clubs did exist, however. Barbauld and Lucy Aikin established a ladies book society in London, ‘into which not a single man [was] admitted, even to keep the accounts’. Aikin to Mrs Taylor, 27 January 1803, in *Memoirs, miscellanies and letters of the late Lucy Aikin*, ed. Philip Hemery Le Breton, (London: Longman et. al., 1864), 126.

¹⁴ Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), 66-7.

¹⁵ John Baillie, *An Impartial History of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne, and its Vicinity* (Newcastle: 1801), 290. I thank Jenny Wilkes for sharing this source.

¹⁶ Derek Orange, ‘Rational Dissent and Provincial Science: William Turner and the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society’. in *Metropolis and Province: Science in British Culture, 1780-1850*, 205-30 (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

¹⁷ Although the Act of Toleration (1689) brought greater freedom of worship, Dissenters who refused to subscribe to the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England were excluded from public office and could not matriculate from either of the English universities until the eventual repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828.

their political beliefs came.¹⁸ Their work on the jointly authored *Evenings at Home: or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, begun in 1790, encapsulated familiar conversation as core to their Dissenting vision of domestic reform.¹⁹ Aikin's epistles 'To Mrs. Barbauld at Geneva' and 'To William Enfield,' published in his *Poems* of 1791, indicate the vitality of the letter in conceptions of community, especially in times of crisis. Indeed, in its title and content the volume strongly suggests correspondence and companionship with Barbauld's *Poems* (1773, 1792). This is especially clear in 'Sonnet to Mrs Barbauld, March 1790', which refers back to 'Corsica' in her volume and, by ending with a plaintive 'in vain',²⁰ echoes her 'Epistle To William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade', first published in the same year as Aikin's *Poems* and then again in the revised edition of her celebrated volume.

Scholars today are giving much needed critical attention to letter writing, a literary form which is particularly illuminating for the history of women in the eighteenth century, and provides important windows into its cultures of knowledge and materiality.²¹ As Barbauld's letter suggests, philosophical debate occurring within familial and domestic relationships informed more recognisably public forms of

¹⁸ I discuss Barbauld's better-known *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (London: J. Johnson, 1790) in Chapter Three.

¹⁹ Aikin and Barbauld, *Evenings at Home: or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, (London: J. Johnson, 1792-5). On sociability at Warrington see Anne Janowitz, 'Amiable and radical sociability: Anna Barbauld's "free familiar conversation", in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain: 1770-1840*, 62-81 (Cambridge: CUP, 2002). The subject of familiar collaboration between the Aikin-Barbaulds has been admirably explored by Scott Krawczyk in *Romantic Literary Families* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), and by contributors to *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle, 1740–1860*, ed. Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: CUP, 2011).

²⁰ John Aikin, *Poems* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), 75.

²¹ Notable contributions include Kathryn Sutherland, *Jane Austen's textual lives: from Aeschylus to Bollywood* (Oxford: OUP, 2005); Melanie Bigold, *Women of Letters, Manuscript Circulation, and Print Afterlives in the Eighteenth Century: Elizabeth Rowe, Catherine Cockburn and Elizabeth Carter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Elizabeth Eger, 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects: Bluestocking Friendship and Material Culture'. *Parergon* 26, no. 2 (2009): 109-38.

exchange, and *vice versa*. Though excluded from certain forums of philosophical debate, it is clear that Barbauld saw herself and her sister-in-law as able participants in the commerce of ideas, and, moreover, as beings with an entirely equal claim to participate in the study and progress of humanity. Her private correspondence and published writings add her voice to Enlightenment conversation about Locke's 'proper Study of Mankind'.²² She called on men and women alike to make personal, practical, and – most resoundingly for the marginalised – Stoic use of philosophy. For social thinkers like Barbauld, the philosophy of mind provided a meditative form of private consolation, as well as a conversable topic that worked towards her sense of participation in public matters. Lockeanism enabled a distinctly sensory perspective on the extension of one's ideas into the world. Putting theory into practice in her own work, Barbauld's correspondence, highly influential published writings and innovative pedagogy each convey a 'material psychology'.

This thesis argues that women were central to the development of psychology in late eighteenth-century Britain. They were denied the scientific opportunities of their male contemporaries: the universities and even most radical Dissenting academies did not admit them, they were prevented from attending anatomy classes, debarred from the medical profession, and remained excluded from membership of the Royal Society until 1944. Yet in spite of these restrictions, women were vital participants in psychological discourse. In a period of remarkably politicised interest in human consciousness and its relation to the body and material world, women writers engaged closely and enthusiastically in the 'science of man', taking significant risks in the act of publication alone. Speculation and disputation on the nature of mind were particularly precarious activities in the age of revolutions and its war of ideas. The radical feminist, Mary Hays,

²² Locke, *Human Understanding*, 737.

whose ideas I discuss shortly, faced misogynistic attacks for her outspoken materialism. The central figures of this thesis did not share her beliefs, but along with innumerable others, they actively participated in ongoing debate over the use of Lockean philosophy. Anna Barbauld, Hannah More, and Elizabeth Hamilton each used the associationism of Locke and David Hartley to forward a distinctly domestic philosophy.

They were not alone in this: as Mitzi Myers points out, Mary Wollstonecraft shared their ‘revisionist bourgeois ideology,’ though her militancy set her apart from Barbauld, and her support for the French Revolution placed her in opposition to conservatives like More.²³ Wollstonecraft remains a brilliantly compelling figure in scholarship today, but the bias of attention to her work in cultural histories of science and philosophy has skewed understandings of the potential for women in Lockean psychology; since the Victorian era, as Barbara Taylor points out, ‘each new version of Wollstonecraft [has acted] as a lightning-rod for competing feminist visions.’²⁴ Burgeoning interdisciplinary interest in the history of women’s writing has brought much needed attention to work that has until recently been evanescent, but the nature and scope of women’s engagement with psychological theory remain underexamined. Though widely diffused and highly influential, moderate and conservative women’s philosophies of mind have been overlooked or oversimplified, perhaps in part because of their very instrumentality. Often conceptually and materially grounded in domestic practice, the contributions of writers such as Barbauld, More and Hamilton have eluded traditional and implicitly masculinist philosophical history.²⁵ The hermetic separation

²³ Mitzi Myers, ‘Reform or Ruin: “A revolution in female manners”’. *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, no. 11 (1982), 207.

²⁴ Barbara M. Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 10.

²⁵ For example, Daniel N. Robinson, *An Intellectual History of Psychology*, 3rd Edition (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

this implies between (male) philosophy, science and medicine on the one hand from (female) cultural production on the other, is, I argue, an anachronism in eighteenth-century history. This has been further exacerbated by persistent literary elitism against educational writing and, whether knowingly expressed or not, an aversion to devout writing in secular scholarship.

The writers considered in this thesis engaged in literary and practical activity to shape embodied and material philosophical disciplines. Critically sophisticated, innovative and extraordinarily influential, their perspectives on the human mind were informed by, and yet in important ways distinct from earlier Enlightenment theory. The logic behind my choice of writers is two-fold; there are key similarities between them in terms of the kind of texts they produced – each wrote educational and religious texts which drew on philosophical and physiological theories of the human mind in order to forward a vision of domestic reform that maintained the separateness of the sexes. On the other hand, by grouping together writers whose political, religious and personal backgrounds were divergent, and who themselves resisted such grouping, I want to recover a philosophical tradition that allows for both dissonance and agreement between women writers; indeed, their differences help to open up such a field to fuller investigation.

Readjustment of perspectives on genre and interdisciplinarity in the period puts reformist women at the very beginnings of what we might now recognise as applied psychology. Recognition of their work is not without its own challenges: the considerable successes of More, Barbauld and Hamilton are offset, from a modern liberal perspective, by their undeniably problematic gender politics. Though they themselves overstepped gender boundaries in the very act of publication, the middle-class domestic ideology they helped popularise maintained women's subordination. I do

not seek to resolve this issue, nor do I wish to mitigate More's repressive class politics. Though the scope of this thesis cannot sufficiently accommodate the contributions and resistances of working-class women to her evangelical project of reform, I indicate the potential for further study on this subject. In the interim, the reformist ideas of conservative, moderate and liberal women writers demand attention. This thesis describes how Barbauld, More and Hamilton developed philosophical languages of materiality and embodiment that revolutionised educational and charitable practice, and how in doing so they helped initiate profound (though by no means unambiguous) psychological, social and political change.

The Lockean Paradigm

The long eighteenth century began with a fundamental shift in understandings of the human mind. Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, first published in 1689, challenged the notion of the mind as possessing innate ideas, marking a major departure from the dualist tradition spanning from Plato to René Descartes. In Book I of the *Essay*, Locke argues that since there is no empirical evidence that children are born with innate ideas, there is no reason to suppose that such things exist. He compares the mind at birth to 'white paper' – although Locke himself did not use the term, this has come to be generally known as the *tabula rasa* hypothesis.²⁶ In the second book, Locke advances his own account of the formation of the mind, arguing that

²⁶ Locke, *Human Understanding*, 81. The following provide good discussions of Locke's theory of mind: Gary Fuller, Robert Stecker and John P. Wright, *John Locke: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding in Focus*, ed. Gary Fuller, Robert Stecker and John P. Wright (London: Routledge, 2000); William Walker, *Locke, Literary Criticism, and Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994); Matthew Stuart, *Locke's Metaphysics* (Oxford: OUP, 2013); Michael Ayers, *Locke* (London: Routledge, 1991); John W. Yolton, *The Two Intellectual Worlds of John Locke: Man,*

All ideas come from sensation or reflection. Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: —How comes it to be furnished? [...] To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE.²⁷

Locke differentiates between two types of idea that constitute human consciousness: ‘ideas of sensation’ and ‘ideas of reflection.’ The latter are secondary, however, being formed after the mind is furnished with the building blocks of thought.

In departure from Descartes, Locke’s theory was fundamentally concerned with the mind rather than the soul. Influenced by the anatomical lectures of Thomas Willis, Locke situated the mind in the body, stating that ‘the first capacity of human intellect is, – that the mind is fitted to receive the impressions made on it; either through the senses by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them.’²⁸ ‘This’, he continues, ‘is the first step a man makes towards the discovery of anything, and the groundwork whereon to build all those notions which ever he shall have naturally in this world.’ Locke thus puts great emphasis on the first sensory perceptions in an individual human life, and the mind’s susceptibility to ‘outward objects’, the things in the physical world that cause sensation, as ‘the original of all our knowledge’. From his foundational perspective, personal identity begins with things external to the body:

Person, and Spirits in the 'Essay' (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004). For recent interdisciplinary accounts of Locke’s influence, see Patrizia Nerozzi Bellman, ‘On the Sciences of Man in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Art: Anatomizing the Self’. in *Bioethics and Biolaw Through Literature*, ed. Daniela Carpi, 162-77 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011) and Mark Blackwell, ‘The People Things Make: Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding and the Properties of the Self’. *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 35 (2006): 77-94. For a summary account of Locke’s influence on philosophical tradition, see William Uzgalis, ‘The Influence of John Locke’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/influence.html> (accessed April 20, 2014).

²⁷ Locke, *Human Understanding*, 104.

²⁸ Ibid., 118.

All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that great extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which sense or reflection have offered for its contemplation.²⁹

The passage moves towards transcendence and then, with wry humour, re-grounds man's view of himself in the passive receptivity of the infant mind. This was a bold challenge to man's view of himself. Moreover, Locke's notion of sensory education as key to personal, and, he teasingly suggests here, even spiritual identity threatened to upturn Judeo-Christian orthodoxy. The bifurcation from the 1730s of Lockean thought into materialist and immaterialist strands, particularly in France, was perhaps enabled by Locke's own ambivalence on the issue: while he did not explicitly refute the existence of an immaterial soul, he left the question open, suggesting it was plausible that an omnipotent god could animate matter and give it sensation. Although this was a tentative move, and Locke did not himself collapse the mind/body split, the bare suggestion of the possibility was a radical departure from dualist orthodoxy, and prepared the ground for later materialist and atheist theories, beginning with Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques* (1734). The product of his 'English period', Voltaire took Locke to task for shying away from the obvious implications of his theory, thus giving rise to atheistic French materialism.³⁰

For Locke, human identities were the product of circumstance. This liberal idea came to be of crucial importance throughout the eighteenth century, shaping the way people thought about the beginnings of the self and granting special significance to the first impressions in each individual life. G. S. Rousseau argues that Locke's *Essay*

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See, for example, John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). Prominent French materialists included Baron D'Holbach and fellow *salonniers* Julien Offray de La Mettrie, Denis Diderot and Claude Adrien Helvétius.

satisfies Kuhn's categorisation of paradigms as 'unprecedented' and 'open ended' scientific works that define revolutions, stating that Locke was the 'first to deal with a *science* [...] that had not as yet been developed: the science of man'.³¹ It was a science of man in the universal, rather than gender specific sense; nowhere was Lockean theory of clearer significance than in women's writing about women. Locke's *Essay* fundamentally altered the terms of early feminism; following its publication, arguments for the improvement of women's education came to be increasingly based on his environmental account of mind. Notwithstanding exceptions such as Margaret Cavendish, the feminist publications of the late seventeenth century generally used the dominant dualist model to underpin arguments for the improvement of women's education and status, and they continued to do so after Locke. Mary Lee Chudleigh and Mary Astell both maintained the Cartesian view,³² and while Astell's feminist writing incorporated Lockean environmentalism, she drew on Descartes to argue for the equality of souls, maintaining his distrust of the body, which, she says 'very often Clogs the Mind in its noblest Operations, especially when indulg'd'.³³

³¹ George S. Rousseau, 'Nerves, Spirits and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility (1975)', in *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 162.

³² On Cartesian women in the seventeenth century, see Eileen O'Neill, 'Women Cartesians, "Feminine Philosophy", and Historical Exclusion'. in *Feminist Interpretations of René Descartes*, ed. Susan Bordo, 231-57 (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). For a discussion of Astell's Cartesianism see Joan K. Kinnaird, 'Mary Astell and the Conservative Contribution to English Feminism'. *The Journal of British Studies* 19, no. 1 (1979): 53-75 and Brandy Lain Schillace, "'Reproducing' Custom: Mechanical Habits and Female Machines in Augustan Women's Education'. *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 111-37. On Astell, Locke and feminism, see *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith*, ed. William Kolbrener and Michal Michelson, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), particularly chapters by Mark Goldie and Derek E. Taylor. On Locke's influence more generally, see Kathryn J. Ready, 'Damaris Cudworth Masham, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, and the Feminist Legacy of Locke's Theory of Personal Identity'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 563-76 and *Feminist Interpretations of John Locke*, ed. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Kirstie Morna McClure (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

³³ Mary Astell, *A serious proposal to the ladies, for the advancement of their true and greatest interest. In two parts. By a lover of her sex.* (London: Richard Wilkin, 1697 [1701]), 229.

Locke's emphasis on the role of the bodily senses in the formation of ideas posed something of a problem for devoutly religious feminists invested in Cartesian thought, but the feminist potential of sense-based psychology was clear. Mobilising both Lockean and Cartesian thinking, Judith Drake argued that:

if [women] be naturally defective, the Defect must be either in Soul or Body. In the Soul it can't be, if what I have heard some learned Men maintain be, that all Souls are equal, and alike [...] that there are no innate *Ideas*, but that all the Notions we have are deriv'd from our external Senses, either immediately or by Reflexion.³⁴

Anticipating that, in the collapse of the binary distinction, the soul/mind might become sexed, Drake insisted that there was no difference between men and women's physical ability to receive the sensations by which ideas are formed. This might be understood in today's terms as equality feminism, but it has an important religious element. Towards the end of the century, Mary Wollstonecraft would reiterate the point that the there is no 'sex in souls' in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792),³⁵ and she, along with conservatives such as Hannah More, continued to assert that women's education made them too closely associated with the body. Wollstonecraft was no materialist; indeed, British writers of either sex rarely refuted the existence of the soul. By the end of the century, however, the soul had slipped from psychological discourse, and the notion of the mind as an embodied entity, subject to the forces of circumstance, was almost universally accepted.

³⁴ [Judith Drake?], *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex: In a Letter to a Lady* (London, 1696). 11-12.

³⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of men: in a letter to the right honourable Edmund Burke: occasioned by his reflections on the revolution in France; and, A vindication of the rights of woman: with strictures on political and moral subjects*, ed. David Lorne Macdonald and Kathleen Dorothy Scherf (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997), 176.

Hartley's Theory

Developing from Locke's suggestion that the wrong association of ideas was responsible for human error or prejudice, David Hartley's *Observations on Man* (1749) gave a physiological account of thought as the product of sensory impressions conducted along the nerves by vibrations, forming simple and then, by a process of association, complex ideas.³⁶ Hartley, like Locke, was defensively ambivalent about materiality of the soul:

It does indeed follow from this Theory, that Matter, if it could be endued with the most simple Kinds of Sensation, might also arrive at all that Intelligence of which the human Mind is possessed: Whence this Theory must be allowed to overturn all the Arguments which are usually brought for the Immateriality of the Soul from the Subtlety of the internal Senses, and of the rational Faculty. But I no-ways presume to determine whether Matter can be endued with Sensation or no. This is a Point foreign to the Purpose of my Inquiries. It is sufficient for me, that there is a certain Connexion, of one Kind or other, between the Sensations of the Soul, and the Motions excited in the medullary Substance of the Brain; which all Physicians and Philosophers allow. I would not therefore be any-way interpreted so as to oppose the Immateriality of the Soul.³⁷

Hartley's position, like Locke's, seemed to invite materialism even in its refutation. In 1775 Joseph Priestley published *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind*, a revised edition of *Observations*, which hinted strongly at materialism. In his first 'Introductory Essay' to the book, Priestley declares himself 'inclined to think that man does not consist of

³⁶ David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* (London: S. Richardson, 1749), 1:73. The best account of Hartley's thought is Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999). For an useful summary of Hartley's arguments see Barbara Bowen Oberg, 'David Hartley and the Association of Ideas'. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no.3 (1976), 441-54.

³⁷ Hartley, *Observations*, 1:511-2.

two principles, so essentially different from one another as matter and spirit [but rather] that the whole man is of some *uniform composition*.³⁸ Though Hartley's 'doctrine of associations' was uncontroversial in itself, Priestley threatened to destabilise a theory that had previously been relatively safe territory for more conservative thinkers. In short, there was little in Lockean/Hartleyan psychology *per se* that offended, notwithstanding their acceptance of the bare possibility of a material mind, but philosophers who picked up on this thread, as Priestley did in *Hartley's Theory*, his *Free Discussion* with Price and *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777), were considered a serious threat to orthodox belief.³⁹ Priestley threatened to radicalise the pious Hartley, and critics expressed outrage at what they saw as his materialist perversion of the Hartley's Christian moral philosophy.⁴⁰ Anglicans and Dissenters alike were aghast; the Unitarian William Kendrick, Methodist John Whitehead, and Anglican bishop Samuel Horsley each wrote alarmed letters to Priestley, the replies to which he published in *A Free Discussion*.

Priestley has nonetheless been credited with the popularisation of Hartleyan associationism, especially in Dissenting academies,⁴¹ though I will suggest that this requires some qualification. His revisions certainly made Hartley's ideas more accessible: he did away with much of the conjectural 'doctrine of vibrations', as well as

³⁸ Joseph Priestley, *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind* (London: Johnson, 1775), xx.

³⁹ 'More than a dozen refutations of the *Disquisitions* were published by the date of its second edition' in 1782. Robert E. Schofield, *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1773 to 1804* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2004), 72. These include A. Bicknell, *The putrid soul. A poetical epistle to Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. on his disquisitions relating to matter and spirit.* (London: J. Bowen, 1780); John Caulfield, *An essay on the immateriality and immortality of the soul* (London: J. Dodsley, 1778); and Andrew Baxter, *The evidence of reason in proof of the immortality of the soul* (London: T. Cadell, 1799).

⁴⁰ See Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 376.

⁴¹ Isaac Kramnick, 'Eighteenth-Century Science and Radical Social Theory: The Case of Joseph Priestley's Scientific Liberalism'. *The Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 1 (1986), 29. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature*, 376.

most of its theological component, to which Hartley had dedicated his second volume, and Priestley's book ran to three editions by 1770. The 'habitual associations' it described shaped narratives of psychological development in the novels of the 1790s, and were widely applied in educational writing and practice. Hartley's theory had special resonance for women; as Mary Hilton explains, associationism 'gave a central role to mothers and became a popular science for women. They, being the earliest carers of the instinctual infant, were the adults most likely to set up the proper (or improper) associations between sensations and feelings.'⁴² Each of the authors central to this study drew on Hartleyan associationism, and popularised its use through their educational writing. Unlike Hays, they steered clear of French materialism, and though in some ways agreeing (even despite themselves) with Wollstonecraft, they chose to distance themselves from her outspoken and seemingly Gallic challenges to the *status quo*. Rather, they looked to the relatively uncontroversial Hartley for a means of engagement with public life. As this study shows, devout thinkers like Hannah More were also savvy enough to recognise the uses of Priestley's controversial materialism, even as they distanced themselves from his opinions.

Soul and mind

In *From Soul to Mind: The Emergence of Psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James* (1998), Edward Reed writes that:

What distinguished the psychology of 1890 from that of 1815, besides the change in name from *moral philosophy* to *psychology*, was primarily

⁴² Mary Hilton, "'Child of Reason': Anna Barbauld and the Origins of Progressive Pedagogy', in *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress 1790-1930*, ed. Pam Hirsch and Mary Hilton (Harlow and New York: Longman, 2000), 26.

the way in which psychology was used to support religious ideas. Early in the century, psychology was considered to be a science of the soul. By the end of the century, psychology had more or less abandoned the soul and replaced it with the mind. Nevertheless [...] most psychologists still expected the science of mind to reinforce important religious beliefs.⁴³

What is most useful about Reed's argument is his point that the secularisation of psychology did not take place until relatively recently, and that assumptions to the contrary impose a false separation between science and religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, there are several problems with Reed's claims. First, it should be noted that the terminology was not as clearly defined in the eighteenth century as Reed suggests: though it probably gained prevalence with its later secular professionalisation, particularly after Sigmund Freud, psychology was used alongside moral philosophy and other discourses to describe the science of mind far earlier.⁴⁴ Second, it was a science of the mind rather than of the soul in the eighteenth century. Indeed, as Reed acknowledges, David Hartley was perhaps first to designate 'psychology' the 'Theory of the human Mind' alone.⁴⁵

A digital survey of texts in *Eighteenth Century Collection Online* seems to confirm that the currency of the word 'soul' declined as the century progressed (see Appendix, Table 1). There is a steady fall in its usage from a third of the way into the century, suggesting that Voltaire's *Lettres* might have been representative of a wider questioning of earlier assumptions. Interestingly, the use of the word 'mind' does not undergo a corresponding increase, and in fact decreases slightly between the 1740s and

⁴³ Edward S. Reed, *From Soul to Mind: The Emergence of Modern Psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.

⁴⁴ The OED cites Henry Curzon's *Universal Library* as the first English use of the term psychology to mean 'the scientific study of the nature, functioning, and development of the human mind'. Curzon defines psychology 'doctrine of the soul' which examines [...] the Mind of Man'. See Henry Curzon, *The Universal Library: or, Compleat Summary of Science* (London: George Sawbridge, 1712), 1:27.

⁴⁵ Hartley, *Observations*, 1:354.

80s. Similar trends are apparent in subject areas defined in *ECCO* as ‘Medicine, Science and Technology’ (Table 2) and ‘Literature and Language’ (Table 3). There is a bifurcation between soul and mind in both of these, but there is a closer alignment of ‘spirit’ and ‘mind’ in the former. The high occurrence of ‘spirit’ in texts defined in *ECCO* as scientific suggests that Reed is correct in terms of the religiosity of early psychology. The declining use of ‘soul’ does not necessarily signify secularisation, though this may have contributed towards it;⁴⁶ indeed, Reed’s argument that psychology remained linked to religion up to the end of the nineteenth century reinforces the point that the terminology did not always reflect the religious aims of early psychology. Nor, I argue, did its approaches and applications, which embraced fields we might recognise today as experimental science, medicine, the arts and humanities, and social sciences.

The movement from soul to mind was by no means straightforward, but was shaped by psychology’s diffusion over a number of interrelated spheres. Reed perhaps takes it for granted that the ‘two cultures’ of C. P. Snow’s disputed hypothesis was far from solidified in eighteenth-century Britain, but it is important to state that there was no hermetic separation between art and science at the time.⁴⁷ His choice of Erasmus Darwin as a figurehead for late eighteenth-century psychology might remind us, then, that scientific art was not yet considered an oxymoron: Darwin’s scientific poem *The Botanic Garden* (1791) is a case in point.⁴⁸ Of course, the above findings from *ECCO* are also subject to problems of categorisation: editions of *The Botanic Garden* are listed separately under ‘Medicine, Science and Technology’ and ‘Literature and Language’, whereas Mark Akenside’s Hartleyan poem, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1744,

⁴⁶ For a history of this, including Barbauld’s unwitting contribution to post-Romantic secularism, see Colin Jager, *The Book of God: Secularization and Design in the Romantic Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: CUP, 1959).

⁴⁸ Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden: A Poem, in Two Parts* (London: J. Johnson, 1791).

reissued with an introduction by Barbauld in 1794), is classed under ‘Literature and Language’ alone. The permeability of such categories in the eighteenth century must be kept in mind, especially since binary perspectives tend specifically to demote forms of expression that are traditionally considered feminine; one of Reed’s most revealingly problematic claims is that ‘although Mary Shelley used the form of the gothic novel to work out her ideas, her intention of making a serious philosophical and scientific statement is manifest.’⁴⁹ The sociology of scientific knowledge that emerged in the 1970s encourages recognition of the sciences as responding to, as well as informing, social and cultural change. In light of the eighteenth-century union of religious culture and science, this surely necessitates the inclusion of women’s applications and adaptations of psychology into the history of science, especially those of highly active women such as More, whose belief in a ‘vital spirit’ blended Anglicanism with psychophysiological theory.⁵⁰ One of the premises of this study is that scholarship needs to engage seriously with religious women’s contributions to psychology. This requires attention to the diversity of women’s writing, as well as an understanding of its social and historical contexts.

‘The Female Philosopher’ and Mary Hays’ materialist feminism

The eighteenth-century science of psychology both informed, and was in turn informed by, the wider culture of sensibility – a culture with equivocal implications for women. As Harriet Guest has recently explained,

⁴⁹ Reed, *From Soul to Mind*, 58.

⁵⁰ Hannah More, *Christian Morals* (London: T. Cadell, 1813), 2:153.

At the beginning of the wars with France, in 1793, sensibility provided a means to justify or explain the absence of women from discussions of the state of the nation, and the need to advance or resist reform, but [...] it was also the language to which women had recourse to express their sense of membership in the wider community of the nation, and identity with its concerns, because it signalled their exclusion from partisan or interested opinion and debate.⁵¹

During this period, Guest continues, ‘the availability to women writers of a language of humane feeling which appeared “unbounded”, which seemed to transcend social boundaries and political differences, acquired a new urgency and significance’.⁵² Guest has shown how writers ranging from Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Amelia Anderson Opie, Elizabeth Inchbald and Jane Austen each accessed this language to reimagine human society and their place within it. The idea of a comprehensive perspective on humanity forms part of the focus of this study, so too does the ambiguity of the science of sensibility, which reflected and participated in the broader ‘problem of sensibility.’⁵³ On the one hand, sense-based and materialist psychology allowed for an emphasis on the importance of education in the making of the mind. On the other, representations in medical texts and elsewhere of (especially middle and upper-class) women as problematically nervous beings reasserted notions of physical difference, a form of sexism the Cartesian feminists seem to have anticipated. Moreover, women who engaged too closely with the ideas of the French were subject to misogynist attacks.

Analyses of the role of psychology in shaping the culture of sensibility have tended to re-emphasise this gendering of the nervous system, particularly in foregrounding medical works such as those of George Cheyne. Cheyne attributed

⁵¹ Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 4.

⁵² Guest, *Unbounded Attachment*, 5.

⁵³ Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 220.

women with softer nerves, and thus claimed they were more susceptible to the physical effects of mental shocks and disturbances⁵⁴ In his important and influential book, *The Culture of Sensibility* (1996), therefore, G. J. Barker-Benfield claims that while nervous psychology held significant potential for early feminists this was counteracted by a gendering of the nerves:

The fundamental issue for gender would be that of consciousness, of “mind” inevitably associated with feeling, in short, of “sensibility,” as the eighteenth century understood the term. The revolutionary possibilities for women’s consciousness were countered in the same terms, women’s subordination naturalized on the basis of their finer sensibility. The potential for women in sensational psychology seemed to be short-circuited.⁵⁵

My argument seeks to complicate this position by showing how women’s writing was not as easily contained by the gendering of the nervous paradigm, as Barker-Benfield suggests; indeed, it questions the impact – both in the period and its criticism – of the pathologising connotations of such a category as ‘nervous psychology’. Perceptions of the impact of this have also been skewed by attention to radically feminist women writers; while it is no doubt the case that the nervous paradigm Barker-Benfield identifies was often used in response to naturalise women’s subordination, it is important to remember that the ‘potential for women’ in nervous psychology was not singularly directed towards radically feminist arguments.

⁵⁴ G.J Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Also see George S. Rousseau, *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility*, 157-84 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability. The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 1988) and ‘Hypochondria and Hysteria; Sensibility and the Physicians’. *The Eighteenth Century. Theory and Interpretation* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 141-74; and more recently Erin Wilson, ‘The End of Sensibility: The Nervous Body in the Early Nineteenth Century’. *Literature and Science* 30, no. 2 (2012): 276-91.

⁵⁵ Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 3.

Debate on the philosophy of mind was central to the ideological battles in the age of revolutions roughly spanning 1775 and 1815. Over this time, the significance of Locke's theory of mental development became increasingly contested across political divides. As we have seen, materialist philosophy grew out of Lockeanism on both sides of the Channel, but in the years following the Revolution, Priestley's monist materialism came to be associated with French atheism. Fears over the threat to dualist Christian orthodoxy were expressed in increasingly gendered language: the French *philosophes* and 'new philosophers' of the 1790s were represented as heretical sexual libertines, and women especially bore the brunt of this. Radical feminists following Wollstonecraft, who responded to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of childhood development by directly challenging the repression of women, faced censure and ridicule. The gendered repercussions of such engagement became increasingly visible in print culture: as Mary Robinson put it in 1799, female philosophers were 'literary bugbears', and 'treated with ridicule and contempt'.⁵⁶ A caricature of 'unamiable' woman, the 'Female Philosopher' was deployed against speculatively-minded women by opponents of either sex; variously represented as 'unsex'd' by her overstepping of gender boundaries, sexually libertine in her emulation of the French, and grotesquely embodied, she was paraded in satire across print genres.

Science rarely provided women with paid employment, and in the exceptional cases that it did, it came at a cost. The astronomer Caroline Herschel, who discovered several comets, received a stipend of £50 per year for her work with her brother, the

⁵⁶ Mary Robinson, *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination. With Anecdotes.* (London: Longman, 1799), 40.

Royal Astronomer William Herschel, from 1790.⁵⁷ She was satirised in the below cartoon entitled ‘The Female Philosopher, smelling out the comet’ (Figure 1).

⁵⁷ Mascha Hansen, ‘Scientifick Wives: Eighteenth-Century Women Between Self, Society and Science’. in *Discovering the Human Life Science and the Arts in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Ralf Haekel and Sabine Blackmore, 53-67 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 59.



Figure 1. 'The Female Philosopher, smelling out the Comet'. Hand-coloured etching, published by R. Hawkins, 2 February 1790. © Trustees of the British Museum

The print ridicules the female scientist by playing on the notional hierarchy of the senses; women, it suggests, are so bound by their sensuality as to be incapable of achieving the vision crucial to Enlightenment empiricism. The Female Philosopher's allegiance with smell in particular signifies her devaluation of philosophy.⁵⁸ In return, philosophy revels in debasing her – the (atypically male) moon grins in collusion with the farting cherub. The insinuation of imbecility in Herschel's rapturous pose and blush at the 'strong sulphurous scent' is, of course, self-defeating: in its own sensory terms, the print reeks of a vulgar chauvinism that, whilst noxious, is a blatant emission of insecurity in the face of her real scientific proficiency. To a woman of such acknowledged powers of perception as Herschel, this would have been plainly, perhaps even laughably detectable.

It is hardly surprising that very few women writers in eighteenth-century Britain proclaimed themselves philosophers, and barely any publicised overtly materialist beliefs. Even before the French Revolution, connections were made between Priestleyan materialism and unbridled sexual desire. A poem entitled *A Remarkable Moving Letter!*, published in 1779 under the historian Catharine Macaulay's name, pours scorn on her marriage to the much younger William Graham:

MATERIAL atoms, variously combin'd,
 Form all the vice or virtue of the mind.
 Soul and Spa-water differ but in phrase,
 So preach the Doctors of degen'rate days;
 Give then this female, frail machine the blame,
 That fan's a widow's furor into flame:
 And take us back, on truths that PRIESTLEY proves;
 'Twill soothe thine age to view our infant loves,
 To hear me beat republican alarms,
 Or lisp out raptures in my GR-H-M's arms.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Clare Brant, 'Fume and Perfume: Some Eighteenth-Century Uses of Smell'. *Journal of British Studies* 43, no. 4 (2004), 447-57.

⁵⁹ *A Remarkable Moving Letter!* (London, 1779), 9-10.

As Guest observes, the poem ‘turns on the analogy between “the body of the state” and the body of the historian. Unlike patriotic men, who “transform their existence,” Macaulay Graham has, from the point of view of her satirists, gloriously failed in the act of transubstantiation, and remains a figure of female frailty.’⁶⁰ Like the caricature in Figure 1, women’s supposedly closer attachment to the flesh underpins the poem’s misogyny, but it is Priestleyan materialism specifically that is turned against women here. After 1789, this was increasingly associated with revolutionary politics and the painted libertinism of the French in British print culture. To take just one example, here is Charles Lucas:

There is scarcely a *female Philosopher* to be found that is not an EPICUREAN; and, as soon as the French Revolution commenced, the *filles-des-joie* were the first to distinguish themselves. At present, some of these Philosophesses are united in the spider-woven bonds of the Gallic-Hymen with the most famous of their legislators and warriors.⁶¹

Such representations make Mary Hays seem all the more remarkable. Hays is at the radical extreme of women’s engagement with the philosophy of mind, and perhaps went further than any eighteenth-century British writer, man or woman, in her many open professions of materialist beliefs. As Scott Nowka, Gina Luria Walker and Marilyn Brooks have discussed, Hays builds her feminism on French materialism in particular, rejecting outright the categorical distinction between mind and body, and insisting that the mind was subject to the laws of causation established by Isaac Newton.⁶² As in her

⁶⁰ Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2000), 200.

⁶¹ Charles Lucas, *The Infernal Quixote: A Tale of the Day*, Vol. I, IV vols. (London: Minerva Press, 1801), 235.

⁶² Scott A. Nowka, ‘Materialism and Feminism in Mary Hays’s “Memoirs of Emma Courtney”’. *European Romantic Review* 18, no. 4 (October 2007): 521-40; Gina Luria Walker, *The Idea of*

friend and fellow Unitarian Joseph Priestley's thought, this led towards necessitarianism, the belief that human action is determined by external causes, by chains of events in the world which are beyond our control and yet subject to change through political action. For Hays, this doctrine provided a convincing answer to women's supposed mental inferiority to men, and bolstered her argument for their rational education.

Like her mentor Wollstonecraft, Hays was an educationalist. As Walker states, her didactic *Letters and Essays* 'combined the psycho-perceptual dynamics described by Locke and Hartley with Rousseau's ethical pedagogy to convince women that their first responsibility was to educate themselves and their daughters'.⁶³ What is more surprising is that her conduct writing also promotes French materialism. In *Letters and Essays*, she schools Amasia (who shares her name with the queen of the Amazons) in metaphysics, offering clear arguments and counterarguments in favour of materialism and necessitarianism. She did the same in the periodical press: her spirited 'Reply to J. T. on Helvetius' and 'Defence of Helvetius' in the *Monthly Magazine* took an immaterialist critic unflinchingly to task.⁶⁴ In her best-known work, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), Hays held firm on her materialism, but her preface to the novel also contains a disclaimer: she cautions readers that the narrative is 'calculated to operate as a warning, rather than as an example'.⁶⁵

Being Free: A Mary Hays Reader (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2005) and *Mary Hays (1759-1843): The Growth of a Woman's Mind* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Marilyn Brooks (ed.), *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

⁶³ Walker, *Mary Hays (1759-1843)*, 70.

⁶⁴ Hays (as M. H), 'Reply to J. T. on Helvetius'. *The Monthly Magazine* 1, June 1796: 385-87; 'Defence of Helvetius'. *The Monthly Magazine*, 1797: 26-8.

⁶⁵ Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, ed. Eleanor Ty (Oxford : OUP, 2000), 4. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.

The eponymous Emma's 'hazardous experiment' is a marked transgression from British sexual mores – the active pursuit of Augustus Harley, a man who though equally enamoured, repeatedly refuses her advances. When she eventually learns of his secret marriage, Emma proposes adultery. However, the preface also signals Hays' commitment to French materialism:

The most interesting, and the most useful, fictions, are, perhaps, such, as delineating the progress, and tracing the consequences, of one strong, indulged, passion, or prejudice, afford materials, by which the philosopher may calculate the powers of the human mind, and learn the springs which set it in motion—'Understanding, and talents,' says Helvetius, 'being nothing more, in men, than the produce of their desires, and particular situations' (3).

Hays' hesitancy betrays an understandable anxiety about the reception of a novel which, while receiving positive reviews in the *Monthly Review* and *European Magazine*, would be deemed deeply immoral by the conservative press.⁶⁶ But while she seems to disavow her heroine's behaviour, Hays' preface appears somewhat disingenuous. By quoting Helvétius here, as she does time and again throughout the novel, Hays makes her standpoint clear: desire is the wellspring of 'understanding' and 'talents'. This is not to suggest that *Emma Courtney* does not act as a warning to her female readers, but that encoded in this warning is a criticism, not of the rational desire of her heroine, but of the structures of society that have 'crushed', 'pampered' and 'trained' women to 'meretricious folly' (163).

In *De L'Esprit*, Helvétius not only posits that the pursuit of pleasure is the principal motivator of human action, but that of all the pleasures, 'the love of women is,

⁶⁶ *Monthly Review* 22 (1797): 443-49; *European Magazine*, 1797: 33-4. Negative reviews include *Critical Review* 19 (1797): 109-11, and *Anti-Jacobin Review*, May 1797: 54-58.

among civilized nations, the main spring by which they are moved.⁶⁷ Helvétius was notorious as an epicurean and lover of women,⁶⁸ and as the following anecdote demonstrates, this was closely bound up with perceptions of his materialist philosophy:

A circumstance relative to Helvetius, was the origin of his system upon physical sensibility. He had naturally a strong inclination to women. One day, when a very young man, he was in a public garden, where he observed a man who was surrounded and caressed by several women of distinguished appearance. He felt himself inclined to envy the fate of a person seemingly so happy, and who attracted the attention and regards of such charming women. [...] From that moment he formed a design of distinguishing himself by his talents, that he might become the object of that attention which to him appeared so flattering, and which he imagined he could turn to the advantage of his taste for pleasure. It was relative to this manner of being momentarily affected, that he established a general system, contradicted by reason, and the experience of every age.⁶⁹

The writer suggests a relation between the ‘general system’ of materialism and an effeminate obsession with flattery as well as sexual libertinism. His reputation was not unfounded: in *De L'Esprit*, Helvétius takes evident pleasure in noting that ‘The women among the Gelons were obliged by the laws to do all the works that required strength, as building of houses, and cultivating the earth: but to reward them for their pains, the same law granted them the privilege of lying with every warrior they liked,’ lubriciously adding that ‘the women were much attached to this law.’⁷⁰ Writing at a time when anti-Gallic sentiment ran high, Hays takes a considerable risk in drawing on and citing Helvétius so extensively, not only because of the ill-feeling towards French philosophy and execration of women’s uses of it, but also because she follows him in making the link between materialist theory and physical desire.

⁶⁷ Helvétius, *De L'Esprit*, 169-70.

⁶⁸ Ian Cumming, *Helvetius: His Life and Place in the History of Educational Thought* (London: Routledge, 2001), 36-7

⁶⁹ Gabriel Sénat de Meilhan, *Considerations upon wit and morals* (London, 1788), n. 280-81.

⁷⁰ Helvétius, *De L'Esprit*, 183.

Hays' treatment of the doctrines of materiality and necessity in *Emma Courtney*, which drew extensively from Hays' correspondence with Godwin, presents something of a problem. On the one hand, she shows how the rational education of a woman can form a mind which is capable, amongst other things, of sound argument, clear judgement, and of administering medical care when her husband, a surgeon by profession, fails spectacularly in all of the above. On the other hand, Emma's cramped education at a girl's school has given her a distinctly sexual nature – the type of nature that Wollstonecraft had insisted was the result of women's mental and physical education. Rather than correcting her '*sexual character*' (117), however, Emma's rationality confirms, even reinforces, her desire. As she writes to the Godwinian Mr Francis: 'Philosophy, it is said, should regulate the feelings, but it has added fervour to mine!' (80).

The pathologised sensibility of *Emma Courtney* might thus initially appear to perpetuate the selfsame nervous paradigm that, in Barker-Benfield's view, naturalised female subordination. Emma's manifestation of traits such as trembling, fainting, and the 'nervous fever' she suffers after Harley's death seem to reinforce a gendering of the nerves that threatens to undermine the feminist potential of the novel (164). However, the limits of the nervous female body are prevailed over at the crisis of the story, when Augustus is brought, dying, to Emma's home. Here, her nerves are 'hardened' by mental determination, at once compounding the interconnection of mind and body, and demonstrating that women's supposedly inherent nervousness could be overcome. Indeed, it is Emma's husband, Montague, who cannot overcome his emotional instability. While Hays seeks to show that women are not biologically determined in terms of intellectual and physical abilities, however, she also seems keen to maintain the value of a distinctly female capacity for 'humane feeling' that, in Guest's formulation,

in some ways resembles the sympathetic embodiment of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).⁷¹ In Hays' view, the faculties of reason and sympathy are equally embodied and mutually responsive; thought is not dominant over feeling but flows through the same channels, giving it greater strength. This slightly complicates Marilyn Butler's claim that 'The theme of *Emma Courtney* – at least at the conscious level – is that women will never be free unless they learn to submit their passions to the control of reason'.⁷² The novel's affirmation of both reason and passion may be vexed at times, but it is nonetheless an attempt to identify and disturb binarity. That Hays does not resolve these problems is in part plot device – if Emma were to overcome her excessive sensibility, and become a philosopher like Mr Francis, as she momentarily does, what would – indeed, what could she do then? The identity of the female philosopher, therefore, is limited by circumstance; even where women did overcome the limits of their education, they were not accommodated by the current emotional and professional structures of society.

Previously relegated to the status of 'Disciple of William Godwin',⁷³ recent scholarship on Hays has demonstrated that she departed significantly from her friend's philosophical perspective. As Nowka correctly states, 'Hays's *material* necessitarianism can be clearly distinguished from Godwin's *idealist* necessity, and it is precisely this difference that made their views irreconcilable'.⁷⁴ Marilyn Brooks has shown that Hays was disappointed with Godwin's failure to address the unequal status of women, and finds the material necessitarianism of Unitarian Dissent and Helvétius 'consolatory'

⁷¹ Guest, *Unbounded Attachment*, 4-5.

⁷² Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 44.

⁷³ M. R. Adams, 'Mary Hays, Disciple of William Godwin'. *Publication of the Modern Language Association* 55 (June 1940): 472-83.

⁷⁴ Nowka, 'Materialism and Feminism'. 526.

because they offered a ‘rationale of error’.⁷⁵ Hays was also alienated by Godwin’s reaffirmation of dualism in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (1793), and the rationalist rejection of desire in his utopian vision. In a radical, if absurd, movement away from materialism, Godwin had it that in the ideal future, ‘we shall all be wise enough to consider the sensual intercourse as a very trivial object. [...] Reasonable men then will propagate their species, not because a certain sensible pleasure is annexed to this action, but because it is right the species should be propagated; and the manner in which they exercise this function will be regulated by the dictates of reason and duty.’⁷⁶ Though his later revisions toned this down, Godwin went as far as to suggest in the first edition of *Political Justice* that the omnipotence of mind over matter would eventuate in man’s immortality, removing the need for sex altogether: ‘The men’, he asserts, ‘who exist when the earth shall refuse itself to a more extended population, will cease to propagate, for they will no longer have any motive, either of error or duty, to induce them.’⁷⁷ In stark contrast to this, Hays wants to rehabilitate sexual desire within the thinking body, and finds in Helvétius a useful insistence on the value of love between the sexes. By favouring Helvétian materialism over Godwinian rationalism, Hays attempts to level body and mind, collapsing such binaries without necessarily resolving them. As in Emma’s correspondence with Mr. Francis, Hays’ insistence on the interrelation between rational thought and physical desire marks her break with Godwinian philosophy.

Moreover, Godwin’s appeal to personal autonomy, as reproduced in Mr Francis’ letters, comes as a somewhat jarring response to Emma’s struggles. He tells her, ‘The

⁷⁵ Marilyn L. Brooks, ‘Mary Hays: Finding a “Voice” in Dissent’. *Enlightenment and Dissent* 14 (1995), 11.

⁷⁶ William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1793), 2:852-2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 871.

first lesson of enlightened reason, the great fountain of heroism and virtue, the principle by which alone man can become what man is capable of being, is *independence'* (134).

As Brian Michael Norton has recently argued, Hays anticipates modern feminist criticism of the Enlightenment notion of autonomy, which sees it as is ‘an unmistakably *masculine* ideal, modeled on the social roles and fantasies of *men*, leading some to question its ultimate value for women.’⁷⁸ As Norton suggests, Hays’ novel provides a nuanced critique of Enlightenment conceptions of autonomy, revealing their inadequacy in terms of the contingencies of women’s lived experience, and incompatibility with the domestic affections. Hays insists on the value of emotion not just as concomitant to individual intellect or ‘talents’, but as essential to the interpersonal relations that make up society, resisting the atomistic vision of Godwin’s philosophy in favour of a more reciprocally humanistic associational model. To summarise her position, materialism allows Hays to figure women’s desires as the product of the embodied mind, enabling a reconceptualisation of its value both to the individual, and to society. Desire, she maintains, is an energy with great potential for the improvement of humankind; resisting its alienation in post-Enlightenment idealism, *Emma Courtney* makes clear that for Hays, ‘passions and powers [are] synonymous’ (147).

Hays’ critics recognised the centrality of the body to her philosophy, and exploited this in viciously misogynist attacks, such as this well-known and particularly grotesque barrage of criticism from Coleridge:

Of Miss Hay's intellect I do not think so highly, as you, or rather, to speak sincerely, I think, not *contemptuously*, but certainly very *despectively* thereof. - Yet I think you likely in this case to have judged better than I. - for to hear a Thing, ugly & petticoated, ex-syllogize a God with cold-blooded Precision, & attempt to run Religion thro' the body

⁷⁸ Brian Michael Norton, ‘Emma Courtney, Feminist Ethics, and the Problem of Autonomy’. *The Eighteenth Century* 54, no. 3 (Fall 2013), 297.

with an Icicle - an Icicle from a Scotch Hog-trough - *I do not endure it! - my Eye beholds phantoms - & 'nothing is, but what is not.'*⁷⁹

Of course, attempts to undermine women's intellectual achievements often resort to the grotesquely embodied or sexualised, but this seems to have taken an added intensity in attacks against Hays, especially in Elizabeth Hamilton's parody of Hays as Bridgetina Botherim in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), which I discuss in Chapter Five. Such responses came to confirm the truth of Hays' heroine's observation, that, 'The shame of being singular [...] requires strong principles, and much native firmness of temper, to surmount (90).' Paraphrasing John Aikin,⁸⁰ she continues that 'Those who deviate from the beaten track must expect to be entangled in the thicket, and wounded by many a thorn'.

Bonds of union? Women, reputation and association

On 22nd July 1804, Maria Edgeworth wrote to Anna Letitia Barbauld with the suggestion of establishing a periodical 'written entirely by ladies'.⁸¹ Barbauld rejected the scheme, insisting in her reply that

There is no bond of union among literary women, any more than among literary men; different sentiments and different connections separate them much more than the joint interest of their sex would unite them. Mrs. Hannah More would not write along with you or me, and we should probably hesitate at joining Miss Hays, or if she were living, Mrs. Godwin.⁸²

⁷⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Robert Southey, in *Collected letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1956), 2:563.

⁸⁰ John Aikin, *Letters From a Father to His Son* (London: J. Johnson, 1793), 9-10.

⁸¹ Maria Edgeworth to Barbauld, July 22, 1804, in Anna Letitia Le Breton, *Memoir*, 236.

⁸² Letter from Barbauld to Edgeworth, August 30, 1804; *ibid.*

Barbauld is firmly dismissive of the notion of a unilateral association between women writers; the ‘joint interest of their sex’ is an insufficient basis for such an alliance because it is trumped by forcefully held and divisive beliefs. In Barbauld’s view, she and Edgeworth, More, Hays and Wollstonecraft may all be ‘literary women’, but their conflicting political and religious views and reputations render them incompatible. To fabricate a union under the auspices of Edgeworth’s proposed ‘Feminiad’ would be to make a false association; it would disregard the heterogeneity of women’s writing, and reinforce gender distinctions in print culture by trivialising their work; as Barbauld reminds Edgeworth, ‘There is a great difference between a paper written *by* a lady, and *as* a lady’, and to write always ‘as a lady’ would entail writing in ‘trammels’.⁸³

The passage provides a useful opportunity to address an important methodological concern about the grouping of women writers, and especially writers who, as Barbauld points out, share neither ‘sentiments’ nor ‘connections’. Her assertion is a reminder to modern readers to resist their elision. Equally, it is important to guard against attributing commonalities to shared gender experience alone; similarities in their approach to the human mind should be considered in light of other factors, just as their dissimilarities must. I do not mean to suggest that material psychology constituted, in the views of the women in this study, a ‘bond of union’ so insistently disavowed by Barbauld. In fact, it is often their very disunity that interests me. Though they can, I think, be grouped together through their middle-class reformism and Christian belief, there are significant differences in their political and religious uses of philosophy.

Attention to their distinct perspectives brings to light a comprehensive and richly discursive philosophical field. In one of the first reappraisals of conservative feminist responses to the French Revolution, Kathryn Sutherland argued that ‘the

⁸³ Ibid.

realignment of “left wing” Wollstonecraft and “right-wing” More allows us to constitute women’s history as a more complex and more internally divided, and perhaps therefore historically more resilient, legitimisation of women’s negotiations with experience than has so far been allowed’.⁸⁴ As Sutherland suggests, identifying internal divisions can help to solidify our sense of ongoing debate and schism, conversation and ‘strong collision’, and resist the essentialism that so troubled Barbauld.

As Daniel White and more recently Emma Major have shown,⁸⁵ Barbauld’s religious background is of fundamental importance to her writing. Both scholars demonstrate that it is necessary to look beyond the ‘feminist/antifeminist debate’⁸⁶ in order to gain a better understanding of how Barbauld configured her position as a Dissenting woman writer. Major’s important study of women, nation and religion works towards a critical re-establishment of the centrality of religious devotion in the politics and literary productions of devout women writers such as Barbauld and More. As Major puts it,

Barbauld and More

possess overlapping views on the role and importance of the religious public. Although they responded to the challenges of the French Revolution and its aftermath in very different ways, both writers seek a solution in the transparency of a public faith that collapses public and private boundaries and offers a tantalising space where gender is eventually irrelevant.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Kathryn Sutherland, *Hannah More's Counter-Revolutionary Feminism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 35.

⁸⁵ Daniel E. White, ‘The “Joineriana”: Anna Barbauld, the Aikin Family Circle, and the Dissenting Public Sphere’. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 511-33; Emma Major, ‘Nature, Nation, and Denomination: Barbauld’s Taste for the Public’. *ELH* 74, no. 4, (Winter 2007): 909-30.

⁸⁶ White, “Joineriana”, 514.

⁸⁷ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 272.

My argument builds on this by taking an interdisciplinary approach to their uses of associationist psychology, as they were related to religious profession and educational practice.

Religion, like education, seemed to hold significant potential for women as a means of participation in the shaping of the nation. Barbauld and More in particular sought to renegotiate the relationship between church (whether Dissenting or Anglican) and the individual, both asserting the importance of feeling as an energising counterpart to the dry systems of philosophy. This was picked up on by Wollstonecraft, whose preface to *The Female Reader* (1789) includes the following quote from Barbauld's *Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, on Sects, and on Establishments* (1775):

Philosophy represents the Deity in too abstracted a manner to engage our affections. Philosophers 'dwell too much in generals. Accustomed to reduce every thing to the operation of general laws, they turn our attention to larger views, attempt to grasp the whole order of the universe; and, in the zeal of a systematic spirit, seldom leave room for those particular and personal mercies which are the food of gratitude.⁸⁸

Such a stance was not opposed to theory, but to the tendency of (generally male) philosophers to disconnect abstract devotional thought from embodied feeling, a capacity that Wollstonecraft, like Hays, wanted to maintain. Though Wollstonecraft praises Barbauld's essay, she later criticised her poem 'To a Lady, with some Painted Flowers' for aestheticising feminine weakness and idealising superficial accomplishment,⁸⁹ provoking a venomous poetic retort from Barbauld, which, though unpublished in her lifetime, proves difficult to square with modern-day feminism. Barbauld's reassertion of feminine difference in 'The Rights of Woman' (1825) is

⁸⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Female Reader*, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1989), 4:323.

⁸⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Vindications*, ed. Macdonald and Scherf, n.168.

certainly a conservative move, but the advances she made in the field of psychology also informed the educational writings of more radical women like Wollstonecraft, as well, I argue, as William Godwin's move into children's literature in the 1800s.

Barbauld was far from opposed to women's rational education. She advertised for and began to mentor female pupils in 1787, and in her letters to one of her female pupils, she indicates that both men and women should be given a similarly broad foundational knowledge, writing that 'every woman should consider herself as sustaining the general character of a rational being, as well as the more confined one belonging to the female sex; and therefore the motives for acquiring general knowledge and cultivating the taste are nearly the same to both sexes.'⁹⁰ The 'more confined' female character, then, is conceptualised here as an addition to the 'general' character that unites all human beings as rational creatures. She goes on to make clear the reason behind the difference between male and female education: 'the line of separation between the studies of a young man and a young woman appears to me to be chiefly fixed by this,—that a woman is excused from all professional knowledge.' But Barbauld's notion of women's proper sphere knowledge is broad: as well as astronomy and botany, which were more acceptable sciences for young women, she advises that 'experimental philosophy, chemistry, physics' are not merely recommended but, for devotional reasons, are 'unpardonable not to know'.⁹¹ Her complacent understanding of the potentiality within the 'bounds of female reserve' was no doubt gained from her

⁹⁰ Anna Letitia Barbauld, 'On Female Studies', in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ontario: Broadview, 2002), 475. Further references to this edition will appear as *SPP*.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

education at Warrington, as Janowitz puts it, Barbauld ‘might well have had an idealized notion of how pliable were the boundaries of the domestic scene’.⁹²

In her essay *Against Inconsistency in our Expectations* (1773), Barbauld’s argument for a Stoic regulation of personal expectations is underpinned by the philosophy of the mind. It is through the ‘accurate inspection’ of the human mind that we may come to differentiate between what we are able to change and what we are unable to change, and to act accordingly. Employing the associationist language of ‘habit’ and ‘affection’, Barbauld’s essay begins with the notion of using the study of the mind to ‘act with precision; and expect that effect, and that alone, from his efforts, which they are naturally adapted to produce’.⁹³ At the end of the essay, her argument arcs back to the same point:

Let us then study the philosophy of the human mind. The man who is master of this science will know what to expect from every one ... The passions and inclinations of others are his tools, which he can use with as much precision as he would the mechanical powers; and he can as readily make allowance for the workings of vanity, or the bias of self-interest in his friends, as for the power of friction, or the irregularities of the needle.⁹⁴

‘Let us’, Barbauld’s inclusive call to study here, is echoed a decade or so later in her pedagogic *Hymns in Prose*, several of which begin with the words ‘come, let us’. Here, in her essay, she explicitly links the ‘philosophy of the human mind’ with power – an understanding of the mechanics of the mind allows for their use as ‘tools’. A strikingly similar recommendation is made in *On Female Studies* (1787):

A woman with a cultivated mind [...] will be able on all occasions to discern between pretenders and men of real merit. On subjects which she

⁹² Janowitz, ‘Amiable and radical sociability: Anna Barbauld’s “free familiar conversation”’, 66.

⁹³ *SPP*, 187–8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

cannot talk herself, she will know whether a man talks with knowledge of his subject. She will not judge of systems, but by their systems will be able to judge of men.⁹⁵

McCarthy and Kraft note that here Barbauld ‘aligns herself with the older feminism of Mary Astell’ by advising that her pupil use ‘intellectual attainments to create a sphere of inner autonomy from which to judge men.’⁹⁶ She turns women’s enforced silence – the fact that they ‘cannot talk’ – into a form of resistance, or associational Stoicism. Indeed, she seems to delight in the progress of women’s scientific discourse; reflecting after the turn of the century on the progress of female scientific education since Samuel Richardson’s day, she wonders, ‘What would [earlier] critics have said, could they have heard young ladies talking of gases, and nitrous oxyd, and stimuli, and excitability, and all the terms of modern science.’⁹⁷

In their unifications of theory and praxis, More, Barbauld and Hamilton positioned themselves as the *de facto* inheritors of the doctrine of association; by embracing and innovating it they were reasserting the primacy of the domestic environment, its status as the first and most influential site for the construction of subject/nation. All three figure domesticity as power, though not without difficulty, often registering frustration even as they recommend women and girls remain within the bounds of female propriety. I do not mean to make any normative claims here, or to seek to resolve the tensions arising from this, but I do think it is important to resist positions which could reaffirm hierarchical epistemologies. As Jennie Batchelor points out, women writers were often ‘deeply suspicious of a conduct-book ideology that

⁹⁵ *SPP*, 482.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 474.

⁹⁷ Barbauld, ‘Life of Samuel Richardson, with Remarks on his Writings’. in *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, Author of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison* (London: Richard Phillips, 1804), 1:clxiv.

sought to trivialise women not only by insisting that they engage in properly feminine but inconsequential employments, which lacked economic and cultural status as work [...] but also by rendering invisible the very real labour daily expended in the tasks of domestic management, child rearing and charitable activities.⁹⁸ Indeed, one of the challenges for feminist scholars today is to seek approaches that recognise such tensions while resisting the belittlement of the strategies and practices women used to negotiate them.

According to David Simpson, in the aftermath of the French Revolution theory and method were ‘coming to be identified as either in themselves synonyms or effectively so in the dangerous confusion put about by the French politicians. Here the belief in method, in the progressive application of mental techniques to practical-political ends, comes itself to be regarded as wild and visionary delusion—a delusion of “theory”’.⁹⁹ Hamilton’s burlesque of radical experimental science in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, which I discuss in Chapter Five, hinges on the representation of the New Philosophers as absurdly skewed in their vision as they attempt to put their idealist schemes into practice. However, such attempts to counteract radical print culture did not constitute a rejection of theory or its application through practice, but sought to paint the New Philosophers as misappropriating the distinctly practical philosophical tradition of British Enlightenment figures like Locke, politically subverting and sexualising it in the process. Indeed, what Hamilton was seeking to do through her satire was to clear the stage for her own domestic philosophy. Moreover, such efforts to expunge political radicalism from the philosophy of mind reaffirmed the very efficacy of its union with practice: as Chapter Three shows, Hannah More’s

⁹⁸ Batchelor, *Women's Work*, 13.

⁹⁹ David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 8.

evangelicalism draws positively on the revolutionary potential of science, while denouncing its misapplication. While politically aligned with Burke, she is in agreement with Wollstonecraft in perceiving that the feminised literary mode of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was problematic to say the least, and that his anti-theoretical approach, in harking back to the ‘frantic reign of chivalry’, was a violation of ‘common sense’ philosophy, something she conceived of as transcending gender boundaries; tending naturally towards practice, Enlightenment philosophy was for her, as well as Barbauld and More, ‘an excellent material of universal application’.¹⁰⁰

Because they figured practice in such distinctly material ways, they require a different critical approach to traditionally masculine philosophical discourses. Understanding women’s contributions to philosophy necessitates innovative approaches to their work, approaches that are sensitive to idioms outside of those which have normally been considered authoritative. It is equally important that scientific and philosophical discourse is not approached as a one-way street; in identifying the influences of, as well as on, women engaging with these discourses, I want to move discussion of psychology in eighteenth-century Britain beyond the rigidly gendered terms to which it has often been confined.

Structure and approach of the thesis

¹⁰⁰ Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, (London: T. Cadell, 1799) 1: 19.

Chapter One focuses on two strands of Barbauld's writing: her pedagogic texts, and her 'object poems', drawing links between the two through the associationist schema of impressions and inscription. I draw on current scholarship in material culture studies and sensory history, which enables a connection between the role of the senses in education and the cultural production of the home. I discuss Barbauld's object poems in terms of affect, and investigate how Priestley's notion of active matter might relate to the orientation of her texts towards the sensing body. I consider the materiality of Barbauld's texts in the context of the domestic models of conversation and sociability in the Warrington circle. Barbauld, I argue, shapes her texts to become physical circumstances in the lives of her readers, enabling her to create 'deep, strong, and permanent associations' in the mind of the child, as well as to forge and maintain social associations in her Dissenting social network. Her 'sensible objects' are active and functional; they are instruments of affect. I consider how the textual object functions through the senses, focussing in particular on the role of the domestic fireplace and the poems Barbauld placed around it.

William Keach has drawn attention to the longstanding misrepresentation of Barbauld as a 'very pretty poetess',¹⁰¹ the epithet given the author by Hazlitt. Flourishing scholarship on Barbauld in recent years has reasserted her importance as a political writer whose voice, as Isabel Grundy has recently argued, 'cannot be separated into male and female'.¹⁰² In Chapter Two, I argue that Barbauld's writing for children is continuous with and indeed forms a central element of her political perspective, casting

¹⁰¹ Hazlitt William, *Lectures on the English Poets* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1818), 290. As cited by William Keach in 'A Regency Prophecy and the End of Anna Barbauld's Career'. *Studies in Romanticism* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1994), 570.

¹⁰² Isobel Grundy, "Slip-shod Measure" and "Language of Gods": Barbauld's Stylistic Range'. in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, ed. William McCarthy and Olivia Murphy, (Lanham, Maryland, 2013), 24.

considerable light on her other work. It provides in-depth and interdisciplinary readings of her highly influential pedagogic texts, *Lessons for Children* (1778-1779) and *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781). I look at Barbauld's innovative use of sensible images in these books, which had a considerable influence on the shaping of the genre, and a far wider influence on educational practice and cultural production than has been recognised. I discuss the ways in which Barbauld adapted and implemented theories of mental development in her use of sensible images, arguing that her pedagogic approach was underpinned by distinctly embodied and, I suggest, inherently domestic and Dissenting perspectives on the human mind's relation to the world. I also discuss a further object poem, 'The Baby-House', suggesting a link between Barbauld's visual and visionary modes in this politically radical children's text. I provide a counterpoint to this discussion by suggesting how Barbauld's theoretical influences might have been moderated and supplemented by her experience of educational practice. I argue that while Barbauld implicitly acknowledges the limits of heavily theorized pedagogies, her concern with the circumstances of everyday life was itself intrinsic to associationist theory.

Chapter Three argues that More used material psychology to forward her evangelical project. More deliberately uses materialist and vitalist theories of mind despite their atheistic and pro-revolutionary associations, imagining herself as apothecary to the nation, transforming the 'poison' of sensibility through her prescriptivist philosophical approach. I explore the phenomenology of More's 'vital Christianity', focussing on her charitable and educational projects of loyalist Christian reform, and argue that her evangelicalism unites Locke with the Bible – arguably the

two most important books of the eighteenth century.¹⁰³ The first section considers the role of the senses in the Mendip schools. It shows that for all her distrust of sensuality, More and her teachers implemented relatively progressive educational ideas in order to maximise the efficacy of religious instruction. This informs my subsequent discussion of the sensory in the celebratory feasts attached to the schools, where I use Hannah Arendt's spatial notion of the social sphere to develop materialist understandings of More's attempts to structure and contain the association of the poor. I discuss the material psychology of her practices of charitable giving, concentrating on her manual production of knitted stockings as dowries for women in the Mendip clubs. More's shrewd manipulation of the gift economy, I argue, was an attempt to establish affectional ties of duty and obligation between social classes. I outline the challenges More faced in reconciling her education of the poor with growing anxiety over the democratisation of literacy, arguing that she drew on the sensory pedagogic techniques in the Schools in her propagandist tracts in order to counteract the 'poison' of popular print. Finally, I show how her medico-religious ministry to the rural poor informed her modelling of charitable work as a Christian profession for women in her *Cheap Repository Tracts* and conduct literature, and discuss the problematic gender politics of her domesticisation of charity. This chapter reveals how More increasingly fashioned herself as apothecary minister to the nation, and demonstrates that attention to the materiality and physicality of her practices can considerably elucidate the strains on her conservative feminism.

This leads into my discussion of in Chapter Four of More's battle with the 'New Philosophers' in her novel, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), and its associated

¹⁰³ John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), v. McClean opens with the assertion that Locke's *Essay* is 'The book that had the most influence in the Eighteenth Century, the Bible excepted.'

conduct books. It focuses on More's renewed activity in the battle over Locke in the early 1800s. Again, More seeks to expropriate philosophical ideas used by her radical opponents. She also contributes to the associationist narrative form of the novel of romance. This chapter discusses the associationist intertextual techniques More used to realign Enlightenment thought with Christian morality. It shows how in *Cœlebs* More binds the associationist model to her staunch Anglican conservatism. Writing against Hume's sceptical materialism and Godwin's appropriation of the associationist model of memory in *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), More raises spectres of rational suicide, something she connected with Wollstonecraft and European literature soon after the publication of Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres*. She draws on the sensationalised nature of suicide in the newspaper press, the circularisation of which fed on and into the myth of the English malady. I show how More consciously draws on this discourse in order to figure the domestic as a space of patriotic and religious self-sacrifice, while encoding hints in her intertextual choices of the limitations and frustrations of the bounded sphere.

Chapter Five examines Hamilton's strategic adaptation of sense-based psychology; a psychology she saw as lending itself to practical applications, and thus uniquely suited to use by women in the early education of children and management of the domestic environment. Tracing the language of impressions and associations in her writing, I show how Hamilton appropriated material psychology in order to shape a distinctly feminine philosophical discourse. Like More, Hamilton's writing can be read as an attempt to rehabilitate the theory of association, but Hamilton's approach is far less conservative. I argue that Hamilton views women as particularly well-suited to philosophical enquiry, and that her nonpartisan writings themselves encourage close and

comprehensive study – *Memoirs* is therefore considered here in the context of her other satirical and conduct writing.

The approach of the thesis is broadly interdisciplinary; it is a literary historicist study of the social, cultural and political implications of ideas that migrated from and fed back into scientific and philosophical fields. It uses approaches from sensory history, material culture studies and anthropology to examine texts that often self-reflexively inscribe practices of domestic management. Associationist theories of mind and matter put objects forefront of the development of mind. This did not occur in isolation from, but alongside other scientific theories and technologies. Vitalism put new significance on the liveliness of matter, and as recent books by Jon Mee, Mary Fairclough and Harriet Guest have uncovered, various models of sociable exchange informed changing understandings of sympathy, community and correspondence.¹⁰⁴ As Fairclough points out in her study of sympathy, psychological and physiological ideas were subject to intense politicisation around the time of the French Revolution.¹⁰⁵ Theories were reimagined as the relation between subject and state became increasingly contested, and were used by both sides of the revolutionary debate. The changing political import of the doctrine of association, then, should be considered within a wide-ranging cultural shift through which various ideas about personal identity were appropriated, modified and propagated according to different ideological positions.

Objects, especially books, possess a certain agency; they shape physical behaviours, necessitate and define social associations. The material turn and ‘vital

¹⁰⁴ Mee, *Conversable Worlds*; Guest, *Unbounded Attachment*; Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013).

¹⁰⁵ Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd*, 59.

materialism,¹⁰⁶ in current scholarship in the arts and humanities offer new perspectives on practices of philosophical exchange. As Arjun Appadurai puts it,

we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus, even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social contexts.¹⁰⁷

Sonia Hoffkosh's very recent work on affect and materiality in Barbauld's 'Washing Day' goes some way towards establishing a critical language that can embrace domestic labour and Enlightenment endeavour.¹⁰⁸ The recent growth of material culture studies and eco-criticism opens up new approaches to eighteenth-century and Romantic writing on the relations between the human mind and the material world. I am interested here in the ways that Barbauld inscribes the physical culture of domestic labour. My argument is not intended to be normative, though I want to suggest the potential impact of my study on emerging ecocriticism, particularly in Jane Bennett's post-environmentalist notion of 'vital materialism'.¹⁰⁹ In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Bennett argues for an understanding of the world and of ourselves as vitally material. There are interesting parallels between Bennett's thinking and that of the eighteenth-century women in this study; both material turns seem to challenge a conceptual

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Braun, 'Environmental issues: inventive life'. *Progress in Human Geography* 32 (2008): 667-79; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁷ Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value'. in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), 5.

¹⁰⁸ Sonia Hofkosh, 'Materiality, Affect, Event: Barbauld's Poetics of the Everyday'. in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, ed. William McCarthy and Olivia Smith, 83-106 (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁹ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

distancing from the particular, and towards an understanding of matter as active. The theoretical framework of the material turn can give fuller sense not only of objects' spatial ontology but also of their social, religious and political significance. By considering the materiality of women writers' work in light of their own medico-philosophical understandings of the human mind, I want to open up a new space for the female philosopher, as well as understand better the historical conditions that allowed for such an identity to be imagined, contested and, I argue, embodied by women writers.

In his recent book, *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement*, the archaeologist Lambros Malafouris undertakes to 'provide a new account of the making of the mind' by seeking to 'understand how human minds came to be what they are by taking material culture seriously'.¹¹⁰ This strikes a particular chord with this study: though the application of such a perspective to academic scholarship is new, it is arguably precisely what Barbauld, More and Hamilton understood themselves to be doing in the late eighteenth century. Malafouris' approach follows recent developments in cognitive science and philosophy, in particular the 'extended mind hypothesis' of Andy Clark and David Chalmers,¹¹¹ which posits an active externalism, that is, a theory that cognitive activity includes processes outside of the brain. In their view, the physical environment plays an active role in brain function, and the human mind can be conversely viewed as extended in the physical world. The mind functions through certain embodied interactions with objects, and the very physicality of these processes is integral to their cognitive function. Thinking, in other words, can occur in things. I am not concerned so much with epistemological questions

¹¹⁰ Lambros Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), 8.

¹¹¹ Andy Clark and David Chalmers, 'The Extended Mind'. *Analysis* 58, no. 1 (January 1998): 7-19.

arising from recent studies in cognitive science and philosophy, such as whether (and if so how) we should understand textual and material objects as embodiments of cognitive processes, or if we can viably conceive of objects themselves as agents, nor is it my purpose here to investigate the ecological repercussions of the latter. My aim is to demonstrate how the writers in this thesis forwarded a comparable discourse that was representative of the material turn of their own day. I argue that More, Barbauld and Hamilton conceptualised material objects and embodied practices as often divine extensions of the mind. In seeking to resist the ‘biochauvinist prejudice’,¹¹² that ‘condemns material culture to a life outside of cognition proper’,¹¹³ the material turn itself responds to the same habits of thought that have tended towards the invisibility of female philosophy diachronically, and while it is reasonable for feminist literary historians to point out that domesticity in the late eighteenth century was a limiting social norm, perpetuated by writers such as More, Barbauld, and Hamilton, it is important that our contemporary feminist perspectives allow for a recognition and reassessment of the philosophical import of their writings and practices.

By grounding their work in the quotidian and domestic, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Elizabeth Hamilton, and Hannah More negotiated the bounds of philosophy, and developed innovative disciplines in the ‘science of man’. As their engagement with this discourse suggests, the contested significance of the nervous system was not resolved in such a straightforward manner. The works of the writers in this thesis demonstrate that the suppression of feminist arguments through the gendering of the nerves helped to shape new philosophical disciplines. Women’s philosophical discourse may have been

¹¹² Andy Clark, *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 77.

¹¹³ Michael Wheeler, ‘Minds, Things, and Materiality’. in *The Cognitive Life of Things: Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind*, ed. Renfrew C. Malafouris L, 29-37 (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research Publications, 2010).

circumscribed, but this also created the conditions for women to adopt, shape and apply associationist philosophy in new forms. In the disciplines they developed, these highly influential women writers made a ‘lasting impression’¹¹⁴ on British culture and society.

¹¹⁴ Martha More’s *Mendip Annals: or, a Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More in their Neighbourhood*, (London: James Nisbet, 1859), 108-17. I take my title quote from the ‘charge’ of 1794 given to the women in the Mendip clubs by Hannah More, which I discuss in Chapter Three.

1. Inscribing on the mind: Anna Barbauld's 'sensible objects'

'Oh! How I remember it, book and all'.¹ So wrote the 37-year-old Elizabeth Barrett Browning of Barbauld's *Lessons for Children*. As Barrett Browning's fervour attests, the text had quite an impact on the imagination of the child reader. That she remembers it 'book and all', however, suggests that as an object it had a profound impact on the senses, too; *Lessons* impacted not only in terms of its textuality, but also in terms of its physicality. Writing on the use of children's books in the eighteenth century, Matthew Grenby has commented on this characteristic of *Lessons*: the book's design, he writes, is 'a concession to the physicality of reading'.² An effort to engage the reader through the senses can be traced in much of Barbauld's work; especially, it is argued here, through her inscriptions on, and thematisation of, objects. The particular tangibility of these texts calls for a reading more awake to the role of the senses in their production and consumption. As William McCarthy notes, Barbauld had a 'penchant for making objects speak messages';³ she used objects as a special, sensory mode of communication. Indeed, 'Voice of the Enlightenment', McCarthy's epithet for Barbauld, could almost be extended to her 'sensible objects': they speak to the senses, and they speak of her Enlightenment understanding of the human mind as shaped by the senses.

¹ *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford*, ed. Meredith B. Raymond and Mary Rose Sullivan (Waco, TX, 1983), quoted in William McCarthy, *ALBVE* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 216.

² M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 194.

³ William McCarthy, *ALBVE* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 180.

There is a profusion of objects in Barbauld's poetry and prose. Many of her poems are about objects, were inscribed onto, or accompanied physical objects, which were then given as gifts to friends. Barbauld's objects are diverse, and, aside from the notable exception of an icehouse, they are of the quotidian and domestic: fire screens, chimney ornaments, a doll's house. As we shall see, the poetic inscription of such items invites considerations of their production and consumption in eighteenth-century material culture. Objects find their way into Barbauld's prose, too: in her highly popular and influential pedagogic text, *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), they take centre stage as the medium through which important religious ideas are communicated to the child's mind. This chapter considers why Barbauld focused on objects in the ways that she did. Why is a text meant to inculcate religious devotion grounded in the realm of things? What does it mean that Barbauld populated her friend's worlds with object poems? And how do we read the materiality of Barbauld's inscriptions and exchanges?

Susan Rosenbaum has called attention to the materiality of what she calls Barbauld's object poems, arguing that the poet resists commercial forms of exchange, 'exploiting the association of women's writing with feminine handicrafts to distinguish her works from those sold for profit'.⁴ Angela Keane has argued that Barbauld subverts masculine forms of exchange in her employment of a 'gift economy'.⁵ But I would like to suggest that Barbauld is also doing something more fundamental here, that materiality itself is a central concern in her work. In her object poems, Barbauld writes about and on things in the real world, making the poem a tangible thing. Such inscription, as I see it, comprises a peculiarly unmediated mode of communication; an

⁴ Susan Rosenbaum, “‘A thing unknown, without a name’: Anna Laetitia Barbauld and the illegible Signature”. *Studies in Romanticism*, (Fall 2001), 389-90.

⁵ See Angela Keane ‘The Market, the Public and the Female Author: Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s Gift Economy’ in *Romanticism*, Vol. 8, Issue 2 (2002), 161-178.

engagement of the reader's senses. These poems are not only texts – they are objects, and draw attention to themselves as such. They are not just read by the eye, but also by ear, and even by the skin. This chapter draws on what David Howes has termed the 'sensual revolution' in material culture studies,⁶ addressing the sensory aspects of Barbauld's children's literature and her object poems more closely than has so far been undertaken in analyses of these works.

The ivory pocketbook

In the summer of 1769,⁷ Barbauld – then Anna Letitia Aikin – paid a social visit to Mr Turner, a Dissenting minister, and his family, in Wakefield. Turner's son, William (later of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society) recalls that 'at the close of her visit, she presented to the writer of this paper, then a little boy between seven and eight years old, an ivory memorandum book, on the leaves of which, after she was gone, were found written the following lines'.⁸ In the poem that the young Turner found, Barbauld draws an analogy between the young recipient's mind and the pocket-book:

Accept, my dear, this toy; and let me say
 The leaves an emblem of your mind display;—
 Your youthful mind uncolour'd, fair and white,
 Like crystal leaves transparent to the sight
 Fit each impression to receive whate'er
 The pencil of Instruction traces there.⁹

⁶ David Howes, 'Scent, Sound and Synesthesia: Intersensoriality and Material Culture Theory', in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley (London: Sage, 2006), 161.

⁷ Date attributed by William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft. See *Poems*, ed., McCarthy and Kraft, 235.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ 'Verses written in the Leaves of an ivory Pocket-Book, presented to Master T[urner]'; *ibid.*, 27.

As with all of Barbauld's poems of improvement and of friendship, the tone is one of fond affection. The giving of this gift is an affectionate bestowal from one generation of the Dissenting community to the next, in more ways than one: affection, after all, signifies doubly as mental influence. Notwithstanding the tenderness of her address to the child as 'my dear', there is more to Barbauld's act of giving. The word 'mind' appears no less than six times in this relatively short poem. She is not merely exchanging a gift in friendship, but is making an 'impression' on the boy's mind with her own 'pencil of Instruction'.



Figure 1. Ivory note-book, 1826-1875 (?) © Trustees of the British Museum

An ivory pocketbook, perhaps one similar to the example in Figure 2, with its allusion to the human mind, was an apt choice of object, a literal *tabula rasa* to receive the poet's Lockean inscription. The leaves, made of ivory, could be inscribed upon, and then erased with a drop of water on the finger. In the poem, Barbauld cautions that the similarity between the mind and the book ends in the impermanence of the marks on the ivory; inscriptions on the mind, she warns, are indelible. Perhaps, in the use of the

pocketbook, Turner would remember this as he erased his mistakes with the touch of his finger. Barbauld's message would thus be reinforced by the physical use of the book. The haptic quality of this gift contributes to its purpose: the gift is an agent of affect. Her second point of departure from the analogy is that without inscription, the book would remain blank, whereas the mind cannot remain so: 'Nature forbids an idle vacuum there' and 'weeds spring up in the neglected soil'.¹⁰ Whether or not careful cultivation takes place, the things that we experience will inevitably shape our minds. In her advertisement to *Lessons*, Barbauld draws a similar comparison between agriculture and education, stressing that the latter occupation is 'humble but not mean; for to lay the first stone of a noble building, and to plant the first idea in a human mind, can be no dishonour to any hand'.¹¹ There is a sense here of physicality: education is a practical undertaking, involving the hand. Barbauld understood the nature of the mind to be embodied, and cultivating it was thus an embodied pursuit.

While Barbauld's analogy of the pocketbook is not striking in its originality – philosophers as early as Plato used technologies of writing as a metaphor for mind¹² – I consider it to be of significance here for two reasons. First, in that it demonstrates her interest in the philosophy of the human mind even at a very early stage in her career: she was twenty-six, and it would be another two years before her first poems were published. Second, in that the poem is peculiarly functional, enacting the inscription that it thematises. Her message is both inscribed in the book and in the boy's mind. In its practical application of the philosophy of mind, 'Verses written in the Leaves of an

¹⁰ *Poems*, ed., McCarthy and Kraft, 27.

¹¹ *Lessons for Children from Two to Three Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 4.

¹² For a diachronic study of technological models of memory see Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of memory: a history of ideas about the mind* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000).

ivory Pocket-Book' marks the beginnings of what I see as a common imprint in much of Barbauld's literary output, a body of work substantiated by objects.

The education of circumstances

In his influential essay 'The I altered', Stuart Curran writes that 'if a woman's place is in the home, or in the schoolroom as in Anna Barbauld's case, or in the garden, then the particulars of those confined quarters are made the impetus for verse'.¹³ While I agree with Curran that Barbauld's focus on the domestic object may be a response to disenfranchisement, turning the physical realities of the 'bounded sphere' into a means of participation, I do think that Barbauld is drawing on much more than her domestic circumstances as a woman. Her objects are not circumstantial in this sense. Rather, they are circumstantial in that they form a circumstance, or an element of the education of others. Barbauld is not just drawing from, but is drawing onto the domestic environment. Her poems are not just a response to her environment, but comprise a deliberate attempt to become a part of other people's environments, in order to influence and affect; in short, they are an exercise in 'environmental psychology'.¹⁴ As she writes in her essay 'What is Education?' (1798):

The education of circumstances [...] is of more constant and powerful effect, and of infinitely more consequence to the habit, than that which is direct and apparent. This education goes on at every instant of time; it goes on like time; you can neither stop it, nor turn its course. What these have a tendency to make your child, that he will be. Maxims and documents are good precisely till they are tried, and no longer; they will teach him to talk, and nothing more. The *circumstances* in which your

¹³ Stuart Curran, 'Romantic Poetry: The I Altered'. in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 190.

¹⁴ Barker-Benfield uses this term to describe the eighteenth-century belief that 'human selves were made, not born'. See *Culture of Sensibility*, xvii.

son is placed will be even more prevalent than your example, and you have no right to expect him to become what you yourself are, but by the same means.¹⁵

Barbauld's interest in the philosophy of mind was undoubtedly shaped by the circumstances of her own education in Warrington, where her father taught at the Dissenting Academy. Here she met Joseph and Mary Priestley, and she maintained a close friendship with the Priestleys after they moved to Leeds. As I explained in my introduction, Joseph Priestley was a key proponent of associationism, the theory of mind advanced in David Hartley's *Observations on Man* (1749), which came to be immensely influential in the later eighteenth century, due in no small part to Priestley's publication, in revised form, of *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind* in 1775. As Isaac Kramnick remarks, 'Hartley, thanks to Priestley, was everywhere'.¹⁶ It is worth pointing out, however, that although Hartleyan associationism may have approached ubiquity, Priestley's version was far from being universally accepted.

Despite opposition to Priestley's materialist additions to *Hartley's Theory*, Hartleyan associationism came to be of special importance to Unitarians, occupying a central place in Dissenting culture. *Observations* was, according to Richard Allen, 'part of the core curriculum in the Dissenting academies'.¹⁷ It should be remembered, though, that not all academies were cut from same cloth, but were in fact hugely varied in their religious and political outlooks, from the radical Hackney College, where William Hazlitt read Hartley from half past nine until eleven on most evenings,¹⁸ to the

¹⁵ SPP, 323.

¹⁶ Isaac Kramnick, 'Eighteenth-Century Science and Radical Social Theory: The Case of Joseph Priestley's Scientific Liberalism'. *The Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 1 (1986), 29.

¹⁷ Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 434.

¹⁸ *Lamb and Hazlitt: Further Letters and Records Hitherto Unpublished*, ed. William Carew Hazlitt (London: Elkin Matthews, 1900), 35.

numerous Baptist academies, where Priestley's version would almost certainly have been frowned upon.¹⁹ Even some relatively liberal academies were anti-Unitarian; Thomas Belsham's resigned from Daventry Academy in 1789 after his rejection of the Holy Trinity became known to the school trustees, and differences between tutors' theological beliefs caused considerable friction at Warrington. Furthermore, archival evidence from the more liberal academies does not always bear out claims regarding the centrality of *Hartley's Theory*: John Pye Smith's lecture notes from Homerton (c.1800-1850) make no mention of Priestley's book, opting instead for Hartley's original alongside Belsham's *Elements of the Human Mind* (1801).²⁰

Priestley's influence on Barbauld, however, has been well documented,²¹ not least by the man himself, who was keen to point out that his sermon 'On Habitual Devotion' had occasioned her poem 'An Address to the Deity'.²² Whether or not Priestley claims more than was his due, the sense it gives of active conversation in the Warrington community is, in any case, clear; at that time, dialogue with Priestley was an important spur for Barbauld's writing.²³ Both the sermon and the poem make the progression from the concern that worldly matters can overwhelm devotion, that the minor objects of life can clutter one's thoughts and obscure the idea of God, to the conclusion that, as Priestley puts it, the 'truly good and perfect man' 'sees God in every

¹⁹ The Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies project, *Dissenting Academies Online* provides extensive information on this subject.

<<http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/portal.html>>

²⁰ Pye Smith MSS, NCL/L18/30, Dr Williams's Library, London.

²¹ See, for example, William Keach, 'Barbauld, Romanticism and the Survival of Dissent'. in *Essays and Studies: Romanticism and Gender*, ed. Anne Janowitz, 44-61 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998) and Daniel E. White, 'The "Joineriana": Anna Barbauld, the Aikin Family Circle, and the Dissenting Public Sphere'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 4 (1999), 511-33.

²² Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, *Sermons* (London, 1791), 118.

²³ William McCarthy, *ALBVE* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 75.

thing, and sees every thing in God'.²⁴ Hartleyan associationism forms the basis for the sermon: Priestley's 'habitual regard to God' stems from the associationist notion of mental connections being fixed through repetition. And, as in Priestley's sermon, Barbauld's poem suggests the link between the material world and God can be established and maintained by a process of habitual association:

[...] GOD is seen in all, and all in GOD.

I read his awful name, emblazon'd high
 With golden letters on th' illumin'd sky;
 Nor less the mystic characters I see
 Wrought in each flower, inscrib'd on every tree²⁵

Barbauld's devotion is expressed here as a habit of mind, which leads her to encounter God through the senses, through the practice of looking at, and perhaps also smelling and touching natural objects. Sensing nature is equated with reading here, providing an early intimation of how she conceptualised both reading and devotion as embodied acts. God is 'read' in the scent of flowers and in the knots of trees. This is religious devotion as a physical, practical doing, not as an abstract thinking. Associationist doctrine appears to tend towards this implementation. Indeed, as Priestley notes in his preface to the published version of 'On Habitual Devotion', Hartley's theory 'not only explains [...] many phenomena of the mind [...] but also leads to a variety of practical applications'.²⁶ I want to posit here that Barbauld also turns Hartleyan associationism to just such a practical application.

In *Hymns in Prose*, Barbauld uses associationist psychological techniques to form children into Priestley's 'good' men, cultivating devotion through habit by

²⁴ Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, *Sermons* (London, 1791), 125.

²⁵ 'An Address to the Deity', in *Poems*, ed., McCarthy and Kraft, 4.

²⁶ Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, *Sermons* (London, 1791), 117.

connecting all things with God. She focuses on simple, concrete ideas that would be familiar to the child – such as trees, rivers, and birds – and develops habits of thought through the use of repetition. Since she understood ‘maxims and documents’ to be ineffectual in a child’s development,²⁷ she draws on the sensory impressions to forge these connections. The hymns contextualize devotion within the realm of things in the real world: ‘sensible objects’, as she names them in her preface, a term borrowed from the language of philosophy. She concentrates on the sensations the objects in question provoke, and connects these sensations to the idea of God, introducing the child to the ‘habitual devotion’ of Priestley’s sermon and ‘An Address to the Deity’. As she states in her preface:

The peculiar design of this publication is, to impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind; fully convinced as the author is, that they cannot be impressed too soon, and that a child, to feel the full force of the idea of God, ought never to remember the time when he had no such idea—to impress them by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects; with all that he sees, all he hears, all that affects his young mind with wonder or delight; and thus by deep, strong, and permanent associations, to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life.²⁸

Unmistakably, Barbauld sets out her project in the language of associationism. *Hymns* is introduced as a project of applied, or ‘practical’ associationism, of forging connections in the mind. As the emphatic repetition of ‘all’ suggests, Barbauld seeks to effect an immersion in pleasurable sensory impressions, directing the child’s whole being towards God. The text is figured as a tangible and active intersensory experience; God is not just connected to ideas gained through seeing and hearing, but ‘all that affects’ the

²⁷ ‘What is Education’. in *SPP*, 323.

²⁸ Preface to ‘Hymns in Prose for Children’. in *SPP*, 238. Further references to this work will appear in the text.

mind. Indeed, as we shall see, the senses of touch and smell are also prominent in

Hymns.

Sensory devotion

In the first hymn of the book, Barbauld names objects and animals, connecting those ideas with God. She then focuses more closely on sensations, in this case sounds: birds ‘warble sweetly in the green shade’ and rivers ‘murmur melodiously’ (*SPP*, 239). Both are singing out in praise, and their song is discerned by the child’s ear. The child is then bid to praise God with his/her voice. The passive act of hearing inspires an embodied action; hymns, after all, are meant to be sung. Crucially, the sensations in question are pleasurable; the sounds are ‘sweet’ and ‘melodious’. This sensuousness is developed in the second hymn, where sensory impressions are steadily built up to quite hedonic effect:

COME, let us go forth into the fields, let us see how the flowers spring, let us listen to the warbling of the birds, and sport ourselves upon the new grass.

The winter is over and gone, the buds come out upon the trees, the crimson blossoms of the peach and the nectarine are seen, and the green leaves sprout.

The hedges are bordered with tufts of primroses, and yellow cowslips that hang down their heads; and the blue violet lies hid beneath the shade.

The young goslings are running upon the green, they are just hatched, their bodies are covered with yellow down; the old ones hiss with anger if any one comes near.²⁹

The sheer profusion of beauty here, the sense of joy and gaiety, is calculated to appeal to the child’s sensory delight in nature. Again, there is a call to embodied action in the

²⁹ Ibid.

opening words; a call to ‘listen’ and to ‘sport’ on the grass. The hymn ends on a similarly sensory note, offering God ‘the incense of praise,’ in a natural setting, ‘on every hill, and in every green field’.³⁰ The rituals of church worship are thus converted into a natural, sensory devotion.

Of course, Barbauld was not the first to enlist the senses in religious instruction. As Susan Harvey has shown, there was a long tradition of coming to God through the senses. In her study of the olfactory senses in ancient Christianity, Harvey writes that ‘both through ritual practice and through related instruction (homilies, hymns, or other forms of didactic discourse), Christians granted value to the senses as channels through which believers could approach and encounter the divine’.³¹ Matthew Milner has recently argued that, notwithstanding the ambivalence towards the senses with which post-Reformation thought has often been associated, ‘basic sensory instruction continued in English lay and clerical handbooks in the early sixteenth century.’³² Nor was Barbauld alone in applying associationist thinking to pedagogic practice: Emma Major has noted that the staunchly Anglican Sarah Trimmer also did so. As Major shows, however, whereas Trimmer aimed to impress a sense of duty towards God, Barbauld turns associationism to a much more sensuous, and, for Trimmer, an alarmingly Dissenting purpose: ‘Barbauld’s use of associationist theories is central to a pedagogy which develops a taste for nature and poetry in a non-denominational way that Trimmer and others found objectionable’.³³

While much of *Hymns* is focussed on the senses of sight and hearing, smell and touch also figure in Barbauld’s inscription. The rose fills the air with a ‘sweet odour,’ as

³⁰ *SPP*, 240.

³¹ Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 99.

³² Matthew Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 180.

³³ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 916.

well as being ‘the delight of every eye’ (Hymn IV, 242); ‘The thistle is armed with sharp prickles’ and ‘the mallow is soft and woolly’ (Hymn IX, 250). Gustation also features, albeit somewhat obliquely, in ‘ripe apples’, and the observation that ‘some drink of the fruit of the vine; some the pleasant milk of the cocoa-nut; and others quench their thirst with the running stream’ (Hymn VIII, 248-9). Within the world of things, all the senses can be appealed to in order to ‘impress devotional feelings’; ‘feeling,’ for Barbauld, is both an emotional and a physical state, which can be habitually associated with devotion, so that ‘GOD is seen in all, and all in GOD’.³⁴

McCarthy and Kraft see *Hymns in Prose* as Barbauld’s attempt to bring into being what she had hoped for, at the end of *Thoughts on the Devotional Taste*: a time ‘when the spirit of philosophy, and the spirit of devotion, shall join to conduct our public assemblies’.³⁵ In order to effect wider devotional reform, Barbauld joined the two ‘spirits’ together in *Hymns*, applying philosophical theory and devotional feeling to create a progressive religious text. Associationism is particularly fitting to this task – having been fostered by Priestley, it was already loaded with progressive religious meaning.³⁶ It also lends itself to Dissenting devotional practice because, as is expressed in ‘An Address to the Deity’, it allows for an emphasis on a personal, habitual, and crucially a feeling relationship with God: a ‘devotional taste’, a notion so closely allied to ‘base’ human appetite (or perhaps femininity) that even Priestley found it objectionable.³⁷

³⁴ Anna Letitia Barbauld, ‘An Address to the Deity’, in *Poems*, ed., McCarthy and Kraft, 4.

³⁵ *SPP*, 235.

³⁶ See Isaac Kramnick, ‘Eighteenth-Century Science and Radical Social Theory: The Case of Joseph Priestley’s Scientific Liberalism’. *The Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 1 (1986), 1-30.

³⁷ See Katherine J. Ready, ‘Dissenting Heads and Hearts: Joseph Priestley, Anna Barbauld, and Conflicting Attitudes towards Devotion within Rational Dissent’. *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 2 (2010), 174-90. Also see Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 174-5.

Barbauld's God is found not in the churches of the establishment, but in nature.

As Major argues, the 'appropriation of nature is central to Dissenting claims to purer faith and patriotism', and Dissenting pedagogy aimed to deliver a 'deeper understanding of nature'.³⁸ In 'Hymn VI' Barbauld annexes science to religion, bidding the 'child of reason' to find God through sensory observations of nature:

CHILD of reason, whence comest thou? What has thine eye observed,
and whither has thy foot been wandering?

I have been wandering along the meadows, in the thick grass; the cattle were feeding around me, or reposing in the cool shade; the corn sprung up in the furrows; the poppy and the harebell grew among the wheat; the fields were bright with summer, and glowing with beauty.

Didst thou see nothing more? Didst thou observe nothing beside?
Return again, child of reason, for there are greater things than these.—
God was among the fields; and didst thou not perceive him? his beauty
was upon the meadows; his smile enlivened the sun-shine.

I have walked through the thick forest; the wind whispered
among the trees; the brook fell from the rocks with a pleasant murmur;
the squirrel leapt from bough to bough; and the birds sung to each other
amongst the branches.

Didst thou hear nothing, but the murmur of the brook? no
whispers, but the whispers of the wind? Return again, child of reason, for
there are greater things than these.—God was amongst the trees; his
voice founded in the murmur of the water; his music warbled in the
shade; and didst thou not attend? (*SPP*, 245)

The Enlightenment child uses the senses of sight and hearing, and encounters beauty in nature, but this does not, at first, inspire an inner devotional feeling. By repeatedly connecting sense impressions with God, Barbauld forges deeper and stronger mental associations – associations that will, in time, become automatic. She ends this hymn by echoing the sentiment common to Priestley's sermon and 'An Address to the Deity': 'God is in every place; he speaks in every sound we hear; he is seen in all that our eyes behold: nothing, O child of reason, is without God;—let God therefore be in all thy

³⁸ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 913.

thoughts'.³⁹ In order to achieve this habit, the child must repeatedly 'return again' to nature; they have been taught to observe with the eye and the ear, the senses most favoured in Enlightenment thought, but Barbauld would have the child not merely observe, but to feel nature, and to gain a devotional feeling for God in doing so.

Lisa Zunshine has argued that 'the rhetorical appeal of *Hymns* resides not in the originality of its scriptural images (the originality that her intended three-to-five-year-old readers could hardly appreciate) but in the way Barbauld selects and juxtaposes the hymns, complementing and legitimatizing the ideological coercion implied by the book's catechistic structure'.⁴⁰ Zunshine considers the didactic ideology of *Hymns in Prose*, but her cognitive anthropological approach neglects to address Barbauld's use of theories of mind that were available to her in her own time. This appears to me to be particularly mistaken considering that, in the preface to *Hymns in Prose*, Barbauld makes it very clear that associationism forms the rhetorical basis of her project. Furthermore, although it may be situated within the catechistic tradition of children's writing, which sought to indoctrinate the child through engagement in a repetitive, mechanistic dialogue, *Hymns in Prose* is, as Alan Richardson has pointed out, a relatively progressive instance of this.⁴¹ Barbauld presents a vision of the world and of God that is essentially optimistic, teaching the child to praise a benevolent maker by linking the idea of God with that of pleasurable sensations. Like Hamilton, Barbauld was drawn to Common Sense philosophy, in particular Francis Hutcheson's ethics of

³⁹ SPP, 246.

⁴⁰ Lisa Zunshine, 'Rhetoric, Cognition, and Ideology in A. L. Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose* for Children (1781)'. *Poetics Today*, 2002: 125.

⁴¹ Alan Richardson, 'The Politics of Childhood: Wordsworth, Blake, and Catechistic Method'. *ELH* 56, no.4 (1989), 856.

affection, which rejected jargonistic metaphysics in favour of emotional sense.⁴² She also departs from Watts in her method, rejecting the ‘elevation’ of poetry in favour of measured prose, and only using language and images with which the child would already be familiar. *Hymns* is striking in its groundedness – it is based not in the abstract, but in the material world and the everyday. Its tangibility lies both in its textual focus on sensory perceptions and in its real physical condition; like her *Lessons for Children*, the book is made of ‘good paper, a clear and large type, and large spaces’,⁴³ features which, while taken for granted today, were at the time innovations in children’s literature. Moreover, the text itself was intended to become part of the everyday for children: Barbauld meant *Hymns* to be ‘committed to memory and recited’.⁴⁴ Designed to be particularly ‘agreeable to the ear’, they would not remain on the page alone, but would become part of the child’s physical world, incorporating bodily action into the auditory, visual and tactile pleasures that they describe.

Barbauld’s sensory approach reflects a wider trend in educational practice in the period. Jill Shefrin has shown how visual teaching aids were ‘central to the teaching of young children’⁴⁵ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but that this approach had origins in earlier educational theory, such as in the principle forwarded by

⁴² On the influence of Hutcheson’s aesthetic theory, see Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics* (Oxford: OUP, 2003). For a discussion of Hutcheson’s influence on Unitarian thought see, Terry Eagleton, ‘Ulster Altruism: Francis Hutcheson and William Hazlitt’. Hazlitt Review 6 (2013): 5-12. It is beyond the scope of this study, but I think there is a good deal more to be said about Barbauld’s use of Hutcheson, particularly so because she seems to take from him a sentimental phenomenology, or moral philosophy based on intersubjective emotional experience, which enables an expansive humanist perspective. Indeed, Barbauld’s gifted poems often seem to communicate a benevolent impulsivity.

⁴³ Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children from Two to Three Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 2. Original emphasis.

⁴⁴ SPP, 238.

⁴⁵ Jill Shefrin, “‘Adapted for and Used in Infants’ Schools, Nurseries, &c.’: Booksellers and the Infant School Market”. in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 164.

Comenius that ‘everything should, as far as possible, be placed before the senses’.⁴⁶ In the eighteenth century, as Shefrin explains, the influence of Locke, together with advances in print technology, led to an ‘explosion in printed materials’ that ‘included children’s books, jigsaw puzzles, cards, games, battledores, writing sheets, map sampler patterns, alphabet tiles and maps and prints for classrooms’.⁴⁷

Isaac Watts recommended hanging visual teaching aids ‘*always before the Eye* in Closets, Parlours, Halls, Chambers, Entries, Stair-Cases, &c.’ so that ‘the learned Images will be perpetually imprest on the Brain, and will keep the Learning that depends upon them alive and fresh in the Mind through the growing Years of Life’.⁴⁸ Watts thought this method particularly useful to the teaching of geography, through the use of maps and charts, and Barbauld, who taught geography at Palgrave, may well have produced her own for use in the classroom. She also produced a map to accompany a poem for her husband, ‘To Mr Barbauld, with a Map of the Land of Matrimony’ (published anonymously in 1772).⁴⁹ At Warrington, Priestley produced visual aids such as *A Chart of Biography* (1765). Perhaps drawing again on Hartley, who, in common with other Enlightenment thinkers, considered ‘visible impressions’ to be ‘far more vivid and definite than those of any other’,⁵⁰ Priestley believed that, in order to get a ‘just and distinct idea’ of history, time should be represented visually.⁵¹ Without a visual aid, the student of history would form only a confused and fleeting idea of how various lives stood in relation to each other. Priestley insists that ‘the idea being impressed on the mind by the view of a real sensible object, the contents of the

⁴⁶ John Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, trans. M. W Keatinge (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 184.

⁴⁷ Shefrin, ‘Booksellers and the Infant School Market’. 164.

⁴⁸ Isaac Watts, *The improvement of the mind* (London, 1741), 323.

⁴⁹ The map is reproduced in *Poems*, ed., McCarthy and Kraft, 89.

⁵⁰ *Observations on Man*, 1:209.

⁵¹ Joseph Priestley, *A description of a chart of biography* (Warrington, 1765), 6.

tablet will be fixed in the imagination'.⁵² Barbauld recommended consulting Priestley's chart, as well as the practice of making charts, as aids to the study of history.⁵³ But I want to suggest that she is also doing something analogous in her writing – she seeks to remove abstraction from her pedagogic texts by replacing complex ideas with 'sensible objects', in order to make 'deep, strong and permanent associations', permanently fixing in the child's mind the association between God and the pleasures of the natural world. And indeed, *Hymns* appears to have had just the impact she intended, with Thomas De Quincey recalling that, as a child, it left a 'deep impression of solemn beauty and simplicity'⁵⁴ on his mind. Perhaps due to her ability to engage with the child's sense of delight, Barbauld's pedagogic practice at Palgrave Academy also seems to have had the same effect. One student's designation of Barbauld as 'the Mother of his mind'⁵⁵ is testament to her extraordinary influence on the children she taught.

Active matter: object poems and affectionate exchange

Barbauld's feeling for the sensory life of her readers feeds into both her children's literature and her object poems, many of which she gave to her friends. In a poem she sent to Mary Priestley, *To Mrs P, with some Drawings of Birds and Insects*, the 'deeper art' of poetry accompanies one more closely 'allied to sense'.⁵⁶ By joining two arts together that, in Hartley's view, have 'a peculiar connexion with each other',⁵⁷ Barbauld

⁵² Ibid., 7.

⁵³ Anna Letitia Barbauld, *A Legacy for Young Ladies* (London: Longman, 1826), 162.

⁵⁴ Thomas De Quincey, *Autobiography*, in *Collected Writings*, ed. David Masson (London: Black, 1897), cited in SPP, 236.

⁵⁵ W. Robberds, *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor* (London: John Murray, 1843), 8.

⁵⁶ *Poems*, ed. McCarthy and Kraft, 6.

⁵⁷ *Observations on Man*, 1:212.

has the senses ‘conspire’⁵⁸ to produce a greater affect. She thus espouses psychological techniques that were thought to strengthen mental associations, in order to strengthen social associations. While I do not mean to suggest an exact equivalence between the works Barbauld gave to her friends and her educational texts, I do think that they have a common orientation towards the sensing body. Their heightened physicality would have been fundamental to the experience of reading both the object poems and *Hymns*. Nor is the distinction between her works of instruction and those of affection always clear-cut; the first poem I considered in this chapter, *Verses written in the Leaves of an ivory Pocket-Book*, is both a gifted object and a poem of instruction. It could thus be seen as a nexus between these two strains of Barbauld’s work, but, as we shall see, it is not the only object poem that speaks to or through the senses.

While inscription was a common trope in eighteenth-century poetry, spanning Swift’s epigrams to the Romantic genre of ‘nature-inscription’,⁵⁹ Barbauld’s object poems are also evocative of the handicraft gift, as well, perhaps, as the early modern posy. Like the posy, they are material texts, which are ‘designed to mark a specific occasion or serve a particular purpose’.⁶⁰ They also share with the posy the element of incorporation into the physical life of the receiver/reader. The temporal focus of Barbauld’s occasional poetry, supplemented by this spatial element, allows her to make inscriptions at the very heart of the Dissenting home, commemorating events and reinforcing social and familial connections through the use of concrete objects. As I now hope to show, this forging and strengthening of bonds comprises a further associational significance of the sensible object.

⁵⁸ *Poems*, ed. McCarthy and Kraft, 6.

⁵⁹ See Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 32.

⁶⁰ Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 20.

On the marriage of Charles, her nephew and adopted son, to Anne Wakefield, Barbauld sent a poem accompanied by a pair of chimney ornaments: two seated female figures, reading, each holding a cup in which a candle could be placed. The ornaments, in Wedgwood ware, and therefore a material product of the Dissenting social network, are ascribed the characters of Love and Science, and address each other in the poem. Barbauld places the exchange between science and love above the hearth, the literal and symbolic heart of the domestic world:

‘Then let our mingling flames unite,
 The mingled flames shall burn more bright;
 May never from this hearth remove
 The lamp of Science or of Love!'⁶¹

Within the home, the ostensibly separate spheres of love and science ‘mingle’. As with many of Barbauld’s poems, the lines given to Anne and Charles appear to occupy a space at the intersection between spheres. Her object poems insinuate themselves into the small spaces between public and private worlds, between scientific and social circles, like the ‘The Mouse’s Petition’ (1771), which she twisted around the wires of the animal’s cage.

Sociability and science were inextricably interwoven in Barbauld’s Dissenting social network, as another object poem, ‘Verses inscribed on a Pair of Screens’, attests. Given to her brother and sister in law, each screen was inscribed with a poem, one addressed ‘To Dr. A’, the other ‘To Mrs. A’. In ‘To Dr. A’, Barbauld expresses her wish that

⁶¹ ‘[Lines for Anne Wakefield on her Wedding to Charles Rochemont Aikin, with a Pair of Chimney Ornaments in the Figures of two Females seated with open Books]’. *SPP*, 152.

Beneath this roof, around this hearth,
 Mild Wisdom mix with social Mirth!
 May Friendship often seek the door
 Where Science pours her varied store!⁶²

Again, Barbauld situates her object poem at the hearth. Science does not only occupy a place in the classroom, or in the laboratory, but lives in the home, too. Here, ideas are disseminated through informal social exchange, mixing with ‘social Mirth’, in the ‘free familiar conversation’⁶³ (the phrase William Turner used to describe Barbauld’s father’s pedagogy) that Anne Janowitz has identified as the model of sociability at Warrington.⁶⁴ As Turner relates, ‘the advantages which the students derived from their tutor were not confined to the lecture room: [Aikin] had frequent small parties to drink tea with him, when he was accustomed quite to unbend, and enter with them into the most free, familiar conversation’.⁶⁵ Education at Warrington was not restricted to the classroom – indeed, Turner suggests here that the most effective educational exchanges took place within the physically comfortable and relaxed environment of the home. This warm and informal pedagogy is replicated in *Evenings at Home*, the collection of children’s stories that she published with her brother, and in Barbauld’s *Lessons for Children from Two to Three Years Old*, which features a lesson by the fireside. As Janowitz writes, the informal, almost familial exchange between students and faculty at Warrington filters into Barbauld’s writing: ‘freedom within propriety structures many of Anna Aikin’s images, and in her poems she often claims both the desirability of boundaries, and their

⁶² ‘Verses inscribed on a Pair of Screens’, in *Poems*, ed. McCarthy and Kraft, 136.

⁶³ William Turner, ‘Historical Account of the Warrington Academy’. *Monthly Repository* 8, (1813), 169. Quoted in Anne Janowitz, *Women Romantic Poets: Anna Barbauld and Mary Robinson* (Tavistock, Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2004), p15.

⁶⁴ Janowitz, ‘Amiable and radical sociability: Anna Barbauld’s “free familiar conversation”’. 62-81.

⁶⁵ William Turner, *The Lives of Eminent Unitarians* (London: The Unitarian Association, 1840), 386.

elasticity.⁶⁶ This model is, as I see it, underpinned by associationist psychology, by the belief that the daily circumstances of life make the mind.

Barbauld saw the sensory and social environment of the home, which, as Vickery explains, was fashioned to a great extent by women's creative pursuits,⁶⁷ as central to character building. In 'What is Education?' Barbauld argues that although we are not aware of the process, daily sensory experience was responsible for the making of minds, far and above formal education: 'Do you ask, then, what will educate your son? [...] the society you live in will educate him; your domestics will educate him; above all, your rank and situation in life, your house, your table, your pleasure-grounds, your hounds and your stables will educate him.'⁶⁸ Barbauld's object poems, being placed in the physical environment that her friends inhabited, thus become formative circumstances in their lives.

Acutely aware of the importance of habitual associations in forming character, Barbauld founds her Dissenting project on interconnectivity, on the understanding that 'we are woven into the web of society'.⁶⁹ The web, which is in essence a structure of association, allows for a dissemination of ideas from its extremities. As a Dissenting woman, Barbauld sees science as a means to effect social change by the transmission of ideas through the 'web of society'. She sees Dissenters as separate enough from the rest of society to maintain moral superiority, and yet connected enough to effect change incrementally, on a national level. As she asserts in *An Address to the Opposers of the*

⁶⁶ Anne Janowitz, *Women Romantic Poets: Anna Barbauld and Mary Robinson* (Tavistock, Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2004), 19

⁶⁷ 'Decorating and enhancing the home was a constant creative project for women. The interior was fashioned just as much by its home-made firescreens and chair covers as by mirrors, tables and chairs.' Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 256.

⁶⁸ *SPP*, 323.

⁶⁹ Anna Letitia Barbauld, 'Johnson' in *The British Novelists* (London, 1820), 26:iii.

Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts (1790), this change is inevitable, because of the physical incorporation of Dissenting ideas into mainstream society: ‘you will entrust us with the education of your youth [...] you will read our books and imbibe our sentiments’.⁷⁰ Women, too, have this particular moral advantage of separateness and ability to influence through interconnectivity: as she writes in a poem to her brother, ‘virtues flourish’ in their ‘bounded sphere’.⁷¹ While Barbauld professed herself to have ‘overstepped the bounds of the female reserve’,⁷² those bounds were far from impermeable; they were blurred as much by the domesticised teaching at Warrington as they were by her own engagement with the public sphere. While these ostensible bounds are maintained, conversations take place across and through them. This interaction is especially evident in the culture of the hearth: Priestley, for instance, ‘got a habit of writing on any subject by the parlour fire, with [his] wife and children around [him], and occasionally talking to them.’⁷³ As we have seen in ‘Lines for Anne Wakefield’ and ‘Verses inscribed on a Pair of Screens’, the exchange between love and science in the Dissenting home is literally conducted across the chimneypiece.

According to McCarthy, ‘Verses inscribed on a Pair of Screens’ were likely to have been given in 1798, when John Aikin was recovering from a serious illness and had moved to a new house in Stoke Newington.⁷⁴ In this case, their status as objects of convenience, and the physical comfort they afforded her brother, may have had a heightened significance in their function of aiding his convalescence, especially if, as

⁷⁰ *SPP*, 272.

⁷¹ ‘To Dr. Aikin on his complaining that she neglected him *SPP*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ontario: Broadview, 2002), 57.

⁷² *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, ed., Lucy Aikin, 1:xviii.

⁷³ Joseph Priestley, *Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, to the Year 1795*, (London: J Johnson, 1806), 1:109.

⁷⁴ William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 299.

McCarthy conjectures, his complaint was asthma, and therefore worsened by damp and smoke.⁷⁵ Indeed, there is a textual hint in the poem of the kind of respite the screens might afford:

May Health descend with healing wing,
 Bright days and balmy nights to bring!
 And tried Affection still be by,
 Love's watchful ear and anxious eye

Barbauld's blessing on her brother's new home, her wish for 'bright days and balmy nights', has a special resonance when considered in the context of the screen's placement before the fire. While gathered around the fireside, the 'watchful ear' and 'anxious eye' both prove the constancy of affection, and are organs of sense employed in the task of monitoring health, a task which, as Mark Jenner has shown, could be intersensorial in approach.⁷⁶ The vision required to read the inscription, as well as the patient's condition, would only be possible were the room itself bright enough to do so, while 'balminess' is something that the screen itself might help to grant. In giving this object poem then, Barbauld's affection for her brother is made concrete and functional.

⁷⁵ William McCarthy, *ALBVE* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 403.

⁷⁶ Mark S. R. Jenner, 'Tasting Lichfield, Touching China: Sir John Floyer's Senses'. *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 3 (2010), 647-70.



Figure 3. Mahogany and softwood pole screen, c. 1740. © Geffrye Museum, London. .

We have perhaps lost something of our sense of the fireplace as the heart of the home. More efficient heating methods mean that we no longer need to base all our activity beside the fire in the colder months; instead, heat is diffused throughout the home and human activity is dispersed with it. In Barbauld's time, familial and social contact was concentrated before the fire, and study and work might also be carried out in this congenial environment. Open fires, however, were highly inefficient so that a

room might be cold except for immediately beside the fire, which could be uncomfortably hot. This, in Count Rumford's words, had the effect of 'roasting and freezing opposite sides of the body at the same time'.⁷⁷ In order to counter this problem, fire screens were used to shield the face from the immediate glare of the fire, and fire screen panels were often painted or embroidered by women, and given as gifts. This shaping of the furniture at the heart of the home was also a shaping of the body. As Mimi Hellman explains: 'the system of objects refigured the body in much the same way as the system of clothing, encouraging specific types of poses and gestures—and making them seem natural—through designs that shaped the body's movement and appearance'.⁷⁸ In 'The First Fire' (1815), Barbauld's hearth encourages particular physical and social behaviours:

—Let me imbibe thy warmth, and spread myself
 Before thy shrine adoring:—magnet thou
 Of strong attraction, daily gathering in
 Friends, brethren, kinsmen, variously dispersed,
 All the dear charities of social life,
 To thy close circle⁷⁹

Here, the physical sensation of warmth is associated with sociability; the self is spread not just in terms of posture, but also in terms of social contact with family and friends, drawing people closer into a literal and figurative social circle. The hearth is granted primacy as the magnetic core of sociable exchange within the home.

In her discussion of the conversation piece, Kate Retford notes that the fireplace is 'resonant in its suggestion of imminent hospitality', citing William Chamber's

⁷⁷ Benjamin, Graf von Rumford, *Essays, political, economical, and philosophical* (London, 1800-02), 3:398.

⁷⁸ Mimi Hellman, 'Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 4 (1999), 430-1.

⁷⁹ *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 170-71.

Treatise on Civil Architecture (1759), according to which ‘a chimney-piece should be aligned with the main door of a reception chamber, allowing a host to greet his or her visitor from directly before the fire’.⁸⁰ While the hearth may be the centre of the private world, then, it is also a site of exchange with the outside world, a site for presenting the public face of the family. Barbauld’s choice of the circle as the figure of fireside sociability is certainly evocative of communalit. As in Karen Harvey’s discussion of communalit and conviviality in representations of punch parties, whereby a ring of drinkers were gathered around a central circular vessel, the figure of the circle ‘bound participants tightly into a coherent group’.⁸¹ Participants of such circles, however, face inwards, as would be the case by the fireside. Moreover, that Barbauld’s circle is ‘close’ suggests an exclusivity that is further compounded by the assertion that follows: ‘Here a man might stand/ And say, This is my world!’ The hearth was perhaps of special significance to Dissenters, who were subject to exclusion elsewhere, and thus depended more than others, perhaps, on the strength of social ties, or the ‘closeness’ of their circle. After he left Birmingham for Hackney, Priestley found himself shunned by members of the Royal Society for his radical religious and political beliefs.

Philosophical conversation, then, was brought into the home of his friend and fellow Unitarian, Theophilus Lindsey. As Priestley relates in his *Memoir*: ‘Never, on this side of the grave, do I expect to enjoy myself so much as I did by the fire side of Mr. Lindsey, conversing with him and Mrs. Lindsey on theological or other subjects.’⁸²

⁸⁰ Kate Retford, ‘The Evidence of the Conversation Piece: Thomas Bardwell’s *The Broke and Bowes Families* (1740)’. *Cultural and Social History* 7, no. 4 (2010), 497.

⁸¹ Karen Harvey, ‘Ritual encounters: punch parties and masculinity in the eighteenth century’, *Past and Present* 214 (February 2012), 190.

⁸² Joseph Priestley, *Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, to the Year 1795*, (London: J Johnson, 1806), 1:119-20.

Exclusion from the establishment made such social bonds a necessity, but also made them particularly strong.

Barbauld certainly had an appreciation for the affective power of the gift, as a letter to one of her female students, in which she thanks her young correspondent for a piece of needlecraft, indicates: ‘I was equally surprised and flattered at the very obliging manner in which you have shown that you remember me; and though much struck with the elegance of your fancy and the skilfulness of your fingers, I am still more delighted with the proof they give me of your regard and affection.’⁸³ Taking a step further, Amanda Vickery’s observation that ‘Home-made gifts were usually offered by women and were seen as time, labour and affection made concrete’,⁸⁴ Rosenbaum writes that:

Barbauld defines her poetic labor as the consolidation of private, moral community, exploiting the association of women’s writing with feminine handicrafts to distinguish her works from those sold for profit. The emblem of private community was the home, and she presents several of her object poems as inscriptions on furniture or appliances in the home.⁸⁵

But homes, of course, are physical spaces, not just emblems. By placing her poems within the home, Barbauld was inscribing upon real, lived-in spaces, and shaping the sensory experience of those living within those spaces. That is not to say that socio-economics did not factor into this, but I do think more can be said about the sensory element of these works. Indeed, as Vickery articulates: ‘within consumer cultures interest lies not so much in objects as in their effects. While they practiced at feeling

⁸³ Letter to Miss Dixon, Palgrave, March 17, 1777, in Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Memoir, Letters, and a Selection from the Poetry and Prose Writings of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, ed. Grace A. Ellis (Boston, MA: J.R. Osgood & Co., 1874), 1:89.

⁸⁴ Amanda Vickery, ‘Women and the World of Goods: A Lancashire Consumer and Her Possessions’, in *Consumption in the World of Goods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 286-7.

⁸⁵ Susan Rosenbaum, “‘A thing unknown, without a name’: Anna Laetitia Barbauld and the illegible Signature’. *Studies in Romanticism*, (Fall 2001), p389-99.

feelings, eighteenth-century Britons began to accumulate them as stimuli with which to manipulate emotional highs and lows.⁸⁶ Barbauld's object poems, while they resist such a consumer culture, also function in this way; they are both a physical product of affection, and a physical means of producing affection.

In yet another fireplace poem, 'Lines placed over a Chimney Piece' (1779),⁸⁷ Barbauld expresses the wish that 'Love and Joy, and friendly Mirth,/ Shall bless this roof, these walls, this hearth'. Again, these lines, which are reminiscent of the embroidered sampler, speak of the importance of social interaction, and situate the pleasures of sociability before the fire, a place which is shaped by women's handiwork. Constance Classon writes that the tactility of women's craftwork was itself a means of expression through the supposedly 'lower' sense of touch: 'The handiwork that was so popular among eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women can be regarded as the site of a feminine tactics; both in its promotion of a tactually oriented aesthetic based on traditional women's work and in its manipulation of gender norms to allow women their own space for creative freedom'.⁸⁸ Because of their association with haptics in their production and reception, Barbauld's gifted poems can be read as distinctly feminine sensible objects; far from being immaterial to these matters, the senses play an important part in enabling the forms of subversion that Rosenbaum and others have explored.

In perhaps the same year as Barbauld gave her brother the screens, John Aikin wrote that poetry 'elevates, points, and vivifies all it touches. It paints sensible objects

⁸⁶ Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1998), 145.

⁸⁷ Date attributed by McCarthy and Kraft. *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 277.

⁸⁸ Constance Classen, 'Feminine Tactics: crafting an alternative aesthetics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'. in *The Book of Touch*, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 229.

in all the strong colouring of circumstantial and kindred imagery; it renders visible the secret workings of passion and sentiment by their corporeal expressions; and by associating abstract truths with resemblances drawn from external nature, it indelibly imprints them upon the memory'.⁸⁹ The ability of poetry to affect could only have been heightened by inscription on useful and ornamental objects; indeed, Aikin hints here towards such inscription in his use of the haptic terms 'touches', 'paints', and 'imprints'. As material and poetic expressions of love and friendship, Barbauld's gifts must indeed have been affecting. Their placement in the home is both an inscription on the living space and on the lives that occupy that space. In his discussion of architectural spaces, Mark Paterson writes that 'the almost ineffable "feel" of a building, the concretion of habitual, distracted responses over time, is something that characterizes tactile appropriation: how buildings, through their use, apprehension and appropriation, touch us'.⁹⁰ Barbauld's sensible objects, both those on which she inscribed, and those which are inscribed in her writing, appeal to the senses in order to generate feeling. As Paterson suggests, objects are not inert, but can act reciprocally; they are touched and touch in return.

The furniture of the mind: Barbauld's *Inventory*

It's clear that Barbauld's 'Inventory of the furniture in Dr. Priestley's Study' is doing something rather different in its inscription of, rather than on, objects. But this playful yet not uncritical character of Priestley is, I want to suggest, also concerned with the

⁸⁹ John Aikin, *Letters From a Father to His Son* (London: J. Johnson, 1800), 260.

⁹⁰ Mark Paterson, *Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 97.

activeness of material things. And as I now want to suggest, there's something peculiarly apt in Barbauld's animation of material objects in the poem.

The 'Inventory' plays on the ties between property and personality, between personal effects and personal identity, and in doing so draws on earlier examples of the genre, such as Swift's 'A True and Faithful Inventory of the Goods belonging to Dr. Swift' (1726). But the enlivening of matter in the 'Inventory' is particularly fitting to Barbauld's subject: the materialism that Priestley sought to defend in his *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* hinged on the possibility that matter might be active, rather than inert. Although Barbauld's poem predates this work, there is an interesting congruence between the two: in both, the mind is formed of matter imbued with sensation. Barbauld's phrase 'a mass of heterogeneous matter'⁹¹ suggests that she might also have been thinking of mental processes in chemical, and material terms that strikingly foreshadow Priestley's later controversial writing on the subject.

The poem provides a point of contact between Priestley's science and Barbauld's material impulse. Because of its references to gases, I agree with McCarthy and Kraft that the 'Inventory' was probably written in the early 1770s, around the same time as the experiments that famously occasioned 'The Mouse's Petition'. Priestley's work on the philosophy of mind came a bit later. His edition of *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind* wasn't published until 1775, and it was the response to this book that gave led him to publically defend his materialism.⁹² Although it is likely that her 'Inventory' was composed before the publication of *Hartley's Theory*, it probably did not predate his materialism, which he and Barbauld may very well have debated over at Warrington

⁹¹ SPP, 73-4.

⁹² Alan Tapper claims that Priestley's early materialism was formed in response to Reid's refutation of associationism in his *Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1767). Priestley published *An Examination of Dr Reid's Inquiry* in 1774, the year after he left Leeds. See Alan Tapper, 'The Beginnings of Priestley's Materialism, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No.1 (1982), 73-81

and Leeds. Certainly, the poem plays on the idea of a distinctly material mind. The connection between the objects in a physical space and the mind of the occupant of that space is of special significance in Barbauld's 'Inventory': a poem which gives an insight into the mind of her friend through an exploration of the spaces and objects of science.

In the preface to the first volume of his *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air* (1774-86), Priestley links science with religious and political reform, famously warning that the English hierarchy had 'reason to tremble even at an air pump, or an electrical machine'.⁹³ In her 'Inventory', Barbauld presents Priestley's scientific apparatus as instruments of his radicalism: his 'bottles, jar and phial' are means of defeating the 'rogues' – his religious and political opponents (line 18). The jar mentioned here, 'filled with lightening keen and genuine', is probably a Leyden jar, which was used to generate and store electricity. Electricity is identified here with Enlightenment values, but is also signalled as a potentially destabilising force. The connection between the objects of science and politics continues in the next few lines, where Barbauld writes that Priestley possesses a 'rare thermometer' which allows him to calculate 'the just degrees of heat, to raise/ Sermons, or politics, or plays'. Priestley is able to regulate the level of heat or enthusiasm required in order to generate a response in his readers or auditors. This inherent ability to regulate enthusiasm is somewhat at odds with Jon Mee's observation that, for Barbauld, 'the extreme 'candour' of Priestley's writing brings it too close to the vehemence of enthusiasm that the polite culture of Warrington always reprobated'.⁹⁴ As the poem progresses, the room Barbauld

⁹³ Joseph Priestley, *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air* (London: Johnson, 1774), 1:xiv.

⁹⁴ Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 174-5.

explores, and thereby the mind of the man who occupies it, appears increasingly eccentric and dangerously enthusiastic; it is a ‘chaos dark’ (line 40) which yields violent, polemic works. Though Priestley’s active matter thesis appeared in print after his *Experiments and Observations*, I think it possible that his experiments with gases played some part in the formulation of this position – after all, he was dealing with substances that are dynamic, and sometimes explosively reactive. And this disruptive, explosive potential, both of mind and matter, is something that comes across quite clearly in Barbauld’s poem.

The ‘Inventory’ ends with what a number of commentators agree is an imagined dialogue between Barbauld and Priestley on his discovering her anonymous poem:

“But what is this,” I hear you cry,
“Which saucily provokes my eye?”—
A thing unknown, without a name,
Born of the air, and doomed to flame.

Rosenbaum sees these lines as a somewhat anxious reflection on the ephemeral quality of the poem and indeed Barbauld’s poetic production in general.⁹⁵ McCarthy and Kraft, on the other hand, speculate that Barbauld is witnessing a discovery of Priestley’s here, perhaps of the explosive gas, hydrogen.⁹⁶ But I think it might be both: as Lucy Newlyn argues, the final lines elide Priestley’s scientific discoveries with Barbauld’s poetic invention.⁹⁷ Their relationship was characterised by intellectual and material exchange, and the reciprocity and occasional volatility of this is in turn represented in Barbauld’s poem. Seen in the context of other object poems she gave to her friends, ‘The Mouse’s Petition’ appears less hostile to Priestley than might be assumed. Notwithstanding the

⁹⁵ Rosenbaum, ‘A thing unknown, without a name’, 369.

⁹⁶ SPP, 75.

⁹⁷ Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 151.

critique implicit in the poem, and Barbauld did not shy away from disagreement with Priestley, as an affectionate object it must have delighted its recipient. Making objects (or mice) speak is not merely a process of enlivening matter; the domestic production and gifting of textual objects is also an acknowledgement of the extent to which matter affects us.

Theorising about the implications of his discoveries in *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air* (1774), Priestley suggests that Hartley's doctrine of vibration might account for the conversion of phlogiston in the human body.

Phlogiston theory, for those unfamiliar with it, held that flammable matter contained the substance phlogiston, which was released on burning.⁹⁸ Priestley writes, 'My conjecture [...] is, that animals have a power of converting phlogiston, from the state in which they receive it in their nutriment, into that state in which it is called the electrical fluid; that the brain, besides its other proper uses, is the great laboratory and repository for this purpose; that by means of the nerves this great principle, thus exalted, is directed into the muscles, and forces them to act'.⁹⁹ There is a nexus here between Priestley's work on chemistry, electricity and Hartleyan neuro-psychology. For Priestley, however, there wasn't a clear-cut distinction between these fields. Later in the same work he suggests phlogiston, electricity and light might be the same thing, in different forms. This is in accordance with his Unitarian concept of life; he envisages that 'ultimately, one great comprehensive law shall be found to govern both the material and intellectual world'.¹⁰⁰

The passage also hints towards a metaphorical language common to both Priestley's

⁹⁸ When the air around the flame became saturated with phlogiston, the flame would go out. When Priestley discovered oxygen, he called it dephlogisticated air – he thought it aided combustion because it had less phlogiston in it than ordinary air, and therefore could absorb more.

⁹⁹ *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air* (London: Johnson, 1774), 1:277-8
¹⁰⁰ Priestley, *Hartley's*, xxv.

science and Barbauld's poetry: Priestley's designation of the brain as 'the great laboratory' arguably echoes Barbauld's 'Inventory', which was probably written around the same time, or just before *Experiments and Observations*. While Priestley's Hartleyanism can be traced in her writing, the 'active matter' of Barbauld's poetry might also, perhaps, have helped to shape his thoughts on the nature of mind.

The fire which destroyed Priestley's laboratory during the Birmingham riots of 14th July 1791 made an official inventory necessary: 65 folio pages long, it catalogues a huge number of scientific instruments, including 25 thermometers of various types, barometers, vessels, 6 globes, and 'about forty square feet of coated Jars which had been cracked by Explosions but were of some use'.¹⁰¹ Although the Birmingham laboratory may have been bigger than the one at Leeds, its inventory may give an idea of what impressive and well-stocked spaces Priestley's studies were. This was a space suited to investigations into the fundamental vitality of matter; a place where, in Priestley's words, 'Philosophy [might exhibit] the powers of nature, discovered and directed by human art'.¹⁰² Like Priestley's experimental science, Barbauld's poem explores, examines and records the characteristics of matter, as well as the furniture of the mind of her friend.

After his emigration to America, Priestley wrote a letter to Barbauld in which he expresses regret at the loss of the material reminders of their friendship in the fire. He writes that 'pleasing impressions of so early a date are not soon effaced, if no pains were taken to revive them. If my diaries had not been destroyed in the riots, I should have

¹⁰¹ *Scientific correspondence of Joseph Priestley*, ed. Henry Carrington Bolton (New York, 1892), 221-34.

¹⁰² Priestley, *Experiments*, iii.

been able to retrace some of them better than I can do now.¹⁰³ Mary Priestley, he continues, ‘often lamented the loss of a folio book, into which she had copied all your unpublished poems, and other small pieces, especially the first poem we ever saw of yours, on taking leave of her when we left Warrington [...] The perusal of it would give me more pleasure now than it did at first.’ Priestley’s letter underlines how material texts function to reinforce bonds, or cannot, if lost, constructing what Deirdre Coleman refers to as a ‘phantasmatic relationship between letters and bodies’.¹⁰⁴ He is also thinking of sociable exchange in associationist terms, as something strengthened and maintained by the impressions the objects of friendship make on the mind.

Recent developments in sensory history by David Howes and Mark M. Smith have signalled a move away from the study of a single sense towards intersensoriality, acknowledging that the senses do not work in isolation, but together, and against each other. Constance Classen has written on the intersensoriality of language, reminding us that ‘writing is tactile as well as visual’, and that ‘speech is not only auditory, but also kinaesthetic, olfactory [...] and even gustatory’.¹⁰⁵ Barbauld’s children’s literature invites further intersensorial study, partly because intersensoriality had a place in the associationist thinking that underpinned her pedagogy. Her object poems, too, can be read with an awareness of their physicality. As David Howes points out: ‘Every artefact embodies a particular sensory mix. It does so in terms of its production (i.e. the sensory skills and values that go into its making), in the sensory qualities it presents, and in its consumption (i.e. the meanings and uses people discover in or ascribe to it in

¹⁰³ Joseph Priestley, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Priestley, LL.D, F.R.S, &c.*, ed. John Towill Rutt (London: R. Hunter, 1831), 2:364.

¹⁰⁴ Deirdre Coleman, ‘Firebrands, Letters and Flowers: Mrs Barbauld and the Priestleys’, in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, ed. Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, 82-103 (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 98.

¹⁰⁵ Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993), 50.

accordance with the sensory order of their culture or subculture).¹⁰⁶ While Barbauld's object poems have not survived as artifacts, it may nevertheless be fruitful to consider them as such, in order to gain a feeling for their integration in the sensory lives of their readers and recipients.

Ironically, it is the materiality of some of Barbauld's poems, and their physical situation within domestic environments, that has led to their loss. Barbauld's habit of gifting poems meant that her work was often dispersed rather than published. One collection, a folio book of her unpublished poems owned by Mary Priestley, was lost when Priestley's house was set on fire during the Birmingham Riots.¹⁰⁷ Many of the manuscripts that had belonged to her nephew were destroyed in a fire caused by the bombing of London in 1940.¹⁰⁸ Both fires represent a collapsing of boundaries between the political and the domestic – a violent counterpoint to Barbauld's strategic exchange.

Barbauld's associationist concept of the mind as a physical entity feeds into her poetry and prose, not merely thematically, but instrumentally. In order to produce a greater affect on the minds of her readers – minds that, for Barbauld, are shaped by sense perceptions – she makes her writing distinctly physical. It is materialised through the language she uses, the method by which it is intended to be read, and through its physical condition as or on an object. The doctrine of association, with its thesis of connections formed by sensory stimuli, then crystallized by habit, provides a model for Dissenting sociability. Associations are materialised through the gifting of sensory objects, which are calculated to impress. Affectionate exchange, for Barbauld, means inscribing, not just on the object, but also on the human mind.

¹⁰⁶ David Howes, 'Scent, Sound and Synesthesia: Intersensoriality and Material Culture Theory'. in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley (London: Sage, 2006), 166.

¹⁰⁷ William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 204.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

2. ‘Things themselves’: *Lessons for Children* and *Hymns in Prose*

The first editions of Anna Letitia Barbauld’s *Lessons for Children* (1778–1779) did not contain illustrations, though later reprints did. Writing in the *Monthly Review* in 1778, Thomas Bentley voiced, in prose poorly imitative of Barbauld’s meticulously graded language, a demand for further, illustrated versions of *Lessons*: ‘Thank you a thousand times, say the Masters and Misses, good Mrs. Barbauld, for making such pretty little books;—pray go on and make us a great many more, and desire Mr. Johnson to put some pretty pictures in them.’ Yet even without illustrations, praise for *Lessons* often centred on the book’s images; perhaps above all, it was Barbauld’s textual representation of ‘visible objects’ that, as Bentley acknowledged in his review, delighted the child reader.¹

This chapter aims to establish the significance of sensory images in Barbauld’s writing for children. It seeks to show how, even in their original unillustrated form, images are central to these books, and were crucial to the success of Barbauld’s writing for children. Focusing on her multi-volume reading primer, *Lessons for Children* and her devotional primer, *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), I discuss the ways in which Barbauld interpreted and implemented Lockean and Hartleyan theories of mental development in her use of sensible images, arguing that her pedagogic approach was underpinned by distinctly embodied and, I suggest, inherently domestic and Dissenting perspectives on the human mind’s relation to the world. In order to understand the extent to which her children’s writing might be considered a political act, I also discuss

¹ Thomas Bentley, Review of *Lessons for Children* by Anna Letitia Barbauld. *Monthly Review* 59 (July 1778): 26.

an object poem, ‘The Baby-House’, suggesting a link between visual and visionary modes in what I hope to show is a radically political children’s text. I provide a counterpoint to this discussion by suggesting how Barbauld’s theoretical influences might have been moderated and supplemented by her experience of educational practice. I argue that while Barbauld implicitly acknowledges the limits of heavily theorized pedagogies, her concern with the circumstances of everyday life was itself intrinsic to associationist theory.

The embodied ‘new Walk’

Barbauld claims in her Advertisement to the first volume of *Lessons* that ‘amidst the multitude of books professedly written for children, there is not one adapted to the comprehension of a child from two to three years old.’² *Lessons* was meant to supply this want, and thus marked a radical departure from the abstract in children’s literature; William McCarthy notes the ‘complete absence [...] of abstract “Moral Precepts” such as “Live Well that you may die well”, with which previous reading primers had sandbagged the hapless toddlers who were set to learn from them.’ As McCarthy explains, Barbauld ‘drew her vocabulary instead from sights and sounds, flora and fauna of the country village where she wrote [...] and the daily life of the child for whom she wrote.’³ As I discussed in Chapter One, earlier children’s books often incorporated an embodied element to learning. Movables and books with product tie-ins were produced specifically for children from the mid eighteenth century, but Barbauld was perhaps the first to successfully ground the prose itself in the real world, initiating

² *Lessons for Children, from Two to Three Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 3.

³ William McCarthy, ‘How Dissent Made Anna Barbauld, and What She Made of Dissent’. in *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860*, ed. James and Inkster, 58.

what Frances Burney now famously called the ‘new Walk’ in children’s literature.⁴

Barbauld’s *Lessons* and *Hymns* function through the sensory evocation of familiar spaces and objects; as we shall see, her representations of physical circumstances were thought by admirers of her books to evoke ideas nearly identical to those caused by the objects themselves.

What ideas actually constituted is itself a complex issue. There is some disagreement amongst commentators about whether John Locke was an imagist (that is, whether or not he believed that ideas took the form of images in the mind⁵) but his use of visual metaphors such as ‘pictures drawn in our minds’ might lead us to understand him in those terms.⁶ Moreover, in eighteenth-century discussions of the nature of mental phenomena the terminology was by no means stable and clearly defined. David Hartley for one seems to use ‘image’ and ‘idea’ interchangeably: stating, for instance, that ‘sensations … leave certain Vestiges, Types, or Images, of themselves, which may be called, *Simple Ideas of Sensation*; ‘ideas,’ on the other hand, can be ‘evanescent and imperceptible.’⁷ Since I am engaging here with the terms as they were used in Barbauld’s circle, however, it is sufficient to note, as Joseph Priestley does in his *An Examination of Dr. Reid’s Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1774), that philosophers ‘call ideas the *images* of external things.’ Priestley insists that this is ‘known to be a figurative expression, denoting not that the actual shapes of things were delineated in the brain, or upon the mind, but only that impressions of some kind or other were

⁴ Frances Burney, *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D’Arblay)*, ed. Joyce Hemlow et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972-1984), 4:187.

⁵ According to Michael Ayers, Locke believes that ‘the only thing “which the Mind can be employ’d about in thinking” is a sensation or image’ (*Locke: Epistemology and Ontology*, London: Routledge, 1991, 1:45). David Soles takes a contrary position in ‘Is Locke an Imagist?’ *Locke Newsletter* 30 (1999), 17-66.

⁶ Locke, *Human Understanding*, 152.

⁷ Hartley, *Observations*, 1:56.

conveyed to the mind by means of the organs of sense and their corresponding nerves, and that between these impressions and sensations existing in the mind there is a real and necessary, though at present an unknown connection.⁸ It should also be noted that ‘image’ is used throughout this chapter to refer to all ideas of sense, not visual ideas alone. While the sense of sight is to a certain extent privileged in her work, *Lessons* and *Hymns* have an intersensorial focus; Barbauld’s images include smells, sounds and tastes, even the tactility of a cat’s fur. As contemporary readers testified, Barbauld’s approach is distinctive. As I will demonstrate, the problem of the nature of ideas can be conceptualised both from a Lockean perspective, and the body of practice in Barbauld’s pedagogy.

Bentley’s request for ‘pretty pictures’ reflects the widespread belief that books for children should be illustrated, a view that became prevalent following the publication of Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* at the end of the seventeenth century. In *Concerning Education*, Locke recommends illustrated books for children, stating that:

If [the child’s] *Aesop* has *Pictures* in it, it will entertain him much the better, and encourage him to read, when it carries the increase of Knowledge within it. For such visible Objects Children hear talked of in vain and without any satisfaction, whilst they have no Ideas of them; those Ideas being not to be had from Sounds, but either the things themselves, or their Pictures.⁹

For Locke, then, pictures are useful for two related reasons: because they are inherently entertaining, and because they facilitate reading comprehension. Sensible ideas (ideas of things perceived through the senses) which are not yet familiar to a child cannot be

⁸ Joseph Priestley, *An Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind* (London: J. Johnson, 1774), 30.

⁹ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 212.

communicated by words alone—they must be acquired through the perception either of the thing itself, or through pictorial representations of that thing. Locke contends that books must be easily comprehensible in order to make reading enjoyable for the child: ‘for what Pleasure or Encouragement’ he asks, ‘can it be to a Child to exercise himself in reading those Parts of a Book, where he understands nothing?’¹⁰ This problem had further implications, however, beyond the incapacity of unfamiliar words to entertain: a certain degree of anxiety attended the notion that children might learn words without ideas. To quote Locke again, this time from his chapter ‘Of the Abuse of Words’ in Book Three of *Human Understanding*:

Men having been accustomed from their cradles to learn words which are easily got and retained, before they knew, or had framed the complex ideas, to which they were annexed, or which were to be found in the things they were thought to stand for, they usually continue to do so all their lives [...] this insignificance in their words, when they come to reason concerning either their tenets or interest, manifestly fills their discourse with abundance of empty unintelligible noise and jargon, especially in moral matters.¹¹

Locke’s recommendations on the design and content of children’s books came to be bound up with this concern about insignificance in discourse. Following Locke, Isaac Watts warned that children are capable of parroting language without understanding meaning: ‘Words without Ideas,’ he cautions, ‘lead young persons into a most unhappy habit of *talking without Meaning*.’¹² From the empiricist perspective of Locke and Watts, this habit threatened to exacerbate the obfuscating or misleading potential of language. In essence, it was a problem about communication, about how the

¹⁰ Ibid., 213.

¹¹ Locke, *Human Understanding*, 492.

¹² Isaac Watts, *The Improvement of the Mind* (London: J. Brackstone, 1741), 187. Original emphasis.

communication of ideas might be possible given the arbitrariness of words, and about the social and psychological implications of insignificant speech.

In an 1802 letter to his brother, Henry Crabb Robinson, Thomas Robinson gives a brief description of his wife Mary's routine in teaching their son to read:

A great deal of Mary's time is now occupied in attention to him, and she flatters herself that he repays her attention. An hour or two every evening is employed hearing him read and spell. We use Mrs. Barbauld's and Mrs. Edgeworth's [sic] books, which convey to children *ideas* as well as words.¹³

Robinson's letter indicates that Barbauld's children's books (and those by Edgeworth that followed them) addressed the Lockean requisite for signification. Robinson hints too towards the social, as well as the physical elements of early childhood reading: it is something that is done together, and aloud. Such embodied and social reading practices are, in fact, closely related to the conveyance of ideas identified here by Robinson: Watts advocated reading aloud in order to 'engage the Attention, keep the Soul fixed, and convey and insinuate into the Mind, the Ideas of Things in a more lively and forcible Way, than the *meer reading of Books* in the Silence and Retirement of the Closet.'¹⁴ Language is made more effective through physicalisation; in this way, ideas make a stronger impression on the mind, but are 'insinuated' there, so that children are unaware that they are being taught. Leaving aside for the moment the somewhat troubling implications of this covert method of instruction, I now want to show how the interrelation between reading practices and ideas were written into Barbauld's texts in a very distinctive way.

¹³ Thomas Robinson, letter to Henry Crabb Robinson, March 23, 1802, Henry Crabb Robinson MSS, vol. 2, letter 44, Dr. Williams's Library, London. Original emphasis.

¹⁴ Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, 38. Original emphasis.

Lessons in the domestic and familiar

Lessons was shaped by its initial purpose of providing a text for domestic reading lessons. In her ‘Advertisement,’ Barbauld writes that the ‘little publication’ was ‘made for a particular child,’ her nephew and adopted son, Charles, ‘but,’ she adds, ‘the public is welcome to the use of it.’¹⁵ Although rather modestly phrased (I return to the subject of ‘littleness’ later), the significance of this statement is twofold: ‘use’ serves to suggest both the purpose of children’s books as instruments in the moral and intellectual education of the public, as well as their physical functionality, their status as material objects, designed with a particular end in mind. As Matthew Grenby reminds us, ‘children’s “book use”’ is ‘a more inclusive, and frequently more accurate term than “reading” [which] has very often been more physical and interactive than cerebral and solitary.’¹⁶ In its ‘adaptation’ to the needs of a young child, the look and feel of *Lessons* were determined by the child’s physical abilities. The book is small enough to fit into a young child’s hands, and the type is large: ‘necessary assistances,’ Barbauld continues, for ‘the eye of a child and of a learner [which] cannot catch, as ours can, a small, obscure, ill-formed word, amidst a number of others all equally unknown to him.’ The child’s visual and manual abilities are thus integral to Barbauld’s considerations about the design of the book, and an understanding of these is unique to those with experience in teaching infants: as Barbauld insists, ‘They only, who have actually taught young children, can be sensible how necessary these assistances are.’¹⁷ The implication here is that those who had written previous books for the very young had not had sufficient experience in teaching them—something, it is worth noting here, that was usually

¹⁵ *Lessons for Children, from Two to Three* (1787), 3.

¹⁶ M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 194.

¹⁷ *Lessons for Children, from Two to Three* (1787), 4.

undertaken by women. This practical knowledge, however, is complemented in Barbauld's writing by Hartleyan associationism.¹⁸ Far from being at odds with the domestic groundings of the book, associationist theory itself put the minutiae of daily experience at the very foundation of the mind. That Barbauld's pedagogy is driven by domestic objects is therefore in keeping with the associationist emphasis on the primacy of environment in the education of children.

Written in manuscript by Barbauld for her adopted son, *Lessons* features actual objects that would have been, if not within direct sight of the child, then at least familiar to him at the time of reading. While these particular objects belonged in Charles's home—for example his father's cane, watch and shoes—most of them are such that they would have been recognizable to most of Barbauld's readers. Gillian Brown has recently argued that ‘the material paraphernalia with which eighteenth-century publishers embellished and sold children's books … bear witness to Locke's understanding that mental processes rely on images, whether actual, remembered, or imagined’; this is true of Barbauld's text both before and after its publication.¹⁹ Reading *Lessons* in its manuscript form, Charles would very likely have been able to see the actual objects referred to in the text, would have done so recently, or would be likely to in the near future. The frequent demonstrative references to things—‘here is a pin,’ ‘here is a white butterfly’—and the imperatives ‘see’ and ‘look at,’ suggest, in the first place, Barbauld's actual physical gesturing towards a particular proximal object, and subsequently a conceptual gesturing to or prompting of a familiar type of object; that is,

¹⁸ Joseph Priestley published his own edition of *Hartley's Theory* in 1775, but his earlier work also shows a strong Hartleyan influence. His lectures at Warrington, later published as *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (London: J. Johnson, 1777), were an early attempt at disseminating Hartleyan ideas.

¹⁹ Gillian Brown, ‘The Metamorphic Book: Children's Print Culture in the Eighteenth Century’. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2006), 353.

the image of an object in the mind.²⁰ The first lesson, however, centres on Charles's physical interaction with the book itself, where he sits, how he holds it, and the implement with which he can pick out individual words: 'Sit in mamma's lap. Now read your book. Where is the pin to point with? Here is a pin. Do not tear the book.'²¹ As well as drawing attention to the physicality of the book, Barbauld ensures that the first object introduced in *Lessons* is one that was necessarily present for all her readers.

Lessons continuously draws lines out to its (and the child's) surroundings; in doing so, it also replicates and attempts to shape dialogue between the mother and child. It encourages both child and adult to engage in particular physical behaviours: for instance, it is easy to imagine adult readers of *Lessons* gesturing towards things, perhaps even adapting the text to the child's particular environment, or devising their own object lessons. Brown summarises this process of engagement with illustrated books:

As an adult elucidates a picture for a child, pointing and commentating, the child learns that there is a frame of reference for the picture even as the picture provides a particular frame of reference ... Correlations between pictures and personal experience, between pictures and external information adult supplied by an adult, and between pictures and print all manifest how illustrated books generate conversation.²²

In *Lessons*, the frame of reference is the child's actual surroundings, or the mental images gained from those surroundings. Moreover, since conversation about things forms much of the content of *Lessons*—conversation that would have been played out in the act of joint reading—the interrelations between text and body are fundamental to the experience of reading the book. Moreover, when mamma points out the pleasures of the sensible world to Charles, she is also transcribing for mothers the pleasure, for

²⁰ *Lessons for Children from Two to Three* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 6; *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1788), part 2, 36.

²¹ *Lessons for Children, from Two to Three* (1787), 5-6.

²² G. Brown, 'Metamorphic Book'. 354.

instance, of sharing juicy strawberries with their children, of playing with them, and taking pleasure in their pleasure, and partaking in it themselves.

The mother in *Lessons* guides Charles in an exploration of the world through which he simultaneously engages with the objects in the book, the book as an object, and the objects surrounding both child and book. For Barbauld, objects play a fundamental role in the creation of the subject. Indeed, one might go further and say that Barbauld puts objects at the very forefront of the inception of the understanding. In her poem ‘To a Little Invisible Being who is Expected soon to Become Visible’ (1799?), she imagines the human mind in its unborn state: ‘Senses from objects locked, and mind from thought!’ (*SPP*, 147-48, line 6). The being possesses the faculties necessary to think, but its mind is as yet ‘white paper.’²³ Sensory experience of external objects is required in order to furnish the mind with its first ideas, the bare materials of thought. In *Lessons*, Barbauld introduces abstract concepts by forging associations between their names and these bare materials, or ‘simple ideas of sensation,’ as Locke termed them.²⁴ For example, each month of the year is introduced through the various sensory experiences associated with it: February with a ‘Pretty white snow-drop, with a green stalk,’ and the ‘Caw, caw, caw’ of rooks building their nests. In the summer months, more pleasurable images are evoked, with Mamma exclaiming ‘How sweet the hay smells!’ after encouraging Charles to tumble in it.²⁵ This is a marked departure from earlier reading primers, which often simply listed words to be learnt by rote, without providing any context. Instead of this, Barbauld produces patterns of association within the text. The prose becomes more complex in the later books of *Lessons* and then yet

²³ Locke, *Human Understanding*, 104.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁵ *Lessons for Children of Three* (1788), part 1, 11-12, 20-21.

more so in *Hymns*, but recurring ideas and images throughout both provide a contextual framework for this increasing complexity.

From the particular to the global

A typical move in *Lessons* is from quotidian objects and occurrences outwards:

Do not throw your bread upon the ground. Bread is to eat, you must not throw it away. Corn makes bread. Corn grows in the fields. Grass grows in the fields. Cows eat grass, and sheep eat grass, and horses eat grass. Little boys do not eat grass: no, they eat bread and milk.²⁶

A commonplace domestic event (Charles throwing his bread on the floor) occasions an associative lesson through which ideas are explored from different angles; bread is presented as food for Charles here, it is distinguished from the foods of other animals, and it is also traced back to its ingredients and the labour involved in its production.

While McCarthy has likened this progressive process to schema theory, it has an eighteenth-century equivalent in David Hartley's theory of association.²⁷ As my introduction explained, in *Observations on Man* Hartley agrees with Locke that sensation forms the basis of knowledge, and develops his theory of association along physiological lines. According to Hartley, sensory impressions are transmitted by vibrations of the nerves, which are then replicated in miniature in the brain. These miniature vibrations (vibratiuncles) are the physiological basis for ideas, and become associated with others in the following way: 'Any Sensations A,B,C, etc. by being associated with another a sufficient number of times get such a Power over the

²⁶ *Lessons for Children from Two to Three* (1787), 10-11.

²⁷ William McCarthy, 'Mother of All Discourses: Anna Barbauld's *Lessons for Children*', in *Culturing the Child, 1690-1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers*, ed. Donelle Ruwe (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 94.

corresponding Ideas a,b,c, etc. that any one of the Sensations A, when impressed alone, shall be able to excite in the Mind b,c, etc. the Ideas of the rest.' For Hartley, all ideas originate in sensation, even the most complex. Through the repeated association of sensations, clusters of simple ideas form complex ideas, and then clusters of complex ideas form what he names 'decomplex' ideas.²⁸ The associative structure of *Lessons* and *Hymns* closely resembles this model of mental development, from simple, to complex, to 'decomplex' ideas. In Barbauld's writing for children, information is received through the senses, and the concomitant ideas are situated within an increasingly complex network. Grounding the work in the real world, and using patterns of association, Barbauld forges texts that gradually spread themselves out over the material and the everyday, mirroring the mind's own development.

Through the associative structures in the text, nuclei in elementary networks of ideas are built outwards, and integrated into a fabric that eventually forms the conceptual backdrop for more advanced narratives. The benefit of this is that once a network has been established, new words can be understood in context; that is to say, in relation to various other points in the network. Grass, for example, which is first mentioned in the extract above, later forms an element of lessons on colours and on haymaking. Later still, when it is associated with a number of attributes and uses, Barbauld has Charles engage in metaphorical thinking:

O, here is a large round stump of a tree, it will do very well for a table. But we have no chairs. Here is a seat of turf, and a bank almost covered with violets; we shall sit here, and you and Billy may lie on the carpet. The carpet is in the parlour. Yes, there is a carpet in the parlour, but there is a carpet here too. What is it? The grass is the carpet out of doors. Pretty green soft carpet!²⁹

²⁸ Hartley, *Observations*, 1:65, 77.

²⁹ *Lessons for Children of Three* (1788), part 2, 17.

Barbauld's gradual use of metaphor here—initially providing both tenor and vehicle, and then finally the vehicle alone—is, as McCarthy states, a means of encouraging Charles to 'think poetically.'³⁰ The 'pretty green carpet' is returned to in *Hymns in Prose*: 'If you fall, little lambs, you will not be hurt; there is spread under you a carpet of soft grass, it is spread on purpose to receive you' ('Hymn 2', *SPP*, 240). Because the metaphor has already been introduced in *Lessons*, this figurative devotional idea is ready to be assimilated into the child's spreading network of cognitive associations. Of course, metaphor also gives images an increased vitality, and is thus an important means of making communication more powerful. Pat Rogers summarizes the prevalence of this view in eighteenth-century literary criticism: 'In virtually all writers on style before the Romantic era, it was the job of metaphor ... to deliver a predetermined message with added impact ... it was not normally in question that figurative language was designed to enhance, to adorn, to represent with special clarity.'³¹ In associationist terms, metaphors transfer the associations from one thing onto another thing; as Joseph Priestley has it, they 'give strength and colour, as it were, to ideas,' so 'we naturally use them when our own ideas are peculiarly *vivid*, and when, consequently, we wish to communicate the same ideas, in the same strength, to the minds of others.'³² Indeed, recent research in cognitive literary studies indicates that visual metaphors are particularly evocative of mental images.³³ By demonstrating the construction of metaphor for Charles, Barbauld is not merely encouraging him to think poetically, but

³⁰ McCarthy, 'Mother of All Discourses'. 101.

³¹ Pat Rogers, 'Theories of Style'. in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: The Eighteenth Century* ed. H. B. Nesbit and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 4:365-80, 378.

³² Joseph Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (London: J. Johnson, 1777), 188.

³³ Daniel W. Gleason, 'The Visual Experience of Image Metaphor: Cognitive Insights into Imagist Figures'. *Poetics Today* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 423-70.

also showing how to communicate images, and the ideas and feelings associated with them, to the minds of others more effectively.

In her preface to *Hymns in Prose*, Barbauld makes it very clear that associationism forms the rhetorical basis of her project: its aim, as she states, is ‘to impress devotional feelings’ on the child’s mind ‘by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects … and thus by deep, strong, and permanent associations, to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life’ (*SPP*, 238). In his study of associationism’s literary legacy, Cairns Craig suggests a correspondence between the theory and Ezra Pound’s notion of the ‘image.’ This, he contends, ‘is a modernised version of the “fusion” by which associationists had described the creation of complex ideas and their accompanying emotion.’ Craig’s observation that Pound’s image possesses ‘the energy to provoke ideas and emotions (that is, associations) in its readers’ could, I think, equally apply to Barbauld’s children’s books.³⁴ McCarthy too has identified a proto-Imagist quality in Barbauld’s books for children: ‘Language,’ he writes, ‘seems to bloom from the pages of *Lessons* as if it were a new creation’.³⁵ Certainly there is a peculiar immediacy to the images of both *Lessons* and *Hymns* that merits the comparison. ‘Hymn VII’ in particular is notable for the clarity of its images:

Come, let us go into the thick shade, for it is the noon of day, and the summer sun beats hot upon our heads.

The shade is pleasant, and cool; the branches meet above our heads, and shut out the sun, as with a green curtain; the grass is soft to our feet, and a clear brook washes the roots of the trees.

The sloping bank is covered with flowers: let us lie down upon it; let us throw our limbs on the fresh grass, and sleep; for all things are still, and we are quite alone. (*SPP*, 246)

³⁴ Cairns Craig, *Associationism and the Literary Imagination: From the Phantasmal Chaos* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 296.

³⁵ McCarthy, *ALBVE*, 194-95.

As in *Lessons*, the reader is not presented with this scene as a detached observer, but is addressed as if present. Again, a visual metaphor strengthens the image: the ‘green curtain’ encapsulates the shade of the canopy clearly and concisely. What makes the passage most evocative, however, is the focus of Barbauld’s description on the objects in the scene. The emphasis here repeatedly falls on the ways in which they affect the body, rather than on the objects themselves. In addition to various senses, different parts of the body feature here: tactile sensation extends from the heat of the sun on the head to the touch of the soft grass on the feet. Barbauld’s prose is restrained, and yet she manages to evoke a physical experience with remarkable intensity.

Barbauld’s contemporaries praised *Lessons* for its ‘eloquent simplicity,’ and admiration for *Hymns* was framed in the same terms: Anna Seward noted their ‘touching simplicity, and perfect fitness to their design.’³⁶ This simplicity is in a large part due to Barbauld’s prose style: she keeps sentence short, with few clauses, and avoids long words. This is especially striking in *Lessons*; because of the small size of the book, and the relatively large print, each page provides only a limited number of images. But this simplicity is also intrinsically linked to the image. As Richard Lovell Edgeworth saw it:

When a child, who has observed any of the beauties of nature, begins to read, he will be pleased with descriptions, that give him back the image of his mind. To form an early devotional taste, no book for young children can be better adapted than Mrs. Barbauld’s *Hymns*, from the simplicity, the sublime simplicity of description, and the captivating charm of the melodious language.³⁷

³⁶ Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), 1:321; Anna Seward, letter to Sally Fowler Childers, March 30, 1804, in *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807*, ed. Archibald Constable (Edinburgh, 1811), 6:145.

³⁷ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Essays on Professional Education* (London: J. Johnson, 1809), 81.

For Edgeworth, Barbauld's simplicity of language is important not only because it aids comprehension, but also because of the beauty with which it 'gives back' images. The emotive impact of *Hymns* is dependent on precisely the recollective energy that Craig identifies in Pound.

In *Hymns*, the instruction to observe is invested with a new, devotional purpose, as the sensory pleasures of nature are associated with the idea of God. 'Hymn IX' begins with a tactile and visual experience, an instruction to the child to 'Take up a handful of sand' and try to 'number the grains of it.' Barbauld then introduces the idea of God: 'You cannot count them, they are innumerable; much more the things which God has made' (*SPP*, 250). This is a recurrent pattern in *Hymns*: Barbauld begins with the sensory perception of an object or objects and then relates this to God. The hymn goes on to describe numerous plants and flowers, all of which, says Barbauld, 'are a part of [God's] works.' Eventually, the practice of seeing God in nature becomes habitual; at this point 'things' come to supersede the author: 'There is little need that I should tell you of God, for every thing speaks of him' (*SPP*, 251). Notwithstanding the self-effacement implied here, Barbauld's text was meant to play a very real part in the child's engagement with nature. Indeed, considering the hymns were intended to be 'committed to memory, and recited,' they may well have been repeated outside, as depicted in Elizabeth Sandham's 'Rambles of a Day,' when a young child recites 'Hymn IX' to her sister and friends while on a walk.³⁸ Such fictional representation should not, of course, be taken as evidence for how *Hymns* was actually read and recited, but it does indicate that the book might have suggested such usage, whether or not readers actually followed that suggestion.

³⁸ Elizabeth Sandham, 'Rambles of a Day'. in *Trifles; or, friendly mites towards improving the rising generation* (London: T. Hurst, 1800), 152-53.

Recent studies on the use of children's books in the eighteenth century have brought attention to the ways in which childhood reading was conceptualized as a physical act.³⁹ This fundamental connection between books and the physical world did not always rely on the inclusion of illustrations or metamorphic elements in printed books; as I have suggested, in *Lessons* and *Hymns* certain physical behaviours were also written into the text. In another letter to his brother, Thomas Robinson associates the instructional use of Barbauld's books with playful activity:

At this precise moment I am sitting with Mary, and Thomas who is receiving instruction from his mother out of Mrs. Barbauld's books. The scene brings strong to my recollection the time when you were about the same age amusing yourself in cutting out paper boys. I remember with what affectionate patience our dear mother submitted all to your interruptions.⁴⁰

Even without the potential for tactile interaction with moving parts, then, Barbauld's texts seem to have encouraged play, or at least evoked memories of play.

In its emphasis on 'delight' (*SPP*, 238), *Hymns* recalls earlier children's books, such as John Newbery's *The Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744), which was sold alongside a pincushion or a ball, and Mary Cooper's spelling book, *The Child's New Play-Thing* (1742), which had a page that could be cut up into alphabet tiles. The tangibility and manipulability of what Heather Klemann has recently called the 'book-toy hybrid' put into practice Locke's belief that children learned best through play.⁴¹ As Locke observed, 'Children may be cozen'd into a Knowledge of the Letters; be *taught to read*, without perceiving it to be any thing but a Sport, and play themselves into that

³⁹ See, for example, Grenby, *Child Reader*; G. Brown, 'Metamorphic Book'; and Heather Klemann, 'The Matter of Moral Education: Locke, Newbery, and the Didactic Book-Toy Hybrid'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 223–24.

⁴⁰ Thomas Robinson, letter to Henry Crabb Robinson, December 21, 1801, Henry Crabb Robinson MSS, vol. 2, no. 38, Dr. Williams's Library, London.

⁴¹ Klemann, 'Moral Education.'

others are whipp'd for.⁴² This is encapsulated in Newbery's motto, *delectando monemus* (instruction with delight), a principle that is also traceable in much of Barbauld's writing for children—she too was a proponent of ‘playing children into learning’.⁴³ And her books certainly did delight her young readers; the disdain for eighteenth-century didacticism that ran from Lamb's famous slur on the ‘cursed Barbauld crew’ to Geoffrey Summerfield's charge that she ‘abandoned, or forswor[e], lyricism’ belies the recollections of genuine pleasure communicated by so many who actually read Barbauld's work as children.⁴⁴ Not to mention their long-lasting popularity: twelve editions of *Hymns* were printed in London alone during Barbauld's lifetime, and over forty editions were published in the United States between 1797 and 1820.⁴⁵ Much has been done in recent years to reassess the value of didactic children's books, not least by Mitzi Myers, who reminds us that instruction and delight are not oppositional concepts, but in fact ‘run like woof and warp through the fabric of children's literature’.⁴⁶ The child's delight in the recognition of familiar and pleasurable images was thus fundamental to the effectiveness of *Lessons* and *Hymns* as educational texts.

The rehabilitation of Barbauld's literary reputation has entailed, to a certain extent, counteracting her representation in the nineteenth century as a somewhat prim

⁴² *Concerning Education*, 209.

⁴³ ‘Review of *An Essay on Education* by William Barrow’. *Annual Review* 1 (1803): 577. Author attributed by McCarthy, *ALBVE*, 648n7.

⁴⁴ Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb, 1796-1801*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 2:82; Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 216; *ALBVE*, 216-17.

⁴⁵ McCarthy, *ALBVE*, 215.

⁴⁶ Mitzi Myers, ‘Wise Child, Wise Peasant, Wise Guy: Geoffrey Summerfield's Case Against the Eighteenth Century’. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 12.2 (1987): 107.

female educationalist.⁴⁷ As McCarthy states, ‘The good that Barbauld was said to have done came to be identified almost exclusively as her books for children,’ something that ‘played badly in a climate of growing literary elitism.’⁴⁸ While it is certainly important to rectify Barbauld’s misrepresentation mostly or solely as an educationalist in the Victorian era and beyond, it is equally important to resist the separation of her children’s literature from the rest of her oeuvre. As Marlon Ross puts it:

The Dissenting woman writer takes seriously the idea that small, daily experiences determine the grandest principles of conduct ... Based on the Dissenters’ Unitarian concept of life, a seamless thread runs from practical experience through moral conduct to political action ... Thus, when Barbauld speaks of the education of the young, she is in the same breath speaking politics.⁴⁹

Not only, therefore, do distinctions between these strands of her writing ignore the intertextual links between, for example, the final episode in *Lessons on the sun and moon* with ‘A Summer’s Evening Meditation’ (1773), or between the Hartleyan habitual devotion set out in *Hymns* and in the poem ‘An Address to the Deity’ (1773), they also risk depoliticizing what was, as I later suggest, an intrinsically political act.

In 1777 Joseph Priestley published his Hartleyan lectures on rhetoric under the title *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*. Priestley is particularly insistent here on the psycho-physiological impact of the written and spoken word on children:

⁴⁷ William Keach has pointed out that Barbauld’s literary reputation in the nineteenth century was skewed by Lucy Aikins refiguring of her aunt as an apolitical poet and educationalist. See ‘Barbauld, Romanticism and the Survival of Dissent’, in *Essays and Studies: Romanticism and Gender*, ed. Anne F. Janowitz (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 45. I agree that such representations obscured her more explicitly radical output, but I see her pedagogic work as consistent with and driven by her Dissent.

⁴⁸ William McCarthy, ‘A “High-Minded Christian Lady”: The Posthumous Reception of Anna Letitia Barbauld’, in *Romanticism and Women Poets: Opening the Doors of Reception*, ed. Harriet Kramer Linkin and Stephen C. Behrendt (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 177.

⁴⁹ Marlon B. Ross, ‘Configurations of Feminine Reform: The Woman Writer and the Tradition of Dissent’, in *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776–1837*, ed. Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 97.

‘Whatever … we should think improper for [children] to *see*, it is improper for them to *read* or *hear*; for they have like sensations, and retain similar impressions from both.’⁵⁰

For Priestley, objects and ideas do not resemble each other, but ideas caused by the written word and those caused by physical objects do. The negative significance of this resemblance is that children should not be given inappropriate reading, and Priestley marks out romance in particular as unsuitable for children.⁵¹ However, associationism also provided Priestley with a way of thinking about writing style as a means of stimulating psychological processes in the reader. Under Priestley’s view, language becomes the means by which mental states are not merely communicated, but are replicated in the listener’s or reader’s mind. His rhetorical doctrine, with this added element of a psychology based on physiological theory, brings together the written word, body and mind. According to Priestley:

to represent things to the life, in order thoroughly to affect and interest a reader in the perusal of a composition, it is of singular advantage to be very *circumstantial*, and to introduce as many *sensible images* as possible … in nature, and real life, we see nothing but *particulars*, and to these ideas alone are the strongest sensations and emotions annexed.⁵²

Priestley taught his view of rhetoric at Warrington Academy, and while Barbauld was not entitled to attend his lectures, the informal and domestic nature of sociable exchange within the academic community there makes it highly likely that she would have come into contact with his ideas on the subject. Considering how deeply invested in Hartleyan psychology Priestley was, even at this early stage in his career, it is probable that

⁵⁰ Priestley, *Course of Lectures*, 83-84. Original emphasis.

⁵¹ This might go some way towards explaining why Barbauld’s children’s books came to be seen by Charles Lamb and others as doggedly didactic, as opposed to earlier folk tales. However, as I will show in my discussion of ‘The Baby-House’, Barbauld did not always banish fairies.

⁵² Ibid., 84. Original emphasis.

associationist language suffused everyday conversation with his family, as well as with close friends such as Barbauld. Certainly, her writing for children suggests a deep investment in what might be termed associationist rhetoric. For Barbauld, as for Priestley, the strength of the image is crucial to the process of raising sentiment. Confidence in the power of the circumstantial to ‘affect and interest’ is especially apparent in the story of the hunted hare in *Lessons*, which is worth quoting at length:

Ha! what is there amongst the furze? I can see only its eyes. It has very large full eyes. It is a Hare. It is in its form, squatting down amongst the bushes to hide itself, for it is very fearful. The Hare is very innocent and gentle. Its colour is brown; but in countries which are very cold it turns white as snow. It has a short bushy tail; its lip is parted, and very hairy; and it always moves its lips. Its hind legs are very long, that it may run the better. The Hare feeds upon herbs, and roots, and the bark of young trees, and green corn; and sometimes it will creep through the hedge, and steal into the gardens, to eat pinks and a little parsley; and it loves to play and skip about in the moon-light, and to bite the tender blades of grass when the dew is upon them; but in the day time it sleeps in its form. It sleeps with its eyes open because it is very fearful and timid; and when it hears the least noise it starts and pricks up its large ears.⁵³

Barbauld paints a vivid picture here, framing abstract concepts (‘innocent,’ ‘gentle’) with an abundance of concrete, particular ideas. Such sensory detailing in *Lessons* forms a key element of Barbauld’s effort ‘to foster in Charles the sensibility of a poet’⁵⁴: without an idea of the sensible qualities of the hare, Charles would not feel so strongly at its subsequent (and quite graphic) death. The fact that this does not dissuade her from cooking hares (‘It is good for nothing now but to be roasted’)⁵⁵ indicates that what Barbauld is aiming for here is feeling for its own sake. Society will hunt hares, she seems to suggest, but change can only come about on a personal psychological level, and can only be assured through the preservation of virtue that comes from a

⁵³ *Lessons for Children from Three to Four Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1788), 80-84.

⁵⁴ McCarthy, ‘Mother of All Discourses’, 101.

⁵⁵ *Lessons for Children from Three to Four Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1788), 88.

disinterestedness in power. Encoded in this is a reflection, I think, on non-conformity; Barbauld's child feels for the hare, will probably never hunt hares, but will eat it nonetheless.

The politics of pedagogy

McCarthy draws comparisons between Barbauld's pedagogic approach and today's 'whole language' teaching: both favour a contextualized method of teaching to read over 'phonics,' whereby letters, sounds and then words are learned by rote.⁵⁶ Noting the polarized political associations of these two approaches, McCarthy remarks that although writers from across the political spectrum admired and emulated Barbauld's method, the 'preference for concepts, the materials of thinking, over memorized performance' aligns itself more easily with 'liberal Enlightenment' ideals.

Denomination also has an important bearing on this, distinguishing Barbauld's books from catechistic educational works such as those of the Anglican Sarah Trimmer. Two stories from the first volume of *Evenings at Home* (1792), the book for older children that Barbauld co-authored with her brother John Aikin, illustrate the value for liberal thinkers of teaching ideas rather than mere words. In Aikin's 'Travellers' Wonders' Mr. Fairborne tells his children about his travels to a strange land, where the inhabitants wear colourful skins and build their houses of fired earth. The story concludes, of course, with the father revealing that all of the supposedly exotic details in the story could also be used to describe England:

I meant to show you, that a foreigner might easily represent every thing as equally strange and wonderful among us, as we could do with respect

⁵⁶ Ibid., 91-92.

to his country; and also to make you sensible that we daily call a great many things by their names, without ever enquiring into their nature and properties; so that, in reality, it is only the names, and not the things themselves, with which we are acquainted.⁵⁷

A second story, Barbauld's 'Things By Their Right Names,' drives home a more obviously radical message. Here the child listener is brought to question the real difference between war and murder, and must conclude that no such difference exists, except in scale and terminology. Michelle Levy has shown how these stories contribute to the politics of *Evenings at Home*, arguing that the radicalism of the book 'lies in [Aikin and Barbauld's] reliance on an Enlightenment strategy of demystification, of calling "things by their right names."'⁵⁸ But, as Richard De Ritter has argued, this is often simultaneously a process of re-mystification, as familiar ideas and objects are recast as sources of wonder, so that the domestic sphere 'provid[es] children with the means of imagining themselves as citizens of the world.'⁵⁹

The interconnectivity between the individual volumes of *Lessons*, of *Hymns*, of *Evenings at Home* and John Aikin's *Calendar of Nature* (1784) both reflect and are products of the collaborationist approach to authorship recently discussed by Scott Krawczyk and Michelle Levy.⁶⁰ Intertextuality, though, extended beyond the Aikin-Barbauld circle; some of those writing after Barbauld made it quite clear that their own books were intended to be read in conjunction with, or as follow-ups to *Lessons* or

⁵⁷ John Aikin and Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Evenings at Home; or, The Juvenile Budget Opened. Consisting of a variety of Miscellaneous Pieces, for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Persons* (London: J. Johnson, 1792-1796), 1:31.

⁵⁸ Michelle Levy, 'The Radical Education of "Evenings at Home"', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19, nos. 1-2 (Fall 2006): 132.

⁵⁹ Richard De Ritter, 'Domesticating Wonder: Late Eighteenth-Century Writing for Children and the Home'. Paper delivered at The Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies Research Seminar, University of York, February 5, 2013.

⁶⁰ Krawczyk, *Romantic Literary Families*; Levy, *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture*.

*Hymns.*⁶¹ Barbauld's books for children thus formed a central part of the intertextual experience of early reading; their lines out to the physical world were supplemented by links with new books, forming a more integrated childhood canon. Many of these books reiterated the value of Barbauld's pedagogical approach. In Ellenor Fenn's *Lilliputian Spectacle*, for example, Miss Worthy writes to her brother of 'a young lady but a little older than [herself]' whose parents had ill-advisedly given her Shakespeare, rather than Barbauld, to read:

Miss *Thompson* and I walked into the garden; and she discovered so much ignorance about every thing around us, that I pitied her Mama's mistaken notions. Had she read Mrs. Barbauld's *Lessons* a few years since, she would have been acquainted with the origin of the Butterfly, whose beautiful painted wings I was admiring, whilst she repeated lines from *Shakespeare*, which she probably understood as little of as I did.⁶²

Again, *Lessons* furnishes the mind with things rather than words, and this in turn supports an inquisitiveness about things. *Lessons* is considered a preventative for affectation and wordiness; instead, it promotes the empirical observation of nature. In the dedicatory preface to *The Calendar of Nature*, Aikin applauds his sister for bringing about a paradigm shift in children's literature:

Though some of the warm admirers of your poetry have censured you for employing talents of so superior a kind in the composition of books for children, yet, I believe, that there are few parents who do not think themselves obliged to you for this condescension: and if you are ambitious of higher approbation, you may assure yourself of that of the genuine philosopher, who must agree with you in thinking, that to lay a foundation for such a structure as that of the human mind, cannot be an

⁶¹ For example, William Enfield [?], *A new sequel to Mrs. Barbauld's Lessons, adapted for children from four to seven years old* (London: G. Sael, 1796); *Pastoral Lessons and Parental Conversations: Intended as a companion to Mrs. Barbauld's Hymns in prose* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1797).

⁶² Mrs. Lovechild [Ellenor Fenn], *Lilliputian Spectacle de la nature: or, nature delineated* (London: John Marshall, 1790), 3:30-2.

ignoble employment. Nor have your services in this important design been confined to your own exertions. It has been partly from your example that others have been induced to consecrate respectable abilities to the same useful purpose; and the great superiority observable in the books for the instruction of children published within a few years past, to those of former periods, is owing to the superior literary rank of the authors.⁶³

Aikin's address to his sister underscores the political import of children's literature, its significance in the Enlightenment thinking of the 'genuine philosopher.' It also serves as a reminder of Barbauld's impact on the genre; Aikin suggests that she has ennobled a literary form hitherto considered beneath the talent of the 'superior' author. Many of these writers, of course, were women. On this subject, Laura Mandell writes that 'Even Trimmer, who repudiated radically egalitarian views, and Maria Edgeworth, who did not share her father's radical sympathies, were galvanized into professional authorship by the breath of egalitarian logic emanating from Barbauld's *Lessons* and later instances of the genre, a breath that was a breath only and thus did not require self-repudiation by women who were not "feminists."⁶⁴ I agree with Mandell that the ostensibly neutral politics of *Lessons* enabled women who were politically opposed to Barbauld to follow her 'new Walk.' Barbauld's books for young children, however, were not always considered apolitical. Pointing to the increasing distrust of Dissenters after the French Revolution, Emma Major writes that the emphasis on pleasure in *Hymns* accounts in part for Trimmer's anxiety about Barbauld's writing for children: 'Taste and pleasure in understanding God, though apparently ecumenical, are not neutral in Barbauld's children's books, but instrumental in the promotion of a new national religious character

⁶³ *The Calendar of Nature* (London: J. Johnson, 1784), iii-iv.

⁶⁴ Laura Mandell, 'Johnson's Lessons for Men: Producing the Professional Woman Writer'. *Wordsworth Circle* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2002), 111.

and a new vision of the British Protestant Church.⁶⁵ This anxiety seems to have been shared by Sir William Bolland, whose privately circulated poem of 1800 gives a hostile take on her pedagogy:

The purity of infants Barbauld stains,
Infusing her poison in their milky veins;
Taught in her youth a Priestley to admire,
And tune for him her puritanical lyre.⁶⁶

As suggested here, Barbauld's reputation came to be perceived amongst the establishment elite as bound up with that of Priestley. The transgressive enthusiasm associated with Priestley's brand of Dissent was considered, by Bolland at least, to have found an outlet through, not aside from, her children's writing.⁶⁷ While *Lessons* and *Hymns* are (quite appropriately) not written in the same voice as the radical political pamphlets *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790) and *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation* (1793), Barbauld's reputation in the 1790s might well have cast a retrospective shadow for some over her previous writing. It is important to keep in mind that the second-generation Romantic backlash against her writing, typified by Lamb's famous slur on the 'cursed Barbauld crew,' followed her demonization by conservatives during this period.

⁶⁵ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 223.

⁶⁶ Sir William Bolland, *The Campaign. To His Royal Highness the Duke of York. And Britannia in the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred. Addressed to the Honourable C. J. Fox. A Poem in Two Cantos* (London: T. Bensley, 1800), 50. Bolland (1771/2–1840) was a lawyer and book-collector, who ran for legal office in the City of London. W. P. Courtney, 'Bolland, Sir William (1771/2–1840)', rev. Hugh Mooney, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2797>, accessed 5 Oct 2013].

⁶⁷ Jon Mee notes that 'For all his stress on Reason as the core of Christian life, it was easy for Joseph Priestley to be represented as a throwback to the enthusiasts of the seventeenth century when he mixed religious prophecy with political radicalism.' In *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 34.

Enlightenment didacticism did not always negate or obstruct the transcendental potential of the child's imagination. In Barbauld's writing, close observation of the material world often serves as a springboard to the sublime, and the 'wonder' through which she transforms the particular and domestic helped shape what we now think of as Romanticism; as Daniel White has pointed out, 'the early romantic voice [...] emerged in no small degree from the particularities of late-eighteenth-century Dissent'.⁶⁸

Although *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), in particular Wordsworth's 'I am Six' and 'Anecdote for Fathers', is critical of the catechistic tradition Barbauld came to represent, her influence is markedly tangible elsewhere, especially in Coleridge's Unitarian period in the 1790s. Though addressed to his 'cradled infant' (his son, Hartley), 'Frost at Midnight' (1798) might be read as a paean to Barbauld. The first stanza of the poem contains a meditation on the relation between animated object and the 'idling Spirit' which 'makes a toy of Thought'.⁶⁹ Coleridge's ambivalence here about whether the mind is a passive or active entity seems to prefigure his later rejection of Hartleyanism, but it also recalls the imaginative play of Barbauld's 'sensible objects'. His nostalgia for the domestic education of his own infancy in the second stanza, when he and his sister were 'both clothed alike!', seems to echo Barbauld's 'To Dr. Aikin, on his complaining that she neglected him, October 1768', in which she remembers how 'hand in hand with innocence [they] stray'd'.⁷⁰ In his poem, Coleridge seems to joyfully anticipate for his son an education that unites Rousseauian and Barbauldian models, and his final published stanza strongly evokes the imagistic *Lessons* and *Hymns*:

⁶⁸ Daniel White, "'Properer for a Sermon': Particularities of Dissent and Coleridges Conversational Mode', *Studies in Romanticism*, Summer 2001, 198.

⁶⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Frost at Midnight'. in *Selected Poetry*, ed. Richard Holmes, (London: Penguin, 1996), 46.

⁷⁰ *Poems*, ed. McCarthy and Kraft, 18.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
 Whether the summer clothe the general earth
 With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
 Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch,
 Of mossy apple tree⁷¹

Coleridge ends his poem by ‘Quietly shining to the quiet Moon’,⁷² providing a further link with ‘A Summer Evening’s Meditation’, as has very recently been identified by Isobel Armstrong,⁷³ but there is also a hint here towards the Romantic ‘silencing of the female’ described by Richardson.⁷⁴ This is not, of course, to give validation to Barbauld’s writing – it is abundantly clear that she does not require one. Yet, it is worth remembering the role literary elitism against her writing for children has also occluded recognition of its influence on Coleridge and others. I depart now from Barbauld’s *Lessons* and *Hymns* to return briefly to her object poems. Again, Barbauld often assumes a particularly feminine mode in the production and gifting of these textual objects, and uses them to strengthen social bonds. They also communicate philosophical and political ideas, and this is intensified in those written for children.

Miniaturising Matters: the politics of ‘The Baby-House’

In some ways, ‘The Baby-House’ (*SPP*, 183-4) is an astonishingly radical children’s text. Composed at an unknown date and first published in the posthumous *Works* (1825), it moves from the topic of domesticity to childhood imagination; to a history

⁷¹ Coleridge, ‘Frost at Midnight’. 65.

⁷² Ibid., 66.

⁷³ Isobel Armstrong, ‘Anna Letitia Barbauld: A Unitarian Poetics?’, in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, ed. William McCarthy and Olivia Murphy, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 80.

⁷⁴ Richardson, ‘Silencing the Female: Romanticism and the Colonization of the Feminine’. in *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 81-92 .

lesson, offering a distilled primer for what Daniel Watkins identifies as her visionary, expansive perspective on history;⁷⁵ to pro-revolutionary sentiment, anti-imperialism, and republicanism. The poem acts to miniaturise global historical events, bringing them to the attention of a young girl, and insisting that these are issues both necessary and proper for her to know about. At the same time, it expands the domestic space to a monumental scale. It is a poem about gaining political perspective, about understanding large things by looking at small things, and as I hope to demonstrate, it seeks a material realisation of political change on a psychological level. I have been unable to ascertain whether the poem was written before or after *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812), Barbauld's most notoriously radical political poem, but, as I will argue, the parallels between the two are clear.

As a text that functions by referring out to physical objects, 'The Baby-House' engages in what I have been describing as a material application of associationist psychology. Presumably written for and given as a gift to Agatha, the young addressee of the poem, this richly complex piece of children's writing suggests the scope of Barbauld's pedagogic practice. It is likely, I think, that Barbauld taught along similar lines at Palgrave School, and later to her female students; indeed, this seems credible given the thematic links between 'The Baby-House' and 'Written on a Marble', which was likely written for the 'weekly chronicle' at Palgrave (*SPP*, 109). Bolland's privately circulated poem suggests that her political opponents suspected her of radicalising pedagogy; 'The Baby-House' shows that their fears were not entirely unjustified.

Barbauld's description of the doll's house, with its furnishings designed 'to give guests a treat', is suggestive of the inclusive domestic sociability which, for Barbauld, constituted an important mode of women's participation in public life. Her insistence on

⁷⁵ Daniel Watkins, *Visionary Poetics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

the value of the familial environment (both here and in *Lessons* and *Hymns*) accords with what White has described as Barbauld's 'determined and sustained attempt to 'domesticate' [...] rational Dissent.'⁷⁶ Her published and unpublished children's writing alike were means of disseminating this Dissenting vision. A doll's house would encourage the child's rehearsal of informal sociable exchange within the home; play is performative in this respect. The child would also be able, of course, to shape their own miniature domestic environment, physically manipulating the rooms and furniture, and perhaps engaging in their own domestic production. Objects in doll's houses may well have been created or embellished by children in playful re-enactment of work such as the fire-screens on which Barbauld wrote her poems 'To Dr. Aikin' and 'To Mrs. Aikin', discussed in the previous chapter. And as in her other writing for children, Barbauld encourages and participates in what Richard De Ritter has identified as an imaginative defamiliarisation of the domestic. The senses play a key role here in bringing about delight: her description of the 'hurry-scurry' sound of the fairies' feet is particularly evocative and playful. Barbauld then encourages actual physical play with the line 'you'll do well to try and find/ Tester⁷⁷ or ring they've left behind' (lines 7-8). In order to get an idea of what the toy may have looked like, I include images of a turn-of-the-century doll's house made for a girl named May Foster (Figures 4 and 5). Although the toy that belonged to Agatha might not have replicated such an opulent home, Foster's house is by no means elaborate compared to some. It is also valuable for this study because it is abundantly furnished, as is the one described in the poem.

⁷⁶ Daniel E. White, 'The "Joineriana": Anna Barbauld, the Aikin Family Circle, and the Dissenting Public Sphere'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 4 (Summer 1999), 515.

⁷⁷ A sixpence piece; a pertinent choice of object considering the financial themes in the poem.



Figure 4. May Foster's house, ca. 1800. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The imaginative expansion of spatial scale in the poem is mirrored by an expansive temporality: Barbauld stretches her history lesson back to the Egyptian pyramids. Like in *Lessons* and *Poems*, she renders the pyramid imaginistically, and the sense she gives of their size and weight also evokes the temporal weight of history on the land. She then moves swiftly back to pressing contemporary issues, with the contraction of time⁷⁸ in the words ‘he looks again’. Politically, the succeeding lines speak for themselves:

The peasant faints beneath his load,
 Nor tastes the grain his hands have sowed,
 While scarce a nation’s wealth avails
 To raise thy Baby-house, Versailles.
 And Baby-houses oft appear

⁷⁸ Jennifer Krusinger Martin comments that Barbauld’s ‘technique of contraction reorder[s] the space and time for conventionally and developmentally separate mediums: the public realm of national identification and reform, and the (seemingly) juvenile discourse of caterpillars and “Baby Houses”.’ *Raising a nation: Anna Letitia Barbauld as artistic and pedagogic mother of the romantic citizen*. Unpublished dissertation. Northeastern University, Department of English, January 01, 2010, 38.

On British ground, of prince or peer (lines 37-40)

This is radical imagery. Next, Barbauld depicts a tourist visiting a fallen and decrepit Britain, with the line ‘Trees, the pride of ages, fall’, prophesising the collapse of the establishment. She gives a condensed apocalyptic vision of the end of Britain’s imperialist power (*Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* in miniature) and then imagines a redistribution of the wealth gained from imperialism, the ‘treasured coins from distant lands’.

The final couplet of ‘The Baby-House’, ‘Then do not, Agatha, repine/ That cheaper Baby-house is thine’, recalls her suggestion elsewhere, for example in ‘To Dr. Aikin, on his Complaining’, that women’s exclusion from certain forms of public life is the basis of their virtue. I do not mean to gloss over the conservatism associated with this stance, but also want to resist the anachronism of projecting the values of modern-day feminism. As Harriet Guest has shown, Barbauld ‘represents the “household virtues” as continuous with and necessary to more obviously patriotic virtues because their privacy is the basis for an inclusive conception of the civic.’⁷⁹ The poem can certainly be read as a consolatory address to a young girl about not being able to own the world, but the closing words, the ‘cheaper Baby-house is thine’, call to mind Guest’s discussions of domesticity and the Habermasian public sphere in *Small Change*: for Barbauld, the little things make the big things. Further, it is a matter of no minor significance that what is surely Barbauld’s most political known output as a children’s writer is addressed to a girl. However, as we have seen, similar themes and techniques do appear in a story about boys, ‘Eyes and No Eyes’ in *Evenings at Home*, and in ‘Written on a Marble’. The deployment of the same miniaturising strategy across

⁷⁹ Guest, *Small Change*, 251.

Barbauld's children's writing, then, suggests a renegotiation of gendered distinctions in terms of the proper content, if not the precisely the same mode, of literature for boys and girls.



Figure 5. Toy book. May Foster's house, ca. 1800. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The domesticity of the opening lines of 'The Baby-House' is refunctioned in the closing lines, circumscribing and, I suggest, enabling the politics of the poem. Barbauld's curriculum is contained within this, progressing from an imaginative exercise, to geography and history, and then politics. The poem begins and ends, however, with the girl and the baby-house, which are arguably representative of women and home on a broader scale. The double valence of 'alone' in the lines 'But think not, Agatha, you own/ That toy, a Baby-house, alone' compounds the consolatory and yet celebratory address to the girl. Moreover, as I outlined in Chapter One, there are parallels between

Barbauld's addresses to women and Dissenters. To provide an alternative and more speculative reading of the closing lines, the somewhat stern 'Do not' might also suggest the child's dissatisfaction with the toy; perhaps this occasioned the poem. As doll's houses in the period often did, it might have replicated her own house, which may have been modest. Barbauld's insistence that she take 'joy' in the 'cheaper Baby-house', then, suggests conciliation on a individual level, as well, perhaps, as a reminder that Dissenters' virtue depends on their remaining satisfied with a middling financial status, rather than emulating the 'pomp and folly' of the establishment elite. Indeed, as we have seen, Barbauld expresses this same sentiment in her essay 'What is Education?'.

I will conclude this detour from *Lessons* and *Hymns* by returning to the opening lines of 'The Baby-House'. Barbauld's gift to Agatha of 'joy' to accompany the baby-house suggests that quotidian and domestic sensible objects are in fact of great significance to human happiness, and she implies too that her writing for children (she begins '*I give you joy*'⁸⁰) is of also of high value – even (perhaps especially) if unpublished, and 'given' without remuneration. This approaches Rosenbaum and Keane's arguments on the materiality and gift-economy of Barbauld's object poems, which I discussed in the previous chapter. I have termed 'The Baby-House' an object poem even though, since I have been unable to ascertain its physical existence, it seems to have been given to accompany the object it refers to. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the poem was still an object. Perhaps, as the published typography seems to suggest, it was written on a miniature scroll, like 'The Mouse's Petition', or even in a book similar to the one shown in Figure 5. In the poem, as in the toy itself, big things have been brought down to a miniature scale, but, as I have argued, Barbauld's own politics are writ large.

⁸⁰ Emphasis added.

Lessons and *Hymns* do not approach the outspoken radicalism of ‘The Baby-House’. Barbauld’s political publications and her association with Priestley, then, were probably at the root of Bolland’s antipathy, but his assault on her ‘puritanical lyre’ also hints at an underlying paradox for liberal Dissenters. An anonymous contemporary of Barbauld seems to have acknowledged the tension between the Dissenting value of freedom of belief and the need to give children a religious education. In her preface to a children’s adaptation of Isaac Watts’ *Hymns*, E. Y. writes that the purpose of her book is not ‘to retain the child in any sect or body of Christians, but because from these considerations he will see the harmony and sufficiency of revelation, and become a Christian and a Protestant from the rational conviction of his own mind, and not from blind or implicit confidence in others.’⁸¹ Of course, this ‘rational’ Christianity is itself a function of Dissent, as well as the condition upon which depended the suitability of Watts’ hymns for any household, Anglican or Dissenting. The neutrality of *Lessons* and *Hymns* is also crucial to the success of Barbauld’s aims; her neutrality is strategic, and is typical of her pragmatic, moderate, yet expansive vision of Dissent. This might also be said of her stance on gender – by refusing to explicitly tie her pedagogy to either Dissent or her gender, Barbauld’s writing nevertheless constituted a significant cultural and social achievement for Dissenters and women. In the final part of this chapter, I discuss Barbauld’s argument for both the necessity and the propriety of instilling ideas in children. As I suggest, however, this argument is counterbalanced by an acute awareness of the limits of educational theory, and indeed of educational practice.

⁸¹ E. Y., ‘Preface’, in *Dr. Watts’s hymns and moral songs for the use of children, revised and altered by a lady. To which are added, prayers for the use of children*, by Issac Watts (London: n.p., 1791), vii-viii.

Prejudice and the limits of education

Barbauld's epistemology, though distinct from Priestley's, was certainly influenced by that of her friend. Associationism, for Barbauld, is 'that great law on which the power of memory entirely depends',⁸² and this comes across quite clearly in *Lessons* and *Hymns*, both of which were shaped to a great extent by this belief. As I have already indicated, Barbauld's educational thought was also influenced by her experience of teaching children, and this experience brought with it an understanding of how minds are bound to be shaped by circumstances beyond the educator's control. As her essay 'On Prejudice' (1800) suggests, Barbauld's attempts to 'impress on [the] mind[s]' of her pupils at Palgrave the 'sentiments of patriotism—the civic affection' may very well have been hindered by the 'party sentiments and connections' of their parents (*SPP*, 340). Perhaps Charles's adolescence also had a part to play in her cautionary words here that 'the growth of [a child's] reason and the development of his powers will lead him with a sudden impetus to examine every thing, to canvass every thing, to suspect every thing', until 'he will rather feel disinclined to any opinion you profess, and struggle to free himself from the net which you have wove about him' (*SPP*, 343).

In 'On Prejudice', Barbauld argues that an education entirely free of prejudice ('pre-judging' prior to empirical observation—the great bugbear of Enlightenment thinkers, most notably Rousseau) is both impossible and undesirable. Curiously, Barbauld's insistence on the limits of education stems from the selfsame theory that underpins *Lessons* and *Hymns*:

it is, in truth, the most absurd of all suppositions that a human being can be educated, or even nourished and brought up, without imbibing

⁸² 'Essay on Akenside's Poem on the *Pleasures of Imagination*'. in *The Pleasures of Imagination*, by Mark Akenside (London: Cadell and Davies, 1796), 26.

numberless prejudices from every thing which passes around him. A child cannot learn the signification of words without receiving ideas along with them; he cannot be impressed with affection to his parents and those about him, without conceiving a predilection for their tastes, opinions, and practices. He forms numberless associations of pain or pleasure, and every association begets a prejudice; he sees objects from a particular spot, and his views of things are contracted or extended according to his position in society; as no two individuals can have the same horizon, so neither can two have the same associations; and different associations will produce different opinions, as necessarily as, by the laws of perspective, different distances will produce different appearances of visible objects (*SPP*, 338).

Content will eventually be re-evaluated and, quite possibly, rejected, as young people's rational powers reach maturity. At this point, attempts to assert control over their beliefs will be futile; the 'mind must now form itself' (*SPP*, 343). This does not, however, undermine Barbauld's belief in the necessity for early rational education; in fact, the questioning of authority is itself embedded in the rhetoric of her writing for children. As we have seen, 'Things By Their Right Names' and 'Travellers' Wonders' encourage young people to interrogate established thinking, but *Lessons* is the first step in laying the groundwork for this cognitive ability. As Laura Mandell puts it, '*Lessons for Children* is nothing if not a primer exhibiting various thought processes.' Mandell also highlights the importance of associationist psychology in *Lessons*, noting Priestley's influence, and points out that '*Lessons* teaches children to actively order the associations they receive, and thereby habituate themselves to logical thinking.'⁸³ Although Barbauld's purpose in *Hymns* is to 'impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind', even here she encourages the child to be active, rather than passive, in its own education, to 'reverence [its] own mind', to 'cherish it', and 'feed it with the truth, nourish it with knowledge' (*SPP*, 238, 253-54). Barbauld's pedagogy thus encourages and enables the eventual questioning of all systems, including her own.

⁸³ Mandell, 'Johnson's Lessons for Men'. 110.

The final volume of *Lessons*, aimed at children from three to four years old, begins, ‘Charles, here are more stories for you,—stories about good boys, and naughty boys, and silly boys; for you know what it is to be good now.’⁸⁴ Charles is now ready to read ‘connected stor[ies]’, and is able to understand moral narratives because the proper ideas have been attached to the abstract notion ‘good’.⁸⁵ What counts as good or bad has certainly been prescribed in accordance with what is, as Sarah Robbins points out, ‘a teaching philosophy promoting (and helping define) middle-class values as founded in at-home education.’⁸⁶ Yet this lesson does not end with a judgement on which boy is good; instead, Charles is asked to decide ‘which [he] love[s] best.’ Figuring the child as an active participant in dialogic exchange and in physical acts such as play and scientific observation of the natural world, Barbauld signals her departure from the catechistic method with which the works have often been associated. This puts some pressure on Alan Richardson’s argument that Barbauld conceptualized the child ‘as a kind of text’;⁸⁷ her method is not predicated on the child’s passivity, but rather on the fundamental interconnectivity of the mind and its surroundings.

Although her pedagogic writing has occasionally been viewed as a deviation from a poetic output deemed to be of greater merit, Barbauld clearly considered early education to be a matter of the highest consequence, insisting that ‘to plant the first idea in a human mind, can be no dishonour to any hand.’⁸⁸ She thought of children as

⁸⁴ *Lessons for Children from Three to Four* (1788), 3-4.

⁸⁵ *Lessons for Children, from Two to Three* (1787), 3.

⁸⁶ Sarah Robbins, ‘Lessons for Children and Teaching Mothers: Mrs. Barbauld’s Primer for the Textual Construction of Middle-Class Domestic Pedagogy’. *The Lion and the Unicorn* 17, no. 2 (December 1993): 142.

⁸⁷ Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 128.

⁸⁸ *Lessons for Children from Two to Three*, 4. Samuel Johnson admired Barbauld’s early poetry, but was dismissive of her pedagogic work: she “was an instance of early cultivation, but in what did it terminate? In marrying a little Presbyterian parson, who keeps an infant boarding-school, so that all her employment now is, ‘To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer’” (James Boswell,

'callow chiefs and embryo statesmen';⁸⁹ their education was a powerful means of effecting political change. Her emphasis on the significance of the first sensory experiences of a child's life puts her in line with other Dissenters, who considered the particulars of the education of children to be of utmost importance. Priestley's belief in associationism's suitability towards such implementation is clear from his insistence that 'the most important application of Dr. Hartley's doctrine of the association of ideas is to *the conduct of human life*, and especially the business of *education*'.⁹⁰ Because the education of the individual is a central practice of the Dissenting political vision, Barbauld's children's literature should be seen, not as a retreat from the world, but rather as an engagement with it. Associationist psychology is crucial to the Dissenting philosophy of these works, as well as their pedagogic aims. While it is clear that Barbauld did not wholeheartedly subscribe to Hartley's belief that 'children may be formed or moulded as we please',⁹¹ it is equally clear that her pedagogy did make a lasting impression on the minds of her readers. Her teaching not only had a profound influence on the individual lives of those she taught at Palgrave, but also went some way towards vindicating her belief in education as a means of bringing about political reform.⁹² Barbauld's *Lessons* and *Hymns* were read and enjoyed by generations of children; their combination of psychological theory and familiar images from everyday life not only epitomized Enlightenment thinking about the relations between mind and

Life of Johnson: Together with Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides and Johnson's Diary of a Journey into North Wales, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. L. F. Powell, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934- 64, rpt 1971, 2: 408.

⁸⁹ Barbauld, 'The Invitation'. line 83, *SPP*, 52.

⁹⁰ Priestley, *Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry*, xiii. Original emphasis.

⁹¹ *Observations on Man*, 2:453.

⁹² For an account of the careers of Palgrave alumni, which included political reformers such as Thomas Denman, see William McCarthy, 'The Celebrated Academy at Palgrave: A Documentary History of Anna Letitia Barbauld's School'. *The Age of Johnson* 8 (1997), 317-23.

world, but, as I have suggested, also provided a means of moving ideas out into the world.

3. Sense and social reform: Hannah More's Mendip ministry

In June 1791, a notice appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as postscript to a contribution by the Anglican clergyman and antiquary John Elderton:

That great friend to literature, Mrs. Montague, of Portman-square, has lately presented to Miss Hannah More an urn, to the memory of Mr. Locke, to be erected at Wrington, in this county, the place of his nativity. The inscription is very plain, and runs thus:

To JOHN LOCKE,
born in this village,
this memorial is erected
by Mrs. MONTAGU,
and presented to
HANNAH MORE¹

While it was far from unusual for Montagu's acts of patronage to attract such publicity, her gift of this object to More and the correspondence about it are particularly revealing. The report was published just a few days after the urn's initial installation in the garden at Cowslip Green, More's home at Wrington, before Montagu had sent payment to the sculptor commissioned with the work.² In a subsequent letter, Montagu lightly chides More for allowing news of the gift to spread prematurely: 'I fear', she writes, 'you have made me incur the blame of the artificer, who must think me forgetful of the debts I owe, and the honour and pleasure I receive.'³ As the slippage in language here suggests,

¹ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1791, 511.

² Nicholas D. Smith, *The Literary Manuscripts and Letters of Hannah More* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2008), 108.

³ Montagu to More, 1791. William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 1:371. In her reply to Montagu, More denies responsibility for the report, and conjectures that 'someone who saw it in the Artificer's yard at Bath gave this premature publication.' More to Montagu, 14 August 1791, MSS MO 4002, Elizabeth Montagu Papers, Huntington Library, California. Cited in Nicholas D. Smith, *The Literary Manuscripts and Letters of Hannah More*, 108.

the transaction combined elements of commodity and gift exchange; Montagu's articulation of the 'honour and pleasure' she receives in return for her expense highlights the commerciality of her patronage, as well as its affectional aspects. The urn's valence can be partially determined by its role in solidifying socio-economic ties, but its exchange was also a cultural and political statement. By giving this object, Montagu asserts her authority as a participant in the conservative appropriation of Enlightenment philosophy More was seeking to effect. I argue in this chapter that the project of reforming Locke was central to More's written, embodied and material practice from the early 1790s onwards. The urn marks the start of the struggle of (and increasingly between) two loyalist women seeking to wrest possession of the liberal Locke from republican hands.⁴

Memorialising the philosopher in neoclassical form, the 'very plain' inscription befitting his epistemology of 'simple ideas of sense', the gift gave material expression to Locke's standing amongst Bluestocking women. Once dominant over the urn itself, the inscription is now only faintly legible (Figures 6 and 7), but its arrangement of the three names, each in capitals, is intriguing: the titled 'Mrs Montagu' appears between the full untitled names of John Locke and Hannah More, placing the latter two in visual symmetry with each other and suggesting Montagu's role as mediator. These choices are in part commonplace to the genre, and contribute to the stately aesthetic of the memorial, but they are also peculiarly reflexive. The object seems to call attention to its very materiality: the capitalisation of 'Memorial' heightens its formality by recalling

⁴ For a summary overview of Locke's politics see Alex Tuckness, 'Locke's Political Philosophy'. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/locke-political/> (accessed March 2, 2014). On Locke's liberalism, see Ruth Grant, *John Locke's Liberalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010) and Martin Seliger, *The Liberal Politics of John Locke* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968).

earlier spelling history, but might also gesture towards Locke's epistemological, as well as typographical distinction of the object.⁵

⁵ The capitalisation of nouns fell sharply from fashion in English printed books from the mid eighteenth century. See N. E. Osselton, 'Spelling-Book Rules and the Capitalization of Nouns in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries'. in *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English, for John Gerritsen*, ed. Mary-Jo Arn and Hanneke Wirtjes, 49-61 (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhof, 1985).



Figure 6. *Urn to John Locke*, Barley Wood, Somerset. Masonry in Bath Stone.



Figure 7. Inscription, *Urn to John Locke*.

The urn and its inscription boldly proclaimed Montagu's taste and intellectualism, concretising the union of commerce and culture that typified the Bluestockings' model of elite sociability. This distinct combination had been exemplified in More's poem *The Bas Bleu; or, Conversation*. Composed in 1783 and privately circulated before its publication in 1786, the poem represents Bluestocking conversation, in Harriet Guest's phrase, as 'feminine sociable currency',⁶ the intrinsic value of which is in putting Enlightenment philosophy to 'use'. More draws at once from Smithian economics, Lockean educational philosophy and Humean aesthetics in her eulogy:

Let Education's moral mint
The noblest images imprint;
Let Taste her curious touchstone hold,
To try if standard be the gold;
But 'tis thy commerce, Conversation,
Must give it use by circulation;
That noblest commerce of mankind,
Whose precious merchandize is MIND!⁷

Like the urn, *The Bas Bleu* embodies and celebrates the commerce of Enlightenment ideas within the Bluestocking circle. Both objects of exchange provided opportunities for polite philosophical discussion in private and domestic environments that were also significant cultural and political spaces.⁸ Such gifts were aimed towards strengthening the intellectual friendship between Bluestockings; as Elizabeth Eger states, 'Female friendship and professional support were vital components in establishing the bluestockings as a group who cultivated intellectual conversation about literature,

⁶ Guest, *Small Change*, 191.

⁷ More, 'The Bas Bleu: or, Conversation', in *Florio: A Tale, for Fine Gentlemen and Fine Ladies: and, The Bas Bleu: or, Conversation* (London: T. Cadell, 1786), 82-3.

⁸ In 1818 More welcomed two Persian travellers to Barley Wood, who were reportedly 'delighted at seeing Locke's urn'. *Letters of Hannah More to Zachary Macaulay, Esq.*, ed. Arthur Roberts (London: James Nisbet, 1860), 107. Also see Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 99.

history and politics.⁹ Indeed, that Elderton anticipated public interest in the urn suggests the extent to which the exchange of Enlightenment ideas between Montagu and More contributed to a sense of national literary culture and philosophical heritage. The poem and urn, however, also provide early indications of the divergence between the two women's views on the uses of philosophy. In her poem, More implies that the value of philosophical exchange is limited without wider 'use by circulation', embracing 'mankind' more generally. The real 'end' of conversation, More goes on to assert, is 'not to indulge in idle vision', but to unify 'sense and learning', and 'thence produce / What tends to practice and to use' (ll. 324-9). As we shall see, this formed the *modus operandi* of the evangelical ministry More developed over the coming decades. Her philosophical thought found new, sensory forms of translation as she turned away from elite sociability zealously to devote her attention to social and religious reform. Given at a decisive period in this process, the gift of the urn appears an assertion of Montagu's intellectualism, and a friendly reminder to More of her debt to the 'Queen of the Blues'.

In terms of the economies it defines and the philosophical tradition it memorialises, Locke's urn bears complex relations with More's own practices of exchange. This chapter discusses how More's material and textual applications of Lockean associationism, as related to but clearly distinguishable from Montagu's, were fundamental to her evangelical project of social reform. It centres on More's charitable work in the Sunday schools and women's clubs she established and managed with her sister, Martha 'Patty' More from 1789, and demonstrates that from this time onwards, More worked with increasing determination to appropriate sense-based psychology for

⁹ Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 60.

her evangelical cause. I begin by showing that although her Sunday schools followed a ‘limited and strict’ curriculum, she promoted relatively progressive Enlightenment pedagogic techniques, which in turn informed her ‘superintendence’ over working-class adults and propagandist tracts. I draw on anthropological perspectives on gift relations in my discussion of her ministry to the bodies and minds of the poor, and discuss the role of the senses in her closely structured socio-religious events in the Mendips. I suggest that More sought to unite scientific and medical thought with Christianity’s ‘daily bread’,¹⁰ increasingly figuring herself as apothecary to the nation in her writings. I argue that More forwarded a distinctly material psychology, and offer an interdisciplinary reassessment of her ‘vital religion’ to shed new light on the class and gender politics of her writing.

Lockean education in the Mendip schools

In 1788, Hannah and Martha More visited Sarah Trimmer’s pioneering school at Brentford and the following year opened their first Sunday school in Cheddar.¹¹ Instigated in part by William Wilberforce and principally funded by him, the school was the first step in More’s mission to bring ‘vital religion’ to bear on the lives of individuals in rural Somerset.¹² Wilberforce had been appalled by the conditions of the poor he encountered during a visit to Cowslip Green in August 1789, and his entreaty

¹⁰ ‘Still have these ready hands th’ afflicted fed,/ And minister’d to Want her daily bread?’. Hannah More, ‘Reflections of King Hezekiah, in His Sickness’, in *Sacred dramas: chiefly intended for young persons: the subjects taken from the Bible. To which is added, Sensibility, a poem*, (London: T. Cadell, 1782), 259.

¹¹ Stott, *Hannah More*, 105.

¹² After first meeting in 1787, More’s friendship with Wilberforce was rapidly solidified by their shared commitment to anti-slavery campaign; her alliance with him and other members of the Clapham Sect was a crucial means of support for the Mendip schools. See chapters 4 and 5 of Stott, *Hannah More*.

that ‘something must be done for Cheddar’ was met with swift action: towards the end of September, Hannah and Martha set off from Bristol to make their initial investigations.¹³ They were alarmed at the inadequacy of local Church ministry – the incumbent clergyman lived in Oxford and the curate twelve miles away, and Martha More relates in her journal that there was ‘as much knowledge of Christ in the interior of Africa as there is to be met with in this wretched, miserable place.’¹⁴ Immediately setting to work, the Mores secured premises for the school, and following Trimmer’s model annexed to it a ‘School of Industry’, hoping to engage children in the paid labour of knitting, sewing and spinning.¹⁵ Unable to compete with local manufacturers, this project was soon restricted to spinning worsted for stocking makers in nearby Axminster, but the sisters were encouraged by the early success of Mrs Baber, their appointed teacher at the Sunday school.¹⁶ In a letter to Wilberforce, More reports jubilantly that ‘Upwards of thirty said the Catechism perfectly, forty could sing three psalms, and several great girls were beginning to know something of the Scriptures; the face of the village much changed; not a child to be found on the cliffs on a Sunday; the church gradually filling.’¹⁷ Whether or not she overstated these figures, her enumerations make clear that More envisaged the school as a quantifiably effective

¹³ Martha More, *Mendip Annals: or, a Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More in their Neighbourhood*, ed. Arthur Roberts (London: James Nisbet, 1859), 13.

¹⁴ Ibid.,

¹⁵ Sarah Trimmer, *The Economy of Charity; or, an Address to the Ladies concerning Sunday-Schools; The Establishment of Schools of Industry Under Female Inspection; And the Distribution of Voluntary Benefactions* (London: T. Bensley for T. Longman, G. G. and J. Robinson and J. Johnson, 1787). Trimmer recommends school beneficiaries purchase spinning wheels and train children to produce linen for their middle class neighbours, as she had at her school at Brentford, even providing a plate with a diagram of the machine and instructions for its use.

¹⁶ *Mendip Annals*, 23.

¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

means of physical and social containment, as well as religious indoctrination.¹⁸ Over the following decade, the Mores established five other schools in the area, at Shipham, Rowberrow, Nailsea, Blagdon, and Wedmore.

The Mendip schools contributed to a rapidly expanding social phenomenon in the late eighteenth-century Britain.¹⁹ At the same time as engaging children in mechanistic physical employment, Sunday schools reinforced class distinctions by circumscribing working-class access to a ‘world of letters’ through which, according to Habermas, the reading public gains ‘clarity about itself’.²⁰ Like others in the Sunday school movement, More’s educational paradigm was based on a rigid class-based system that sought to control literacy while paradoxically contributing to its democratisation.²¹ In an effort to contain this problem, the curriculum at the Mendip Schools was, in More’s words, ‘very limited and strict’²² – ‘*I allow of no writing for the poor*. My object is not to make fanatics, but to train up the lower classes in habits of

¹⁸ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991). Thompson’s book has been hugely influential in shaping conceptions of the Sunday school movement as a tool for the repression of the poor.

¹⁹ Thomas Walter Laqueur charts the meteoric rise of the Sunday school in *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). Unlike Thompson, Laqueur considers the schools to have been both a product of middle-class reformism and working-class culture, a view which Malcolm Dick contests in Malcolm Dick, ‘The Myth of the Working-Class Sunday School’. *History of Education* 9, no. 1 (1980): 27-41. For a recent account of the influence of charity schools in the development of education in Britain see Mary G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), 51.

²¹ The problem of the democratisation of literacy in More’s engagement with popular print culture has been ably discussed by a number of scholars. See, for example, Kevin Gilmartin, ‘“Study to be Quiet”: Hannah More and the Invention of Conservative Culture in Britain’. *ELH* 70 (Summer 2003): 493-540 and Mark Philp, ‘Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3’. *English Historical Review*, February 1995: 42-69.

²² *Mendip Annals*, ed. Roberts, Arthur, 2nd ed. (London: Nisbet, 1859), 6. More echoes Trimmer: ‘It is [...] generally thought injurious to excite an emulation in *Charity Boys* to write a fine hand, and, unless they are intended for teachers in schools, this certainly had better be avoided’. *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools*, (London, 1792), 20-1.

industry and piety.²³ Accordingly, More produced her own texts and carefully selected those of others for use in the classroom:

The only books we use are two little tracts called ‘Questions for the Mendip Schools,’ [...] Church Catechism (these are hung up in frames, half-a-dozen in a room), the Catechism broke into short questions, Spelling-books, Psalters, Common Prayer-book, and Bible. The little ones learn Watts’ Hymns for Children—they repeat the Collect every Sunday. In some of the schools a plain printed sermon and a printed prayer are read in the evening to the grown-up scholars and parents, and a psalm is sung.²⁴

More’s *Questions and Answers for the Mendip and Sunday Schools* (1800), which she refers to here, is a particularly oppressive catechistic text, with all the mechanistic, prescribed ‘pseudo-talk’²⁵ of the format, and an emphasis on obedience and the correction of children’s ‘wicked ways’: ‘Are we able to do anything of ourselves? No, for we are by nature children of wrath.’²⁶ In comparison to Barbauld’s *Hymns*, the language and syntax are complex, and abstract concepts are left unexplained and uncontextualised: ‘Why is he called our Redeemer and Saviour? Because he continually intercedes for us at the right hand of God.’²⁷ Unlike Barbauld, the inculcation of Anglican scripture, rather than ‘devotional taste’, appears paramount.²⁸ However, although she uses less emphatically sensuous language than Barbauld, More maintained shrewd attention to the senses in her management of the schools.

²³ Letter to the bishop of Bath and Wells, 1801. *The Letters of Hannah More*, ed. Reginald Brimley Johnson (London: John Lane, 1925), 183. Original emphasis.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Gary Kelly, ‘Revolution, Reaction, and the Expropriation of Popular Culture: Hannah More’s Cheap Repository’. *Man and Nature* 6 (1987), 152.

²⁶ *Questions and Answers for the Mendip and Sunday Schools*, Fourteenth edition. (Bath, 1800), 9.

²⁷ Ibid., 7.

²⁸ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 221.

Forerunners for her propagandist *Village Politics* and *Cheap Repository Tracts*, the publications attached to the schools were aimed at countervailing popular and radical print culture among the poor they were educating. According to the editor of *Works*, More and her sister

considered that, by means of Sunday Schools, multitudes were now taught to read, who would be exposed to be corrupted by all the ribaldry and profaneness of loose songs, vicious stories, and especially by the new influx of corruption arising from jacobinical and atheistical pamphlets; and that it was a bounden duty to counteract such temptations.²⁹

Counteracting temptation, however, involved a certain degree of approximation. More recognised that banishing sensory pleasure from the schools would be counter-productive; in a letter to Wilberforce she expresses her opinion that ‘whatever makes them hate Sunday is wrong.’³⁰ While the aims and curricula of the schools were austere, then, teaching methods were relatively progressive. Like Barbauld, More followed Locke in promoting the use of visual aids and ‘plain’ print, and insisted that teachers ‘make [learning] pleasant by cheerful manners, by striking out a hymn when labour had been long continued, and by avoiding corporeal punishment.’³¹ Although she does not seem to have used Barbauld’s children’s books in her schools, opting for the less controversial, but still Dissenting Isaac Watts,³² More’s sensory approach to education in many ways resembles that of Barbauld, whom she knew and respected.³³ Indeed, as

²⁹ Hannah More, *The Works of Hannah More* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1801) 375-6.

³⁰ More to Wilberforce [1792 or 1793]. William Wilberforce Letters, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Cited in Stott, *Hannah More*, 124.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² As Major has shown, however, Trimmer increasingly regarded Watts as dangerous in the 1790s, a period of growing hostility towards Dissenters. See *Madam Britannia*, 222.

³³ More praises Barbauld in her poem ‘Sensibility’: ‘My verse thy talents to the world shall teach,/ And praise the genius it despairs to reach.’ Hannah More, *Sacred Dramas: chiefly*

Emma Major's study shows, and this chapter continues to detail, the distinctions between More and Dissenters like Barbauld are often subtler than might be imagined.³⁴

Along with a growing number of educationalists in the late eighteenth century, More recognised the limitations of the catechistic method, but rather than eschewing the form altogether, or significantly reshaping it as Barbauld had, she encouraged teachers themselves to give greater animation to the process of religious instruction. In one of her letters in *Mendip Annals*, More defensively explains that

A few plain things [...], well digested, appear to me more useful than long, dry, tedious explanations, which, though they may be learned as a task, yet, if they are not made lively and interesting, the children will not delight in it. The grand subject of instruction with me is the Bible itself [...]. To infuse a large quantity of Scripture into their minds, with plain, practical comments in the way of conversation, is the means which I have found, under Providence, instrumental in forming the principles and directing the hearts of youth.³⁵

Casting herself as an 'instrument' of God engaged in ministering spiritual food to the poor, More prescribes pleasant and familiar conversation with the strictly Anglican objective of 'infusing' otherwise 'dry' and unpalatable Scriptural knowledge. The passage might recall Barbauld's use of Locke's *Concerning Education* with its observation on the efficacy of 'delight' in religious instruction, as well as her innovative inscription of familiar conversation in *Lessons for Children* (1778-1779). It should be

intended for young persons: the subjects taken from the Bible. To which is added, Sensibility, a poem (London: T. Cadell, 1782), 172.

³⁴ Major, *Madam Britannia*. In a letter to More, Barbauld herself outlines their similarities and suggests the limits of their correspondence, in both metaphorical and literal senses: 'If any one were to ask me whether Miss More & Mrs. Barbauld correspond, I should say, we correspond I hope in sentiments, in inclinations, in affection, but with the pen I really cannot say we do.' Though her private respect for More was returned, Barbauld's reputation as a Dissenter made her a dubious correspondent; More's annotation to the manuscript letter reads, 'This clever woman was alas! a socinian!!'. Barbauld to More, 22 May [no year], MISC 4132: from Palgrave. New York, Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, New York Public Library.

³⁵ More to unnamed correspondent, *Mendip Annals*, 8.

noted here that teachers employed by More also largely shaped practices in the schools, particularly Mrs Baber at Cheddar. More seems keen to emphasise her first-hand experience of Sunday school teaching, obscuring Baber's work even as she claims humble subservience to 'Providence', but as I explain towards the end of this chapter, her *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-1798) suggest that Baber provided a crucial socio-linguistic link between More and the Mendip poor.

More's activity in the Mendips had a considerable impact on her political writing, but it was also an expansionist endeavour in its own right. Through their Sunday schools, she and her sister sought to diffuse religious knowledge into the family circle via their auxiliaries; Martha More registers particular complacency in reporting that 'A girl about fourteen had requested Mrs Baber to lend her a Prayer-book to take home, and she could then read prayers to her father and mother, as well as say her own; and it is a most comfortable fact that this child has brought her ignorant parents to attend her family prayer.'³⁶ As I now show, More conceptualised the domestic aspects of evangelical reform as distinctly social in embodiment. Her efforts to extend 'vital religion' through interpersonal relations in the Mendip communities were (in today's terms) an externalisation of the associationist model of the mind, a material psychology she conceived of as both profoundly practical and spiritually transformative.

The Mendip feasts and social association

Sensory and material incentives played an important role in the running of the Mendip schools and clubs, and in spite of themselves the Mores repeatedly resorted to bribery to

³⁶ *Mendip Annals*, 47.

promote peaceful compliance among children and adult attendees; as More admits in a letter to Wilberforce, ‘bribes are necessary’.³⁷ In growing recognition of the utility of physical pleasure in coaxing children towards religious instruction, they established an annual feast in the area. As Martha More relates in a journal entry of 3 July 1791, ‘the prospect of the feast [...] was a charm so captivating, that it procured many a task to be learned with pleasure, for the sake of obtaining one good dinner.’³⁸ Her animated account of the inaugural ‘Mendip Feast’ gives an idea of the scale of the enterprise, and is evocative enough of the sensory aspects of the event to invite lengthy inclusion:

We left Cowslip Green in the morning, with some friends, mounted in a wagon, dressed out with greens, flowers, &c. Another followed with the servants, thirteen large pieces of beef, forty-five great plum-puddings, six hundred cakes, several loaves, and a great cask of cider. The children by order were concealed in a valley, whilst all the preparations were making, such as railing in a large piece of ground, and placing the dinner upon the grass to the best advantage. In the meantime we were arranging the children below. At the sound of the horn, the procession began. A boy of the best character carried a little flag; we walked next, then Ma’am Baber, followed by the Cheddar children, and so on according to seniority; all the schools, one after another, singing psalms. Upwards of four thousand people were assembled to see this interesting sight. After marching round our little railing, all were seated in pairs as they walked. The dinner was then carved, and each child had laid at his feet a large slice of beef, another of plum-pudding, and a cake. The instant they were served, all arose, and six clergymen, who were present, said grace. All were again seated, and were permitted to eat as much as their stomachs would hold, and talk as fast as their tongues would go. When the children were properly feasted, and the company had regaled themselves with their leavings, grace was said again, when some little examination into their acquirements took place. One girl could repeat twenty-four chapters, another fifteen; and many questions put to them, which were answered to the satisfaction of the company, and to the credit of the children. As the design of the day was to prove to them the possibility of being *merry and wise*, we all joined in singing “God save the King,” and amusing them by a little mirthful chat. At four o’clock all the pleasure was over, and the children marched out of the circle in the order they

³⁷ More to Wilberforce [1892 or 1793], William Wilberforce Letters, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Cited Stott, *Hannah More*, 115.

³⁸ Martha More, *Mendip Annals: or, a Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More in their Neighbourhood*, ed. Arthur Roberts (London: James Nisbet, 1859), 36.

entered, each school headed by their master and mistress, singing psalms and hallelujahs, till they were lost in the valley. Thus were five hundred and seventeen children, and three hundred others, made happy, and really feasted for the sum of £15.

The passage conveys a sense of the delight Martha More took in her charitable work.

An effort to bring real enjoyment and happiness to the children, and calculated as a powerful inducement to Anglican worship, the feast was a means of establishing a psychological association between active religion and sensory pleasure, while bringing individuals from village communities together into religious association. As Stott states, the feasts ‘were attempts to help people identify with their parish churches, and to promote solidarity between classes and neighbourhoods, a particularly important consideration in the ideologically charged 1790s.’³⁹ The representation in *The Mendip Annals* of the local poor as a ‘savage’ people does not, of course, mean that they were in fact isolated – at least not from each other. Indeed, that More used her annual speech to the Shipham club in 1794 to denounce women who gossiped together and enjoyed organised events such as ‘licentious dancing-matches’ and ‘lewd plays’ in neighbouring towns suggests that this was far from the truth.⁴⁰ In the feast, as in the classroom, ‘delight’ played an important role; though structured by ceremony and ritual, the event allowed for a degree of permissiveness towards the children, included elements drawn from secular festivals, and incorporated a single loyalist song to cautiously promote joint and embodied patriotic expression.

In addition to providing a meal for the Sunday school children, it brought opportunities for social interaction between More, her teachers, and ministers. It remains unclear who made up the remaining majority of the three hundred adults

³⁹ Stott, *Hannah More*, 114.

⁴⁰ *Mendip Annals*, 112.

Martha More refers to here – parents, perhaps? – and she makes no mention of those who carried out the bulk of the work, but the realisation of such an event, the physical labour involved in cooking and transporting the food, must have been a major effort. The Mendip feasts were meant to bring such individuals together into Christian association, through which their activity could be monitored and contained, but even such closely regulated loyalist gatherings could provoke anxiety about the association of the poor. More herself feared that the event might become a site of unrest – the passage above suggests that it was a draw for adult parishioners who, according to the More sisters, came in thousands to witness the spectacle. The numbers of spectators in their two accounts differ slightly and are perhaps exaggerated: Martha reports that there were ‘upwards of four thousand’ people watching, while Hannah reckons on five thousand. Neither sister gives indication of why these outsiders came, whether to watch the procession or the eating, but whatever their real number and intentions, it was enough to make More ‘very uneasy [...] lest it should disturb the decorum of the festivity.’⁴¹

The threat of the mob aside, however, it is clear that there was a political aspect to such events, as manifested by the loyalist song – an embodied communication of political sentiment.⁴² In this respect, More’s feasts seem to partially resemble Hannah Arendt’s ‘public spaces’, or ‘specifically political forms of being together with others, acting in concert and speaking with each other.’⁴³ Seyla Benhabib has claimed that under Arendt’s ‘associational view’, a ‘public space [...] emerges whenever and

⁴¹ Ibid., 37-8.

⁴² Fairclough argues that thinkers across the political spectrum betrayed extreme concern about the physiological element of sympathetic communication in the aftermath of the French Revolution. See *The Romantic Crowd*, particularly 59-107.

⁴³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 162.

wherever [...] “men act together in concert”⁴⁴. However, ‘action’, the uniquely political activity for Arendt, rests on the human conditions of ‘plurality’, or physical identity, and the ‘freedom’ of the individual to do something new, that is, to revolutionise. Political freedom, in other words, depends on individuality and freedom of speech – both of which ‘God Save the King’, like the catechism, sought to structure and contain. More’s associational practices were aimed at bringing individuals she considered ‘isolated’ into religious association through which previously private concerns might be closely monitored. Her notion of the domestic is thus distinctly social in its expansionist instrumentality; as Arendt argues, ‘with the rise of society, that is, the rise of the “household” (*oikia*) or of economic activities in the public realm, housekeeping and all matters pertaining formally to the private sphere of the family have become a “collective” concern.’⁴⁵ This does not infer a strict division between notions of the political and social; to the contrary, ‘the two realms [...] constantly flow into each other like the waves in the never-resting stream of life itself.’ From a material perspective, Arendt’s theory of the public sphere as a physical space of action, as opposed to Habermas’ ‘world of letters’, provides a useful perspective on More’s public activity, particularly in its connection between the domestic and societal. Her argument that the movement of the household into the public sphere created a social, rather than political, space is particularly apposite to More’s feasts; it is clear, in any case, that More was aiming for social and religious, rather than ‘specifically political’ association. Her feasts sought to institutionalise a domestic prospect of the poor whereby associational activity could be safely contained and diffused along loyalist and Anglican lines.

⁴⁴ Seyla Benhabib, ‘The Embattled Public Sphere: Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, and Beyond’. in *Reasoning Practically*, ed. Edna Ullman-Margalit, (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 166.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 33.

Matter and Spirit

The correspondences and content from Martha More's journal in *The Mendip Annals* often betray anxiety over perceptions of their work, and not without reason. As both Scott and Major have discussed, More's involvement in the Blagdon controversy (1799 - 1802) demonstrates how, in terms of both practice and vocalisation, her 'Christian profession' could dangerously resemble religious enthusiasm.⁴⁶ The controversy began with a local tussle between More and the Thomas Bere, the curate of Blagdon, who accused More of fostering Methodist and Calvinist meetings in the schools, and culminated in public defamations on More's character in the *Anti-Jacobin Magazine*.⁴⁷ A previous attack on More's reputation, made at the very outset of her activity in the Mendips, brings the gendered element of such opposition into further focus, and highlights More's ecumenical attitude.

On 15 September 1789, two months after the storming of the Bastille and in a period of intensified debate on Dissenting rights,⁴⁸ a newspaper notice proclaimed that 'The controversy between Miss Hannah More and Dr. Priestley, on the *subject* of *Matter and Spirit*, is likely to assume another form of disquisition, and consequently be

⁴⁶ Stott, *Hannah More*, 177; Major, *Madam Britannia*, 286-88.

⁴⁷ For an account of the controversy see Stott's *Hannah More*, 232-257. For a collection of primary sources on the subject, see Stott's 'Hannah More and the Blagdon controversy, 1799-1802', in *Evangelicalism in the Church of England C.1790-c.1890: A Miscellany*, ed. Mark Smith and Stephen Taylor, 1-50 (2004).

⁴⁸ There were attempts at repealing the Test and Corporation Acts in March 1787, May 1789, and March 1790.

handled in a way much less *metaphysical*.⁴⁹ More accounts for the report in a letter to Walpole:

Being one day in a large company, who all inveighed against Lindsay, and Jebb, and other Socinians who had deserted the Church, because they could not subscribe to the Articles, I happened to say that I thought sincerity such a golden virtue, that I had a feeling bordering on respect for such an unequivocal proof of his being in earnest, as to renounce a lucrative profession, rather than violate his conscience, I must think him sincere, and of course respectable. I have ever since been accused of rank Socinianism, and the papers soon after married me to Priestley, though I reprobate his opinions.⁵⁰

The slander is as absurd as it is crude, and here More seems to brush it off with ease ('I never saw him but once in my life, and he had been married above twenty years'),⁵¹ but it draws attention to the fact that she and Priestley were perceived alike as transgressors of established religion. That an offhand comment from the mouth of such a devout woman as More could result in such representation indicates how precarious women's religious profession was at this time; in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Bastille, even she, it seems, presented a threat to the establishment. But Priestley and More do not, perhaps, make such unlikely bedfellows.

Though she professed to 'reprobate his opinions',⁵² More's distinctly vital perspective on the workings of the spirit approaches Priestley more closely than she might well have admitted. The concept of 'vital religion' was central to the evangelicalism of More, Wilberforce and other members of the group that would later be known as the Clapham Sect. Like Priestley and the Methodist John Wesley, they

⁴⁹ *The Oracle; Bell's New World* 92, 15 September 1789.

⁵⁰ W. L. Lewis, ed., *Letter from Hannah More to Horace Walpole*, 2 November 1789, ed. W. L. Lewis, <http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/page.asp?vol=31&seq=384&type=b> (accessed 10.02.2014), 329.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

blended science and theology, and drew on the burgeoning interest in vitalism driven by electrical discoveries, including those of Priestley, whose *History of Electricity* (1767) communicates a millenarian belief that experimental machines such as the Leyden phial were instruments of divine revelation.⁵³ As I discussed in Chapter One, Priestley's notion of vital materialism, shaped by his chemical and electrical experiments and his Hartleyan associationism, figured matter as 'active'; that is, endued with spirit. In common with pro-revolutionary thinkers like Priestley, More and other evangelicals also put great emphasis on the concepts of 'action' and 'practice'. I now argue that by adopting the language of vitality, More sought to convert volatile (and in 'Gunpowder Joe' Priestley's case, explosive) philosophy into Anglican 'medicine'.

In her introduction to *Eighteenth-Century Vitalism*, Catherine Packham explains that vitalism, an physio-psychological theory amalgamating natural philosophy and human biology, was 'suggestive for political thinkers, theorists and philosophers keen to rethink and reform man, nature, society and government.' Packham points out that 'By the end of the century, vitalism [...] had become identified with a controversial and fully fledged materialism, whose political, theological and scientific implications, in distancing God from nature, and insisting on the autonomous powers of matter, were fully recognised by both proponents and critics.'⁵⁴ The notions of materialism emerging from my study might complicate this view; as will become apparent, Priestley, More and others did not imply a straightforward division between matter and spirit. Packham also notes the use of vitalist language by writers across the political divide, arguing that 'in the revolutionary debates of the 1790s a language of animation, vitality and liberty

⁵³ Joseph Priestley, *The History and Present State of Philosophy, with Original Experiments* (London: J. Dodsley, 1767), xi.

⁵⁴ Catherine Packham, *Eighteenth-Century Vitalism: Bodies, Culture, Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 7-8.

was taken up by writers of all kinds – to the extent that invocations of innate ‘energies’ in man or nature became both a byword of Jacobinism and, perhaps unwittingly, repeated by their loyalist opponents.⁵⁵ While I agree that these ideas were to an extent driven by the innovations of radical scientists, More’s use of vitalism demonstrates her sophisticated engagement with scientific developments. She was not merely repeating or borrowing a vitalist language that more properly belonged to her radical opponents; on the contrary, she deliberately selects and adapts psycho-physiological theories, and intelligently incorporates them into her arsenal for conservative reform.

Vitalist and materialist ideas were not incidental but fundamental to More’s beliefs, and she worked strenuously to defend their Christian application. As I show in the next chapter, her writing at the end of the century and into the 1800s signals an increasing fear that material psychology was being misappropriated by atheists in ever more insidious ways. This does not imply an anti-scientific perspective; far from it, it suggests that More embraced scientific developments and sought to keep them in secure possession. Reed’s argument about the continuity between religion and psychology is also worth recalling here – the two were not as yet distinct. So too is my point that the practical work and cultural productions of women like More should be taken as ‘serious science’. Whether we see psychology in the late eighteenth century as a ‘revolutionary science’ in the Kuhnsian sense – that is, as productive of a shift in paradigms;⁵⁶ or as a product of the revolutionary ‘spirit of the age’ more widely; or (better) as shaped by the mutuality of science and culture, religion is inextricable from science for the loyalist More. As I hope my discussions make clear, Priestley and other experimental

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

philosophers were not lone scientists in the modern sense; they were immersed in religious culture, and their polymathic thinking, like More's, reflects this.

More's work in the Mendips saw her turning away from Montagu's elite sociability towards the 'vital religion' of the Clapham Sect. As Major has shown, More's incorporation of reworked text from her 1770s *Essays* into her *Strictures* suggests 'a corresponding shift away from the polite model of conversational femininity towards a paradigm that is defined more clearly by Christian duty, rather than by a polite Christian sociability'.⁵⁷ My discussion here suggests that More was working to increasingly remove herself from elite 'worldliness' through vital Christianity. Though Montagu, like More, 'was ever conscious of the links between material and intellectual culture',⁵⁸ More's practical engagement with the material world of the Mendip villages marks a radical departure from the forms of exchange situated in and shaped by the luxurious and exotic spaces of Montagu House in Portland Square. Her material psychology, as I have been arguing, participated in this conceptual and environmental shift; at the same time as shaping her thought, charity underwent an incremental, vitally Christian and associational transformation. In contrast to Montagu's May Day feasts for London chimney sweeps on the lawn at Montagu House from 1782, which concluded with beer and dancing, More's sought through her ministry to draw communities together into structured and superintended religious spaces. For More, as we shall see, the performative aspect of charity – typified by Montagu's self-styling as 'Lady Bountiful' in the 1780s⁵⁹ – contravened the Biblical instruction to give without 'sound[ing] a trumpet'.⁶⁰ While they provided food and were by no means wholly

⁵⁷ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 274-5.

⁵⁸ Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason*, 108.

⁵⁹ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 77.

⁶⁰ Matthew 6:1-8.

austere, More's feasts were conceptualised as operating 'under providence'. I have discussed the role of the senses in this, and now consider how affect and materiality relate to More's ideological objects of charity.

Gift relations in the Mendip clubs

Although she claims that the feasts encouraged pupils at the Mendip schools to learn 'with pleasure', it remained an irritation to More that they did so in anticipation of a reward, as opposed to taking active pleasure in the task itself. In *Hester Wilmot*, one of the *Cheap Repository Tracts* authored by More, Rebecca's refusal to send her daughter to Sunday school unless Mrs Jones 'will pay her for it' is met with outrage:

"Pay her for it!" said the lady, "will it not be reward enough that she will be taught to read the word of God without any expense to you? For though many gifts both of books and clothing [sic] will be given the children, yet you are not to consider these gifts so much in the light of payment as an expression of good-will in your benefactors".

In resisting perceptions of bribery, More seeks to counter venal 'worldliness' in the poor; she demands that in place of an attachment to charitable gifts as material objects, they develop an affectional attachment, or bond of obligation, to the rich. Notwithstanding the example More makes of Mrs Jones' here, she and her sister did engage in bribery of adult women in the clubs, as well as effecting punishment by withholding rewards: one woman who 'refused the benefit of prayer [...] was denied the pleasure of beef'.⁶¹ The association of 'prayer' with 'pleasure' suggests that More was replicating the union of Lockean pedagogy and scripture as she extended her ministry from the schools to the clubs. However, and as we shall see, the women in the clubs

⁶¹ Martha More, *Mendip Annals*, 55.

were far from passive, repeatedly forcing their benefactors to fall back on bribery of one form or another. Such concessions to ‘worldliness’ seem inconsistent with More’s beliefs, but might also, I think, have contributed to her conceptualisation of religion itself as a material force. Though we may have some reservations as to the veracity of Martha More’s report of an ‘old women’ who ‘is now beginning to taste the *pleasures* in the *promises* of the gospel’,⁶² the repeated emphasis on embodiment in the *Mendip Annals* underlines how closely the Mores’ understanding of the vital spirit approached a devotional taste, even though bodily desire could be inimical to its Christian progress.

In a letter to Wilberforce which gives further indication of the barriers facing the sisters’ efforts, More describes the negotiations that enabled the successful institution of women’s clubs at Rowberrow and Shipham, the intention for which was to provide financial assistance during periods of sickness and post-natal rest. More recounts, ‘It was no small trouble to accomplish this; for, though the subscription was only three halfpence a-week, it was more than they could always raise.’⁶³ She also faced objections from the women that the money would be better spent on ‘tidy’ funerals, which she dismisses as an ‘absurdity’, reflecting a common concern among the middle classes about overly elaborate ‘pauper funerals’.⁶⁴ Finally, it was agreed that ‘a separate sixpence each at the time of a death would amply assist the poor family.’ Monetary bargaining aside, however, More emerges unbeaten in her report:

One article mentioned in the rules gave universal satisfaction—namely, that on the day any young woman married, who had been bred in the school, and was of a good character, if she produced a paper to this effect, signed by a minister of the parish, she should have for her marriage portion, a pair of white worsted stockings of our own knitting,

⁶² Ibid., 57. Original emphasis.

⁶³ Martha More, *Mendip Annals*, 66.

⁶⁴ See Thomas Laqueur, ‘Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals’. *Representations* I (1983): 109–131.

five shillings, and a Bible. To this, I must confess, there was not the shadow of an objection, but a universal smile graced their ferocious countenances.⁶⁵

Seeking to police female sexuality through bribery in what Stott calls ‘an unashamed piece of social engineering’,⁶⁶ the sisters fostered close scrutiny of the clubwomen’s behaviour, demanding multiple forms of evidence to ensure that only the demonstrably chaste and pious were rewarded. Ever careful to avoid appearing indulgent, More assured the high-church layman John Bowdler (brother of Henrietta Maria and Thomas Bowdler, of the expurgated *Family Shakespeare* [1818]) that the ‘trifling encouragement has had a good effect’⁶⁷ on the ‘ferocious’ women. Trifling in monetary terms they may have been, yet the gifts were loaded with social and religious meaning. As I now explain, the act of giving a hand-knitted product and a ‘handsome bible’⁶⁸ alongside currency signifies a carefully negotiated and multi-faceted gift exchange. The materiality of these gifted objects was central to their affective and affectional⁶⁹ functions in establishing a personal, though unequal and relatively distant gift relationship, under which the recipient was obliged to reciprocate by upholding More’s social and religious values. By embodying vital religion through charitable giving, More extends and strengthens her associationist societal, or associational, model through practical, affective exchange.

By choosing to give these three objects, More seeks to establish financial, affectional and religious ties between herself and recipients. She does so through

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Stott, *Hannah More*, 120.

⁶⁷ More to Bowdler, in Martha More, *Mendip Annals*, 7.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ I am using ‘affective’ here to denote the personal, and ‘affectional’ the interpersonal.

practices of personal gift relations as distinct from commodity relations. James Carrier explains the distinction between these two categories:

In gift transactions, the object is linked to the giver, the recipient and the relationship that binds them. In commodity transactions, the object is not linked in any significant, personal way to the transactors: it is an alienable and impersonal property. The third variable is the degree to which transactors are linked and obligated to each other. In gift relations the parties are personally linked and bound to each other.⁷⁰

There is a further variable at play that Carrier does not mention here: the conditions of an object's production are also crucial to the extent to which it might be considered personal (like a gift) or alienable (like a commodity). Writing on the gift relations of needlework in Elizabethan England, Lisa Klein has commented on the heightened affectivity of handicraft productions, pointing out that 'a personal gift such as an embroidered dress or book is particularly appropriate for fostering the mutual obligation that was the aim of the gift exchange.' Klein's argument that 'A hand-wrought gift has a particular intimacy, authority, and efficacy that other gifts, like money or plate, lack'⁷¹ could, I think, have cross-cultural and cross-period significance, as Mauss implies.⁷² However, the degree of closeness suggested by the hand-made gift has more culturally specific valence here; in a period of innovation in the textile industry, the Mores' worsted stockings were distinctly domestic and most likely of higher quality than those which might have been purchased cheaply.⁷³ Moreover, when it comes to the class

⁷⁰ James G. Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 11.

⁷¹ Lisa M. Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework'. *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (June 1997), 471.

⁷² Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen and West, 1966), 2.

⁷³ Worsted was a smooth, durable yarn made from combed long-fibre wool. It was better suited to machine spinning than felt-like yarns, and was factory produced in Lancashire from 1787, and in the West Riding from the early 1790s. However, machine-spun worsted did not gain

politics of charitable exchange in the 1790s, such exchange was particularly charged; at this time, as Zionkowski and Klekar state, gifts ‘served as a touch point in the transformation from the old society to the new.’⁷⁴ More’s exchange of a product of personal domestic labour seems to disrupt the hierarchy of the charitable economy by rendering the relationship more immediately tangible and familiar; the stockings, like Barbauld’s object poems, were meant to act as affectational objects. Indeed, that More gave multiple objects to the women underlines how carefully calculated her charitable economy really was; somewhat analogous to the act of knitting, More ties threads of various kinds – affection, mutual obligation and commerce – to strengthen bonds between different orders of society.

From a Maussian perspective, gifts do not merely betoken relationships, they define them; More, then, does not merely use gifts to secure social attachments, the objects are in a certain sense agents – they are in themselves the ties that bind. As Gregory elucidates, ‘commodity exchange establishes a relationship between the objects exchanged, whereas gift exchange establishes a relationship between the subjects.’⁷⁵ That More gave objects knitted by her own hand infers her identification with the poor in a very real sense; in carrying out such domestic labour, More was assuming a common physical language. In terms of gender and class politics, these acts have material implications. A modest gift in both senses, the white worsted stockings would have been practically useful - indeed, they were literally grounded in their use. If as Eve

popularity among weavers until 1800. See D. T. Jenkins, ‘Early Factory Development in the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1770-1800’, in *Textile History and Economic History: Essays in Honour of Miss Julia de Lacy Mann*, ed. N. B. Harte and Kenneth G. Ponting (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 264.

⁷⁴ Linda Zionkowski and Cynthia Klekar, ‘Introduction’ to *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Linda Zionkowski and Cynthia Klekar (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁷⁵ C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982), 19.

Kowaleski Wallace has argued,⁷⁶ they were an attempt at rendering ‘savage’ bodies respectable for contact with middle class women, they also functioned as a habitual and affectional reminder to the poor of their obligations to their benefactors, and, moreover, as exemplary acts of giving for those bound by duty to take an active interest in their wellbeing. My argument here agrees with Jennie Batchelor’s point that such exchange ‘naturalized subordination’,⁷⁷ even as it sought to ameliorate it, but I add that material and sensory culture was central to this process.

In his discussion of More’s tract *Tom White*, Kevin Gilmartin describes the ‘contractual foundations of a political economy of charitable relief’,⁷⁸ and considers these relations in terms of the hierarchical obligational bond between ‘object’ of charity and middle-class benefactor. I think it was certainly the case, as Gilmartin suggests, that charitable giving ‘worked to establish material incentives [...] which, if accepted, implied a form of consent to the revised social hierarchy’. I would add, however, that in her material as well as her textual condescensions, More constructed affectional ties with the poor in order simultaneously to resist notions of paternalism and advance her ministry. More’s contractualism, under this view, is bound up with her evangelical associationism; though her politics of the ‘natural order’ are drawn from Filmer’s royalist contractualism rather than Locke’s liberal notion of ‘consent’, her charitable economy has a distinctly Lockean sensory inflection. As I have discussed, she incorporated into her relations with the poor an affectional exchange that was more characteristic of female friendship than charity. In doing so, she aimed to bind social classes together into religious union, adopting material and sociable practices drawn

⁷⁶ Eve Kowaleski Wallace, *Their Fathers’ Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (New York: OUP, 1991), 68.

⁷⁷ Batchelor, *Women’s Work*, 47.

⁷⁸ Kevin Gilmartin, “‘Study to be Quiet’: Hannah More and the Invention of Conservative Culture in Britain”. *ELH* 70 (Summer 2003), 497.

from her experience in different milieu, and applying Enlightenment rationalism to maximise their efficiency. More's gift relations functioned towards the 'framework of an aggressive national movement to reform the social order' she was working within; they were calculated to forward her evangelical programme through associational and affectional practices of exchange, rather than through commercial transactions alone.

Dorice Williams Elliott has therefore argued that 'Because she rejected the language of the market-place, More seemed to react against the capitalist economy that was coming to dominate England; her new-styled paternalism, however, used philanthropy's gift economy to replicate capitalism—without seeming to.'⁷⁹ While I agree that More's gift economy ran parallel to the capitalist system, her attitude towards 'worldliness' suggests that her (conscious) aims were quite distinct from it. At the end of the century, More fiercely pitted vital materiality against worldly sensibility in her *Strictures*. 'A worldly temper', she declaims,

is the vital spirit, the essential soul, the living principle of evil. It is not so much an act, as a state of being; not so much an occasional complaint, as a tainted constitution of mind [...] it is at work within, stirring up the heart to disaffection against holiness, and infusing a kind of moral disability to whatever is intrinsically good. It infects and depraves all the powers and faculties of the soul; for it operates on [...] the affections, by disordering and sensualizing them; so that one may almost say to those who are under the supreme dominion of this spirit, what was said to the hosts of Joshua, 'Ye *cannot* serve the Lord.'⁸⁰

Assuming an authoritative medical and ecclesiastical voice, More pronounces condemnation on worldliness as the very definition of 'evil'. Her language of medicine takes a markedly pathological turn here: distinctly embodied in its internal 'infusion', worldliness is a pervasive corruption of the 'vital spirit' – it is the 'living principle' of

⁷⁹ Williams Elliott, "The Care of the Poor Is Her Profession". 180.

⁸⁰ More, *Strictures*, 2:210.

evil. Venomously critical of the ‘sensualization’ of the affections by the elite, More’s attack on the culture of sensibility hinges on her notion of the spirit as a physical force. The stockings are the antithesis of this misdirection of vital energy; working in ill health herself, More insisted to elite and poor alike that self-denial is crucial to breaking the link between ‘worldliness’ and the sensible spirit. More was equally zealous in her attempts to recruit the middle and upper classes to the cause. I now discuss how, as her practice expanded and More sought to popularise her charitable model, she theorised her work in the fashionable language of sensible psychology.

The Christian œconomy

In her conduct writing and elsewhere, More demanded that the middle and upper-class women direct their time and resources towards the poor in order to bring ‘vital religion’ into material and embodied being. In doing so, as I have suggested, she participated in the naturalisation of class and gender difference, a project More believed was providential; as Wilberforce put it, ‘it has graciously pleased the Supreme Being so to arrange the constitution of things, as to render the prevalence of true religion and of pure morality conducive to the well-being of states, and the preservation of civil order.’⁸¹ However, for More and Wilberforce, the security of the social order was less an end in itself as it was a means of persuading the rich into compliance with evangelical reform.

⁸¹ William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, Contrasted with Real Christians* (London: T. Cadell, 1797), 422.

Like More, Sarah Trimmer emphasised practice over the ‘visionary impractical scheme,’⁸² rendering charity an associational science that could harness labour to provide a genteel occupation for married, and especially, unmarried ladies. In her discussion of the cultural implications of domestic and manual labour in women’s writing in late eighteenth-century Britain, Batchelor shows how anxieties over maintaining class distinction emerged over a period of increasing interaction between classes.⁸³ Works such as Trimmer’s *Economy of Charity* (1787) and *Family Magazine* (January 1788-June 1789) thus aimed to provide women with practical advice on the propriety of charitable visitation and school management. Trimmer’s emphasis on the physical act of material transaction in terming her model ‘the personal distribution of voluntary benefactions’ is revealing,⁸⁴ describing an active role for women outside of the home, as well as reflecting a consciousness that charitable gifts were liable to misdirection under earlier indirect methods of philanthropy. As Trimmer writes of impersonal gifts in her *Economy*, ‘they are of the utmost benefit to many deserving objects; but are often obtained by persons who do not need them.’⁸⁵ Trimmer’s distinction between ‘deserving objects’ and undeserving ‘persons’ suggests that while such modes of giving provided assistance to the needy, they were also insufficient as a means of establishing paternalist superintendence over, or objectification of the poor. ‘Personal distribution’, then, worked to ensure that recipients of charity were its proper ‘objects’.

More similarly considered it the duty of the rich and middle class to particularise their charitable acts. Rather than giving in only a generalised manner (through

⁸² Trimmer, *The Economy of Charity*, 49.

⁸³ Batchelor, *Women’s Work*, 15.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1-2.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 106.

subscription, for instance), they should personally familiarise themselves with the conditions of the local poor, in order to educate and superintend behaviour. Giving in person had the additional benefit of effecting a reformation of the benefactor: had the frivolous daughters of Mrs Ranby in More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) visited the poor, for example, their 'flexible young hearts would have been wrought upon by the actual sight of miseries, the impression of which was feeble when it reached their ears at a distance, surrounded as they were with all the softnesses and accommodations of luxurious life.'⁸⁶ Self-denial is crucial to the nature of charity for More, and as we see it played an important part in her fashioning of a viable female profession in religious work. In her *Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*, a text I return to in the next chapter, More writes that the

promiscuous myriads which compose the society, falsely so called, of the gay world [...] by the mere force of incessant and indiscriminate association, weaken, and in time wear out, the best feelings and affections of the human heart. And the mere spirit of dissipation, thus contracted from invariable habit, even detached from all its concomitant evils, is in itself as hostile to a religious spirit as more positive and actual offences.⁸⁷

More voices the commonly held associationist belief that sensory repetition eventually dulls sensibility. Figuring the nerves as conduits to 'spirit', More again suggests that the misdirection of 'feeling', as opposed to feeling itself, threatens the similarly embodied 'religious spirit'. Charity, for More, was the ideal means for women to extend this spirit

⁸⁶ Hannah More, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits and Manners, Religion and Morals*, ed. Patricia Demers (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007), 72.

⁸⁷ Hannah More, *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World. By One of the Laity*. (London, 1791), 206-7.

through work; that is, in an Arendtian sense, through interaction with the material world.

By channelling feeling into acts of charity, then, a proper association would be established between benevolence and pleasure, but this too was liable to excess. More is evidently anxious about the sensory impact of charitable work on women of sensibility:

An ill-directed sensibility leads a woman to be injudicious and eccentric in her *charities* also; she will be in danger of proportioning her bounty to the immediate effect which the distressed object produces on her senses: and she will be more liberal to a small distress which presents itself to her own eyes, than to the more pressing wants and better claims of those miseries of which she only hears the relation.⁸⁸

While echoing Trimmer in recommending visits to the poor as a means of reforming the rich, More attempts to rein in sensibility by attaching it to a strict framework of religious conduct and conservative rectitude. As objects of sense, contact with individuals in need of charity threatened to exacerbate women's nervous impulses; rather than acting on religious principle, they would gratify themselves with 'immediate' and minor acts of charity. In this way, even personal charity could approach the sexualised indulgence and frivolity of the upper classes, and such 'false profession' ran directly counter to More's belief that 'a vital faith manifests itself in vital acts.'⁸⁹

As women of the middle classes engaged more immediately in charitable activity, representations of charitable visitation came to be widely expressed in the fashionable language of sensibility.⁹⁰ Charity takes a particularly sensory immediacy

⁸⁸ Ibid., 104-5.

⁸⁹ Hannah More, *Christian Morals* (London: T. Cadell, 1813), 1:92.

⁹⁰ Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* is a good example of this, as Jennie Batchelor has ably discussed. See 'Fictions of the Gift in Sarah Scott's Millenium Hall'. in *The Culture of the Gift*

when Trimmer connects church teaching on the ‘duty of clothing the naked’ with women’s personal benefactions. ‘Surely’, she writes, ‘the precepts that recommend this branch of charity will strike the mind with double force when the immediate objects of it stand before them in tattered garments, that make silent but powerful claims on their humanity.’⁹¹ However, sensory engagement with objects of charity could also closely resemble indulgence; enabled by women’s supposedly inherent nervous ‘delicacy’, the aestheticisation of the sensory economy between individuals threatened to promote a commoditised philanthropy that More perceived as bordering on heretical, and even hysterical. This was especially the case when it came to extreme sensibility to the suffering of the sick, as typified by Hays’ *Emma Courtney* and her later novel, *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799): ‘If the object of its regard happen to be sick, what inquiries! what prescriptions! [...] What an unaffected tenderness for the perishing body! Yet is this sensibility equally alive to the immortal interests of the sufferer?’⁹²

For More, such conspicuous displays of benevolence were brought on by the disassociation of philanthropic practice from Christian scripture, and were incompatible with her notion of charity as a disinterested act of religious duty. In *Strictures*, she criticises representations of the charitable practices of the rich in British novels, complaining that ‘Creditors are defrauded, while the money due to them is lavished in dazzling acts of charity to some object that affects the senses’.⁹³ She therefore seeks culturally and practically to divorce philanthropy from worldly self-interest by framing it as a religious embodiment. I return to this subject in Chapter Four, where I show how in *Cœlebs*, More seeks to promote changes in the psychology of women through the

⁹¹ *in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Linda Zionkowski and Cynthia Klekar, 159–76 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁹² *Economy of Charity*, 48

⁹² *Ibid.*, 112–3.

⁹³ More, *Strictures*, 1:35. Original emphasis.

process of habitual re-association. I conclude this chapter by turning to More's adoption of the 'vulgar tongue' in her *Tracts*, in order to further explore the philosophical groundings of her domestic economy.

Village Politics and Cheap Repository Tracts

In *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), More describes her didacticism in markedly Barbauldian terms. Like her Dissenting counterpart, she draws on Locke, but gives this a distinctly evangelical cast: 'Teach as HE taught, by seizing on surrounding objects, passing events, local circumstances [...] Call in all creation, animate and inanimate, to your aid.'⁹⁴ I have already pointed out the congruence between More and Barbauld's educational publications, but there are similarities elsewhere between More's focus on particular and familiar sensory images and the associationist technique of Barbauld's *Lessons* and *Hymns*. Stott has remarked on the 'physical context' of *Village Politics* (1793), noting that it is 'both allegorical and rooted in an idealized contemporary reality',⁹⁵ and Kevin Gilmartin has identified the 'precisely situated sense of rural virtue' in More's later tract *History of Tom White the Postilion* (1795).⁹⁶ The inclusion of attractive woodcut prints in the *Tracts* also signals their educational inheritance: like Barbauld's *Lessons* and *Hymns*, their physical design was shaped by Locke's notion of the pedagogic value of 'sensible images', as entertainment and aids to literacy.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 230.

⁹⁵ Stott, *Hannah More*, 140.

⁹⁶ Kevin Gilmartin, "Study to be Quiet". 493.

The *Tracts* were priced to encourage bulk sales for dissemination among the poor, but their re-publication in more expensive forms from 1796 might suggest that they were more popular among the middle classes.⁹⁷ By packaging *Tracts* for the more wealthy consumer, More brought her lessons in reformism closer to the eye of the elite, and their sales in turn helped subsidise the ongoing production of cheaper tracts for the poor. How they were read by the increasingly literate poor is hard to ascertain, but there seems to have been demand for these: their first publisher, John Marshall, continued to produce the *Tracts* in their original form even after More had moved her business elsewhere. Again, however, it may have been the bulk sale of the *Tracts* to the reform-minded middle class that proved most profitable. Though little is known about how the *Tracts* may, or indeed may not, have been read by the poor, the illustrations on their covers and those within were clearly meant to make the pamphlets as desirable and accessible as possible.

More's writing for the poor invites a final comparison with Barbauld's children's literature. In her story 'Things by Their Right Names', published in the first volume of *Evenings at Home* in 1792, the year before *Village Politics*, Barbauld invoked Locke's concept of the 'abuse of words' to redefine war as 'murder'.⁹⁸ This radical politicisation of children's literature must have touched a nerve for conservative educationalists like More. In *Village Politics*, More seeks to reclaim the educational application of Lockean semantics; as Stott points out, 'Running through *Village Politics* is a semantic debate, reflecting the loyalist attempt to wrest control of the political language from the revolutionaries and restore the older, less ideologically charged

⁹⁷ Stott, *Hannah More*, 176.

⁹⁸ Aikin and Barbauld, *Evenings at Home*, 1:150-52.

uses.⁹⁹ More engages in this battle through her dialogue between Jack Anvil and Tom Hod, which reaches stichomythic climax in a series of questions and answers:

Tom. What then dost thou take French *Liberty* to be?

Jack. To murder more men in one night than ever their poor king did in this whole life.

Tom. And what does thou take a *Democrat* to be?

Jack. One who likes to be governed by a thousand tyrants, and yet can't bear a king.

Tom. What is Equality?

Jack. For every man to pull down every one that is above him, till they're all as low as the lowest.

In her reverse catechism – the learner asks the questions here – More adopts an associationist pedagogic technique to affix ideas of death and disorder to seditious language. Her didactic assimilation of Locke's 'abuse of words' puts *Village Politics* in ideological opposition to Barbauld, as well as Paine, but there is a sense of dialectic too, in their shared, social view of semantics. Where *Evenings at Home* used informal conversation to 'teach [children] to *think*' beyond established meaning, *Village Politics* turned intellectually regressive pedagogy to the loyalist re-education of working-class adults.

More's tracts foreground labouring activity, often representing good and bad examples of women's domestic practices and management in close detail. While no doubt accompanied with a real concern for the material and spiritual wellbeing of the poor, More contrived characters such as Rebecca and her daughter Hester in *Hester Wilmet* to both censure and placate working-class women, and she went on to target middle and upper class women in a similar way in *Cælebs*: as her narrator puts it, 'my notion of "household good" [...] does not include one idea of drudgery or servility, but

⁹⁹ Stott, *Hannah More*, 140.

[...] involves a large and comprehensive scheme of excellence.¹⁰⁰ Writing against the indolence and indifference of the affluent classes, she encourages her readers to consider domestic practices as exalted patriotic and religious acts.

In *The Sunday School* and *Hester Wilmot*, More represents the administrative work of founding a school. Drawing on her experience in the Mendips, the former tract models for reform-minded conservatives an effective response to middle-class fears over educating the poor. In dialogue with a rich local farmer, Mrs Jones – a partial self-portrait – acknowledges the risk of literacy ‘doing more harm than good’, but insists that problem only materialises “If you teach them to read, and then turn them adrift to find out books for themselves.”¹⁰¹ While limiting the curriculum in the Mendip schools was one means of assuaging anxieties over widening literacy, More saw the superintendence of conduct outside of the schools as incumbent on the members of the wider community, in particular the local clergy, to the aggravation, no doubt, of ecclesiastics like Bere. In *The Sunday School*, for example, a girl who is about to ‘read, sing, and to learn by heart’ a book of ‘ribaldry’ is quizzed by Mr Simpson the clergyman on whether the soul or body is more valuable. He manages to persuade her that the book is ‘poison’,¹⁰² again drawing a link between religious and medical professions, with the inference, of course, that More’s tract might be ministered by its middle and upper-class subscribers as an antidote. In tacit recognition of the democratisation of reading the schools would help to effect, More sought to promote greater vigilance over the bodies and minds of lower class parishioners. The experience of running the schools and clubs, and the evangelicalism of the social network that supported them, were fundamental to the vision of reform presented in the *Cheap*

¹⁰⁰ More, *Cælebs*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Hannah More, *The Sunday School* (London, 1796), 10.

¹⁰² Ibid., 14.

Repository Tracts. As Henry Thornton, another leader of the Clapham Sect, explains, they were intended as ‘an antidote to the poison continually flowing thro’ the channel of vulgar and licentious publications.’¹⁰³

Published in subsidised cheap pamphlets and more expensive forms, More’s *Cheap Repository Tracts* were aimed at ‘both the poor to whom they were explicitly addressed, and those who in a sense read over their shoulders,’¹⁰⁴ in this sense mirroring Barbauld’s *Lessons for Children*, which, as I discussed in Chapter Two, inscribed a familiar idiom while providing teaching strategies for mothers. More aimed to make an analogous innovation in the language of the working poor. Nearly five years before the publication of Paine’s *Rights of Man* in 1791, William Weller Pepys wrote to More requesting, on behalf of Montagu and himself, that she write ‘a dialogue between two persons of the lowest order’ to illustrate the ‘many absurdities which would follow from the cry of equality being reduced to practice.’¹⁰⁵ Conceptualising the tract as an antidote to socio-economic discontent, Pepys figures More as apothecary to the body politic, which he believes is ‘in great peril’. Montagu and Pepys recognised that More’s work in the Mendip schools, as well as her literary talent, positioned her ideally to address the lower classes in print; ‘Who knew the common people’ writes Stott, ‘the patterns of their lives, their hopes and fears, their colloquialisms, the rhythms of their speech—

¹⁰³ Henry Thornton, *A Plan for Establishing by Subscription a Repository of Cheap Publications, on Religious and Moral Subjects* (London, 1795), 174.

¹⁰⁴ Williams Elliott, “The Care of the Poor Is Her Profession”. 184.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from William Weller Pepys to Hannah More, August 15, 1786, *A Later Pepys: The Correspondence of Sir William Weller Pepys, Bart., Master in Chancery 1758-1825*, ed. Alice C. C. Gaussen (London: John Lane, 1904), 2:283. Pepys was brother of the King’s physician, and admiring correspondent of Mary Hartley, David Hartley’s daughter, who knew More and was friends with other women with connections to the Bluestocking circle, in particular Frances Burney and Ann Ord. A survey of her letters to Pepys reveals a mixture of spiritual, medical and educational advice with conceptual similarities to her father’s *Observations on Man*, and Hartleyan language also surfaces in Pepys’ correspondence with More. See, for example, his letter of August 15, 1786 in *A Later Pepys*, 264-5.

better than she?¹⁰⁶ However, as Mark Philp demonstrates, such engagement in the print battle with radicals comprised a concession on the part of conservative writers:

by writing her tracts, [More] was looking, like many others, for a bridge between respectable and vulgar culture, through which the latter might be transformed. But in the very willingness to take on the challenge of a printed battle with the reformers, these writers also accepted that the ideas of the latter (in however mangled a shape) had to be addressed. In doing so, they were playing their part in the formation of a popular political culture with a national political agenda.¹⁰⁷

Under Philp's account, *Village Politics* helped enable public discourse between politically minded labouring men. More's awareness of this perhaps accounts for the delay between the tract's conception and its eventual publication, which was in direct response to the more pressing threat of Painite pamphlets. Philp identifies *Village Politics* as unique among the tracts published by the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, being 'the only one to set the dialogue between two members of the labouring classes'.¹⁰⁸ Addressing Olivia Smith's point that conservative tracts sought to limit the poor's intellectual engagement with politics,¹⁰⁹ he argues that though this was certainly the case, they 'must also be read as instructive instances of the difficulties of characterising the voice of the labouring man, and the costs of doing so effectively'.¹¹⁰ While their 'anti-intellectual' language circumscribed political identity, they begrudgingly acknowledged the agency of the poor, representing

¹⁰⁶ Stott, *Hannah More*, 139.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3', *English Historical Review*, February 1995, 68.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 62. Philp argues that 'writers identifying with loyalist [...] became committed to a project of popular instruction profoundly at odds with their original intent and their professed commitment to the status quo. The result was that loyalism found itself attempting to create a "vulgar" conservatism.'

¹⁰⁹ Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

¹¹⁰ Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3'. 62.

(though always eventually overcoming) individual resistance to evangelical reform, as in Mrs Jones' struggle with Rebecca in *Hester Wilmot*.

It is also plausible, I think, that the intermediaries most valued by More contributed to the *Tracts*. Mrs Crew, Mrs Jones' appointed teacher in *Hester Wilmot*, bears clear parallels with Mrs Baber, adopting her method of having the children repeat the meaning of Scriptural passages back to her 'in their own words.'¹¹¹ More perhaps paraphrases Baber in Mrs Crew's advice that 'Those who teach the poor must indeed give line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, as they receive it.' Baber's use of a 'plain, practical' language familiar to local working-class children no doubt contributed to the educational model More promoted through *Tracts*, but with an eye to her middle-class readers, she also figures Mrs Crew as an authority on Lockean thought, an educationalist who, like Barbauld, knows that rote learning 'remained in the memory without having made any impression on the mind.'¹¹² More's attempts to replicate the 'vulgar tongue' were no doubt also shaped by pedagogic advice from experienced teachers like Baber, but it also marginalises their voices: Mrs Crew is celebrated as a '*humble* teacher.'¹¹³ More figures such intermediaries as invisible, and yet active agents of her evangelical reform. Indeed, Baber's influence is most clearly vocalised in the reflections on her death in *Mendip Annals*. Though More (perhaps with the rebellious Ann Yearsley in mind) controls her exemplary reputation, the remarkable response of the Cheddar villagers after Mrs Baber's death indicates how central to the community she had been. Martha More reports to her sister that hundreds attended the funeral, all with 'some token of mourning in their dress [...] not one single voice or step

¹¹¹ Hannah More, *Cheap Repository. The history of Hester Wilmot: or, the second part of The Sunday school* (London, 1796).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 9. My emphasis.

was heard;—their silence was dreadful [...] their poor little ragged pocket-handkerchiefs, not half sufficient to dry their tears.¹¹⁴ While Baber's name does not appear in More's tracts, this may have been intended to afford protection for the teacher; More navigated the precariousness of her own professions by signing them 'Z', and initially publishing *Cælebs* and other works anonymously.¹¹⁵

More's committed engagement with the quotidian and domestic puts her in conversation with Enlightenment economic discourse, particularly Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776). Although Smith put the home at the centre of his theory, Sutherland argues that he 'refuses or conceals the female contribution to the economy'.¹¹⁶ Making a similar point, Keane notes that Smith's 'economic vision [...] paid scant attention to the actual running of households', and 'was, in fact, largely responsible for severing the primary semantic link between the term "oeconomy" and the running of households.' Conversely, she argues, More 'placed women at the centre of economic regulation, as the "invisible hand" of domestic and national organization'.¹¹⁷ Though their work was – and indeed often remains – invisible in the sense of unacknowledged, under More's evangelical vision women's labour acts principally as a material expression of providence, under which class and gender distinctions remain in place. Since this economy falls within her evangelical vision, it might usefully be understood, along with Scott's *Millenium Hall*, as a 'feminized,

¹¹⁴ Martha More to Hannah More, 18 August 1795, in William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs Hannah More*, 4th Edition (London: Seeley and Burnside, 1836), 1:562-67.

¹¹⁵ *Thoughts, An Estimate, and Village Politics* were also first published without More's name. For a discussion of publishing practices and questions of professionalism amongst religious women writers see Major, *Madam Britannia*, in particular Chapter 8.

¹¹⁶ Kathryn Sutherland, 'Adam Smith's Master Narrative', in *Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Stephen Copley and Kathryn Sutherland, 97-121 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 117.

¹¹⁷ Angela Keane, 'The Anxiety of (Feminine) Influence: Hannah More and Counterrevolution', in *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Cracuin and Kari E. Lokke, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 120.

Christian economy',¹¹⁸ or, if we accept Keane's account of its etymology, a Christian œconomy. I have been arguing that material psychology provides a medium for this model of reform, and that attention to More's practical work can augment historical materialist readings of her work.

The charitable model More helped popularise impacted significantly on women's movement into the socialised public sphere diachronically. Indeed, we might recognise a trace of it in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*: when Mrs Ramsay seeks to impress on her daughters the duty of providing succour to the lighthouse men, painting for them the desolation of life on the rock, while knitting stockings for the lighthouse keeper's son.¹¹⁹ For Mrs Ramsay, such activity allows her to imagine for herself an existence beyond that of 'a private woman' for whom charity is 'half a sop to her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity', and towards self-identification as 'what with her untrained mind she highly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem.'¹²⁰ There are traces here of Sarah Trimmer's recommendation of charity as an 'experiment' for women of the middle and upper classes, as well as More's characterisation of it as a woman's 'profession'. However, if Woolf registers a personal progression through charity away from gendered connotations of powerlessness and self-indulgence towards something more systematic, publically useful and, at least Mrs Ramsey's self-conceptualisation, somehow empowering, she also gives testament to the lasting tensions in conservative feminism outlined in this chapter.

More's Christian profession is driven by and in turn informs a notion of 'vital religion' that was at once stringently conservative and yet drew purposefully on the

¹¹⁸ Gary Kelly, introduction to Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995), 34.

¹¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12

materialist and vitalist theories of radical thinkers. This, as I have indicated, was not without its problems, and I have discussed some of the challenges facing More in her applications of Lockeanism through her ministry to the Mendip poor, particularly in resisting notions of bribery. I have suggested that the charitable economy she and her sister established in the Mendips led More to increasingly figure herself as Christian apothecary to the nation, and that she conceived of this role as a physical embodiment of the providential spirit. The next chapter builds on this by showing how More represented this process in her writings of the early nineteenth century, and how she became increasingly embattled in her attempts to defend her Anglican philosophy from what she saw as troubling domestic misappropriations of its revolutionary potential.

4. More vs the New Philosophy: suicide, memory and dis/association

Even late in her life, More engaged closely with developments in psychological theory.

In 1819, at the end of the famous ‘vitalist controversy’ between John Abernethy and

William Lawrence, the 74 year old More wrote in her *Moral Sketches* that

In the more advanced Christian, religion may seem to be less prominent in parts of the character, because it is infused into the whole. Like the lifeblood, its vital power pervades the entire system: not an action of the life that is not governed by it; not a quality of the mind which does not partake of its spirit. It is diffused through the whole conduct, and sheds its benign influence, not only on the things done, but on the temper of the doer in performing them. The affections now have other objects, the time other duties, the thoughts other employments. There will be more exertion, but with less display; less show, because the principle is become more interior; it will be less obtrusive, because it is more rooted and grounded. There will be more humility, because the heart will have found out its own corruptions.¹

There is a sense of self-reflection here as More presents the exact converse capacity of the ‘living principle of evil’ against which she had railed in her *Strictures*.² The self-regulation she recommends to her readers was crucial to the stability of her own evangelicalism: the ‘lifeblood’ of her belief demanded discipline, lest in vocal profession it spilled over into enthusiasm, and her efforts to rein in the passions required that she ‘Carefully distinguish between the feverish heat of animal fervour, and the vital

¹ Hannah More, *Moral Sketches of the Prevailing Opinions and Manners, Foreign and Domestic*, 2nd Edition (London: T. Cadell, 1819), 128-9.

² More, *Strictures*, 2:210.

warmth of Christian feeling.³ Under More's associationist model, the 'infused' spirit is directed through an embodied framework ossified by practice and habit, something that demanded close scrutiny of one's own 'energies' and a determination to work towards their correction. Associationism also allowed More to conceptualise the extension of religion's 'vital power' through her work in the Mendips and beyond, but in the popularisation of her Lockean Christianity, she had to ensure that the Enlightenment philosophy on which she drew remained clear of any atheistic European taint.

This chapter discusses the associationist intertextual techniques More adopted and developed in order to realign Enlightenment thought with Christian morality from 1799 onwards. It looks first at her representation of Wollstonecraft in *Strictures*, showing how she disassociates the philosopher from British Enlightenment by linking the idea of Wollstonecraft to corruptive European literature, in particular with notions of suicide as a German cultural phenomenon. I discuss More's exploitation of the discourse of suicide, arguing that although she signals towards the debunking of the myth of the English as a melancholic nation who were prone to self-murder, More was evidently anxious that zealous women might view suicide as a means of self-expression, particularly as a means of asserting themselves as patriotic actors or Christian martyrs. In order to assuage envy for men's more public patriotic capacities, she frames the domestic as a space of female self-sacrifice in *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, but her intertextual choices in the novel suggest that More struggled to subdue this herself. I argue that Godwin's *Caleb Williams* was a key target of More's counterattack against novels of sensibility, looking at the dissociative techniques she uses to revision memory and transform the hero of romance into her Christian ideal. I then turn to her revisions to the essays *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*;

³ Ibid., 120.

and *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World* (1809). Writing against Hume's sceptical materialism and Godwin's appropriation of the associationist model of memory in *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), More again raises the spectre of rational suicide. I argue that though there is an element of *schadenfreude* in More's writing at this time, following the failure of French atheistic materialism to take hold in Britain, and Godwin's apparent retreat from radical politics, I suggest that More continued to be concerned about the changing shape of the atheistic threat, and perhaps with good reason: though Godwin was no longer publishing radical works in the narrowly political sense, had the authorship of his writing for children been recognised, it would have been highly alarming to a conservative educationalist like More.

More's use of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in her best-known piece of conduct literature, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) is informed and yet restrained. In comparison to Wollstonecraft, who had no hesitation in advising parents to 'follow Mr. Locke's system',⁴ and Hays, who asserted that 'The natural fitness or unfitness for the study of any particular science is an occult phrase that conveys no distinct apprehension, except to those who contend for the obsolete notion of innate ideas,'⁵ More appears somewhat cautious in her deployment of Lockeanism. Although she applies associationist logic throughout *Strictures*, and acknowledges Locke's 'broad sanction' as 'the Great author',⁶ she provides her readers with few explicit points of reference to his work. Indeed, More quotes Locke directly (though at length) only once in *Strictures*, choosing a passage from his discussion of the 'abuse of words' to open her chapter 'On the Use of Definitions.' Here she laments the

⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the More Important Duties of Life* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 11.

⁵ 'Reply to J. T. on Helvetius,' *Monthly Magazine*, June 1796.

⁶ More, *Strictures*, 1:197.

misuse of language in fashionable circles, a particular vexation being that ‘Some ludicrous association is infallibly combined with every idea of religion’.⁷ More uses Locke, then, to recalibrate habitual associations she saw as deleterious to the national character. Far from betraying uncertainty about Locke’s theory, More’s intertextual restraint was an astutely strategic element of her evangelical reform of Enlightenment philosophy.

More begins her introduction to *Strictures* with a familiar affirmation of the primacy of education in the formation of character: ‘It is a singular injustice which is often exercised towards women, first to give them a most defective Education, and then to expect from them the most undeviating purity of conduct;—to train them in such a manner as shall lay them open to the most dangerous faults, and then to censure them for not proving faultless.’⁸ Of course, Wollstonecraft and Hays had made similar points earlier in the decade; the latter, as we have seen, highlighted the hypocrisy of attitudes towards women’s ‘sexual character’ in *Emma Courtney*. As contemporary and more recent commentators have remarked, there are significant parallels between discussions of female improvement in More’s *Strictures* and Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.⁹ There is also a common investment in associationist psychology; More, Wollstonecraft and Hays, like most other thinkers at the time, found their educational arguments on the premise that minds are shaped by habit and circumstance; indeed, this belief provided the impetus for educational publications across the political

⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁸ More, *Strictures*, 1:ix.

⁹ Regina Janes, ‘On the Reception of Mary Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,”’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39, no. 2 (1978), 293. Janes points out Walpole’s identification of Wollstonecraft as an educationalist in his letters to More, and demonstrates that contrary to common belief, early reviews of the second *Vindication* were predominantly favourable. On the continuum between Wollstonecraft and More, see Myers, ‘Reform or Ruin’ and Harriet Guest, ‘The dream of a common language: Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft,’ *Textual Practice* 9, no. 2 (1995), 306.

spectrum. However, while they share a fundamental concern with the connection between female education and identity, their divergent political and religious perspectives are manifested in their textual applications of philosophical theory. Whereas Hays repeatedly directs her readers to Godwin and Helvétius through quotations and footnotes, More suffuses *Strictures* with scriptural quotations, encouraging cross-referencing to the Bible, while seeking to moderate female reading by careful reference to select literary and philosophical works they may have found on surrounding library shelves.¹⁰ She gives greater scope to Locke than any other philosopher, but keeps direct citation even to his work to a minimum. More's book thus resists ideological identification with any specific doctrine other than that of the Church of England.

Such an approach perhaps also betrays a concern over the latent materialism of Lockean thought. As I discussed in the introduction, the rise of atheism in French materialist philosophy had demonstrated that the *tabula rasa* hypothesis sits uncomfortably with Christian orthodoxy; the twin beliefs of original sin and the immaterial soul, though not incompatible with Lockean thought, are more obviously aligned with innatist beliefs. This inflects More's approach in *Strictures*: if she was to maintain that all humans are inherently 'corrupt', possessing 'evil dispositions' from birth,¹¹ she had to incorporate Locke's sensational psychology into her writing without drawing attention to his equivocation on the nature of the soul, or to the ideas of those

¹⁰ References to the bible comprise more than half of More's direct intertextual footnotes in *Strictures*. The remainder include literary, classical and theological sources, as well as the philosophy of Locke, Robert Boyle and Edmund Burke. She makes oblique reference to a number of radical figures, but does not provide the titles of their work. For example, Rousseau's *Emile* is gestured towards as 'An ingenious (and in many respects useful) French Treatise on Education.' Though most of her readers would have recognised the work, More was clearly loath to associate her text even the slightest way with those of 'the great master of splendid paradoxes'.

¹¹ *Strictures*, 1: 57.

who had identified the materialist potential of his theory. Writing at the end of the 1790s, More appears confident enough to claim in *Strictures* that the threat posed by the atheistic materialism of ‘Voltaire and his associates’ had passed, having been defeated by the prevailing ‘good sense and good principles’ of the English.¹² The bifurcation of the philosophical tradition into French and English strands was not enough, however, to eliminate the threat entirely: according to More, the ‘modern apostles of infidelity’ had simply ‘chang[ed] their weapons’, and now sought to ‘destroy the principles of Christianity’ in Britain by ‘attempting to attain their object under the close and more artificial veil of German literature.’¹³ For More, German plays and novels such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) aestheticised the sins of adultery and self-murder; their increased currency through British translations and imitations endangered the religious characters of young middle and upper class women, and thus the very foundations of the domestic Christian economy. She exploits the notoriety of Goethe’s valourisation of suicide in particular, representing his novel, which More declines the honour of title and attribution in *Strictures*, as a threat to the female body politic. As I now suggest, by connecting this work in particular to Wollstonecraft, More was mounting a cleverly targeted attack on New Philosophy.

Female self-sacrifice

More’s much cited refusal to read Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792),¹⁴ or even to name her in *Strictures* works on a similar rhetorical basis to her

¹² More, *Strictures*, 1:38.

¹³ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁴ More to Walpole, 18 August 1792. Horace Walpole’s Correspondence, Yale Edition, edited by W. S. Lewis, 31:370 <<http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/>>.

disassociative treatment of other philosophers she deems to be dangerous, but there is an additional force at play here:

a direct vindication of adultery was for the first time attempted by a woman, a professed admirer and imitator of the German suicide Werter. The Female Werter, as she is styled by her biographer, asserts in a work, intitled *The Wrongs of Woman*, that adultery is justifiable, and that the restrictions placed on it by the laws of England constitute part of the wrongs of woman.¹⁵

As the repetition suggests, More was trying to fix an association between Wollstonecraft and Werther. As I discuss shortly, suicide was a particularly contentious issue for More, with worrying ties to libertinism and the ‘revolution in manners’ that Wollstonecraft’s post-mortem representation threatened to bring about.

In *Dying to be English: Suicide Narratives and National Identity, 1721-1814*, Kelly McGuire argues that ‘the novel participates in the construction of a national consciousness through its deployment of a particularly gendered form of suicide reconstituted as sacrifice.’ It ‘Produces a sense of national identity and authority consolidated not so much through the loss as through the voluntary forfeiture of one kind of identity in exchange for another.’¹⁶ For a woman as zealously patriotic as More, this must have struck an uncomfortable chord. In order to counter this, she figures the domestic sphere as an arena of self-sacrifice, insisting to women that a lack of fortitude in this could only reassert their unsuitability for the kinds of political action reserved for men.

Notwithstanding the zeal with which she seeks to restrict feminine sensibility, there are hints in *Cœlebs* of More’s sense of a repressively masculinised public sphere.

¹⁵ More, *Strictures*, 1:44-5.

¹⁶ Kelly McGuire, *Dying to be English: Suicide Narratives and National Identity, 1721-1814* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), xii-xiii.

This surfaces when Charles describes the metropolis: here, More structures her language to be architecturally and culturally resistant to female readers, while ventriloquising her own experience of London society and providing women readers with an insight into it. ‘To a speculative stranger’, Charles remarks, ‘a London day presents every conceivable shape, of which human life is susceptible. When you trace the solicitude of the morning countenance, the anxious exploring of the morning paper, the eager interrogation of the land, and perils by sea—taxes trebling, dangers multiplying, commerce annihilating, war protracted, invasion threatening, destruction impending—your mind catches and communicates the terror, and you feel yourself “falling with a falling state.”’¹⁷ More’s quotation from Pope’s ‘Prologue to Mr. Addison’s Tragedy of Cato (1713)’ also encodes dissatisfaction with exclusion from civic politics, especially in turbulent times. The line appears in the following passage:

A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,
 And greatly falling with a falling state.
 While Cato gives his little Senate laws,
 What bosom beats not in his Country’s cause?
 Who sees him act, but envies ev’ry deed? (ll. 20-25)

The republican sentiment expressed here makes More’s reason for omitting the surrounding lines clear, but her choice of quotation might also hint towards a frustration at confinement within the domestic sphere, as well as a more comprehensive notion of political action beyond the ‘little Senate’. Pope’s equation of patriotic fervour with envy, a sin of the flesh,¹⁸ was perhaps uncomfortably familiar to More; indeed, she appears highly sensitive to women’s exclusion from specifically political spaces of self-sacrifice. The classical Cato is an appropriate figure for translating such sentiment: her

¹⁷ More, *Cælebs*, 73.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:3

own education had been ‘random’,¹⁹ with her father refusing to continue teaching More Latin, despite, or perhaps because of, her early promise.²⁰ In order to overcome such exclusion from learning, More imagines the domestic sphere as a political space for ‘brave’ women, recommending to educated female readers the inclusive potential of benevolent acts. This is emphasised by Charles’ further reflections on London life, which are most positive in his orderly description of charitable organisation, in contrast to the discord of business, ‘frivolous discourse’ and ‘luxurious dissipation’ of mixed evening entertainment.

Pope’s poem and Addison’s play are important intertexts for *Cœlebs*, as suggested by More’s naming of Lucille after Addison’s Lucia. The classical figure of self-sacrifice also strengthens the links between More’s novel and her *Strictures*, when she compares the merits of the study of history to those of Christianity. After touching on Cato’s suicide here, More asserts that ‘while those who exercise a habit of self-application a book of profane history may be made an instrument of improvement [...]; so without this habit the Bible itself may, in this view be read with little profit.’²¹ More continues with a conservative feminist statement of ‘vital Christianity’:

It will be to no purpose that the reader weeps over the fortitude of the Christian hero, or the constancy of the martyr, if she do not bear in mind that she herself is called to endure her own common trials with something of the same temper: if she do not bear in mind that, to control irregular humours, and to submit to the daily vexations of life, will require, though in a lower degree, the exertion of the same principle, and supplication for the aid of the same spirit which sustained the Christian hero in the trying conflicts of life, or the martyr in his agony at the stake.[...] And let me again remind the warm admirer of suffering piety under extraordinary trials, that if she now fails in the petty occasions to

¹⁹ Clark Library MS, More to Sir William Pepys, 11 November. 1783. Quoted in Stott, *Hannah More*, 6.

²⁰ See Stott, *Hannah More*, 6.

²¹ More, *Strictures* 1:187-8.

which she is actually called out, she would not be likely to have stood in those more trying occasions which excite her admiration.²²

More reminds her readers of the continuity between personal and political ‘fortitude’ under Christian belief, while again asserting their physical difference – the ‘irregular humours’ which required the spirit to be disciplined towards religious action. Using the nervous paradigm to circumscribe this action, she insists that women’s true self-sacrifice was in willing submission to prescribed gender roles and their ‘daily vexations’. Fearful that an overflowing vital spirit might encourage emulation of Christian martyrdom, and thus replicate the ‘female Werther’, she directs the ‘admirer of suffering’ towards ‘public worship’.

The Christian profession More offers women as a mode of patriotic action draws on her Lockean pedagogy, as well as her notion of vital spirit. Vocal profession alone could not embody evangelical religion; though women may profess devotion through public worship, this was not sufficient as a means of divine expression:

The evil does not lie in their not being always on their knees, but in their not bringing their religion from the closet into the world: in their bringing the spirit of the Sunday’s devotions into the transactions of the week: in not transforming their religion from a dry, and speculative, and inoperative system, into a lively, and influential, and unceasing principle of action.²³

Believing that ‘it is not enough that the doctrines of the gospel furnish a subject for discussion, if they do not furnish a principle of action,’²⁴ More foregrounds charity as a religious outlet: as Mrs Stanley puts it, *‘Charity is the calling of a lady; the care of the*

²² Ibid., 188-9.

²³ Ibid., 216.

²⁴ More, *Cœlebs*, 72.

*poor is her profession.*²⁵ Charity converts profession from vocal to practical act and is thus both a conservative move that valourises the ‘quiet beauty’ of the silent women over performative ‘display’,²⁶ but also envisages a more public role, or ‘national view’ for her exertions.²⁷

Cœlebs and corrective association

As my previous chapter discussed, More’s evangelicalism is directed at and adapted towards multiple audiences, including elite women such as Montagu. Her distress at the spiritual and physical condition of the poor was accompanied with a real disaffection for the profligacy of the upper classes, and she wrote zealously to urge fashionable women to cultivate charity over material dissipation and frivolity, often couching her message in flatteries such as ‘reformation must begin with the GREAT’.²⁸ Emboldened, perhaps, by the popularity of her *Cheap Repository Tracts* among the affluent classes, More renewed her evangelical campaign with what must be acknowledged as an astounding achievement: a best-selling Christian novel. Though its rigid formalism and aesthetic of austere morality make for less entertaining reading than others in the genre, *Cœlebs* is in some ways a fascinating text, at once seeking to wipe the slate clean while reshaping and redeploying the techniques of her political opponents.

Cœlebs provided an alternative vehicle for More’s model of Christian economy to her tracts and *Strictures*. During his visit to London, More’s protagonist and narrator Charles (*Cœlebs*) co-operates with the amiable but only casually religious Lady Belfield

²⁵ Ibid., 228. Original emphasis.

²⁶ More, *Moral Sketches*, 129.

²⁷ More, *Strictures*, 1:192.

²⁸ Hannah More, *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*, 2nd Edition (London: T. Cadell, 1788), 114.

to provide charitable relief for a young woman whose mother has died. As Wilberforce had funded the Mendip Schools, so Charles requests Lady Belfield to ‘direct [his] purse’, and she proceeds to conduct her charity in accordance with More’s template, making enquiries on the girl’s conduct, piety and industriousness, and subsequently relieving her poverty in a modest and practical rather than ostentatious or extravagant manner. But although she thus far exemplifies More’s charitable woman, Lady Belfield’s worldly sensibility makes her as prone to the temptation of objects of luxury as she is awake to those of charity; she is a sensible, rather than purely Christian benefactor. When her favourite maid falls seriously ill, Lady Belfield is acutely affected by her suffering, and provides the sick Toinette with not one but two surgeons. However, Charles relates that at the moment she is about to go to her servant, ‘the milliner came in with such a distracting variety of beautiful new things, that there was no possibility of letting them go till she had tried everything on, one after the other.’²⁹ Toinette dies in the interim, and having illustrated the point, no more is said of her.

Declining to gratify readers of romance with ‘details that have amusement only for their end’,³⁰ More provides a clear, if heavy-handed contrast to Lady Belfield in the exemplary Lucille. Mr Stanley proudly tells Charles that his daughter ‘imposes on herself’ a ‘union of charity with every personal indulgence’, and that

from this association she has acquired another virtue, for [...] she is sometimes obliged to content herself with practicing frugality instead of charity. When she finds she cannot afford both her own gratification, and the charitable act which she wanted to associate with it, [...] she compels herself to give up the indulgence also.

²⁹ More, *Cælebs*, 108.

³⁰ More, ‘Preface’ to *Cælebs*, 38.

Unlike Lady Belfield, Lucille is willing to forgo material pleasure for charity's sake, but she has achieved More's ideal of self-denial by associating sensory pleasure with charity in the first place. Again, Lockean pedagogy informs her pragmatic approach to physical and psychological reform. The notion that habit and circumstance were the most important factors in shaping identities had been central to the nervous introspection of the so-called 'Jacobin' novels of the 1790s, including Hays' *Emma Courtney* and Godwin's *Things as They Are; Or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). In both of these texts, associationism and necessitarianism underpin the eponymous narrators' accounts of their childhoods as causally decisive periods in their lives. Again, however, More appropriates techniques used by her opponents, and adapts these towards her Christian reformism.

Unlike Godwin and Hays, More's use of associationism in *Cœlebs* is externalised and socialised; rather than focusing on the feelings of individual characters, she examines the psychology of the subject as it was linked to others in the domestic economy. She uses the novel to convey ideas she had earlier put forward in her conduct writing. In *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World* (1791), for instance, More argues that an 'invariable œconomy' could too easily 'incline the heart to the love of money', and recommends associationist economic practice to correct this:

Nothing can effectually counteract this natural propensity but the Christian habit of devoting those retrenched expences to some good purpose; and the œconomy, instead of narrowing the heart, will enlarge it, by inducing a constant association of benevolence with frugality. An habitual attention to the wants of others is the only wholesome regulator of our own expences [sic], and carries with it a whole train of virtues, disinterestedness, sobriety and temperance.³¹

³¹ More, *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*. By One of the Laity (London: T. Cadell, 1791), 69-70.

In *Cœlebs*, More applies this Hartleyan notion of habitual association to assimilate charity into a Christian economy in which ‘the wants of others’, rather than the desires of the body, are paramount. Whereas Lady Belfield’s sentimental charity is undirected by religion and is thus merely equivalent to other ‘indulgences’, Lucille’s Christian charity rests on physical and habitual self-denial; a religious associationist self-discipline through which More seeks to render abstention a physical pleasure. More is optimistic about effecting such a change in her elite readership: a ‘good field’ to Montagu’s ‘pointed hill’, Lady Belfield demonstrates More’s belief in their receptivity to religious cultivation.

In *Cœlebs*, More engages with Godwin in a battle of genres, appearing increasingly embattled as she adopts the form favoured by the New Philosophers as a ‘vehicle’ for politics in the 1790s. Believing that ‘novels, which chiefly used to be dangerous in one respect, are now become mischievous in a thousand’,³² she worked scrupulously to distinguish *Cœlebs* from the sentimental and ‘Jacobin’ novels of the 1790s, refusing to name them directly, much less quote them, as Hamilton had in her satirical novel *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800). Instead, she mounts an intellectual defence of the Church of England that seeks to controvert Godwin’s account of what human perfection means. More disfigures the eponymous protagonist of his *Caleb Williams* in her nomenclature. *Cœlebs* (meaning unmarried) resembles Godwin’s Caleb (loyal servant or perhaps dog) in pronunciation, and the ligature in More’s spelling visually suggests a wedding as well as domestic œconomy, perhaps in further sarcasm towards Godwin and Wollstonecraft. More reasserts Caleb’s significance as a biblical figure and model of devoted action.³³ ‘Ignorant free-thinker[s]’ like Godwin

³² Ibid., 31.

³³ Numbers: 13:6–14:38.

misread and misrepresented the bible: ‘the extreme disingenuousness of the new philosophers, when writing on every thing and person connected with revealed religion. These authors often quote satirical poets as grave historical authorities.’³⁴

The eponymous protagonist of Godwin’s novel must have been easily recognisable to contemporary readers, as the title of an 1809 sequel, *Cœlebs Suited, or the opinions and part of the life of Caleb Cœlebs, Esq.*,³⁵ suggests. Without directing attention or encouraging interest in Godwin’s novel, for the informed reader More’s nominal choices place *Cœlebs* in intertextual combat with *Caleb Williams*. In her own representation of ‘things as they are,’ More draws on personal experience: the unyielding sectarianism of Ned Tyrrel, More’s counterpoint to Godwin’s feudal Mr. Tyrrel, recollects her encounters with clergymen during the Blagdon controversy – those putting undue restrictions on evangelicalism, More suggests, are the real tyrants. Unlike Hamilton, More refuses to replicate ‘jacobin’ novels through explicit parody, but she nevertheless mirrors Godwin and Hays in her use of the novel as a vehicle for politics: on this level at least, *Cœlebs* is to *Strictures* what *Caleb Williams* is to *Political Justice*. She strips the romantic intrigue of pathological inferiority from her novel, leaving a stark but highly intelligible associationist narrative. I conclude this chapter by further examining the complex dialectic at play in More’s covert engagement with Godwinian radicalism.

Matthew Grenby deserves credit as the first to offer serious literary attention to the ‘anti-Jacobin’ novel. In the introduction to his book, he explains that, after January

³⁴ Hannah More, *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society; and An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*, New Edition (London: T. Cadell, 1809), 170.

³⁵ George Rover [pseud.], *Cœlebs Suited, or the opinions and part of the life of Caleb Cœlebs, Esq. A distant relation of the late Charles Cœlebs, Esq. deceased* (London: Edmund Lloyd, 1809).

1793, when the French National Convention declared war against Britain, the “‘war of ideas’, withered away.’ This, Grenby asserts, was ‘not because every champion of radical doctrine had been utterly converted by the logic of the conservatives, but because few of them, with just one or two exceptions, could be found who wished to defy a near unanimous and highly militant anti-Jacobinism to put forward what had suddenly become dangerously orthodox opinions.’³⁶ Grenby goes on to state the qualification that ‘the radical threat had [not] entirely dissipated by the mid 1790s. Some lone radicals were still travelling the country at the turn of the century trying to whip up support for their cause.’³⁷ However, he insists that ‘so much of the evidence pointing to a continued revolutionary underground enduring until the re-emergence of a confident and vocal radicalism after about 1807 derives from the reaction to that perceived threat rather than the threat itself.’³⁸ As Grenby clarifies,

Whether or not the virtual conservative hegemony of which some historians talk had been established by the mid 1790s then, the important point remains that there was no dispersal of the sense of crisis in Britain even after the Treason Trials (1794) signalled the beginning in earnest of the governments clamp-down and the corresponding societies had organised their last mass meetings (1795). Rather, as the orators of conservatism found they had fewer and more reticent voices against which to compete they simply became more strident and bombastic.³⁹

I want to complicate Grenby’s view slightly by questioning the reticence he attributes to radicalism. More and other conservative novelists were responding, I argue, to the increased feminisation and domesticisation of radical activity, something they saw as even more dangerous, because more insidious. More’s response, moreover, is rarely

³⁶ Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel*, 5.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 6.

³⁹ Ibid.

bombastic; *Cœlebs* is highly restrained, as are the corresponding *Strictures*, though as I later discuss, she certainly appears triumphalist at times.

Hannah More did not merely use ‘Jacobinism as a pretext for forcing through [her] vision of a moral reformation,’⁴⁰ but in a sense as pre-text by replicating the associationist form of the novel of purpose. As Mee puts it, *Cœlebs* ‘is not explicitly oriented against any Jacobin threat, unlike her Cheap Repository Tracts of the 1790s, but it is aimed at an internal enemy in the shape of moral complacency and religious laxity among the elite. It adopts the strategies of the anti-Jacobin novelists, using conversations within the domestic space to meet and overcome these dangers’.⁴¹ The enemy was internal in more than one sense; it was a corruption of the physical and psychological being. For More, as she writes in *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont* (1793), ‘it is not so much the force of French bayonets, as the contamination of French principles, that ought to excite our apprehensions.’⁴² More affirms her providential Loyalism by stating that ‘through the blessing of GOD’ Britain will be ‘defended from their open hostilities by the temperate wisdom of our Rulers, and the bravery of our fleets and armies’, ‘but’, she continues, ‘the domestic danger arising from licentious and irreligious principles among ourselves can only be guarded against by the personal care and vigilance of every one of us who values religion and the good order of society.’⁴³ This was no simple opportunism, nor was it a response to a waning threat; what More proposes is a psychological counter-revolution.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁴¹ Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 225-6.

⁴² Hannah More, *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, with a prefatory Address in behalf of the French Emigrant Clergy*, 2nd Edition (London: T. Cadell, 1793) 44.

⁴³ Ibid., 45.

Memory and revision

In 1809, less than a year after the publication of the first edition of *Cœlebs*, Godwin published *Essay on Sepulchres*, an essay that applies associationist psychology to the very matter of building national identity. Godwin address questions of who should be memorialised and where – fundamentally questions about heritage, about how history should be defined and by whom. He suggests that a ‘very slight and cheap’ white wooden cross could be erected to mark the places of interment of the ‘illustrious dead’.⁴⁴ Paul Westover has given an anthropological reading of what he terms Godwin’s ‘necromantic’ work, arguing that *Sepulchres* were an ‘attempt to ground, through tourism, the reading experience in materiality.’ On the politics of this, Westover notes that

Like Godwin's *Political Justice*, the Essay puts its trust in the reason and moral sense of individuals, appealing not primarily to government, but rather to ‘an extensive private subscription’ and to a volunteer ‘committee of men, who should feel, This is our Business.’ Nevertheless, the Essay concerns itself with building national community: it is, in the end, a ‘scheme for Great Britain.’⁴⁵

While Godwin makes room for the participation of any man who feels ‘this is [his] business’, in failing to address the manual labour involved, he writes the working man out of his scheme. Westover does not surmise who Godwin envisaged would actually do this work, whether paid labourers or the (male) volunteers themselves; indeed, the class politics of *Sepulchres* remains an underexamined topic in critical analyses of the essay so far. Moreover, all of those Godwin marks as worth memorialising are men, bar

⁴⁴ William Godwin, *Essay on Sepulchres*, in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1993), 6:1.

⁴⁵ Paul Westover, ‘William Godwin, Literary Tourism, and the Work of Necromanticism’. *Studies in Romanticism* 48, no. 2 (2009).

Richardson's fictional Clarissa Harlow – indeed, he ridicules the idea of memorialising Anne Chaucer. Perhaps in part an attempt at amendment of the scandal following the publication of his *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), Godwin's essay uses associationism to masculinise memorialisation.

Like *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*, *Sepulchres* operates on the cusp between individual psychology and politics. Published in the February of 'a particularly morbid year', seeing the death of Thomas Holcroft and Godwin writing in increasingly ill health,⁴⁶ the essay is fundamentally concerned with the interrelations between private and public identity. As Westover discusses, memorialisation was increasingly linked to national identity during the Napoleonic wars. A memorial was proposed to mark Nelson's death in 1805, and was erected in Birmingham in October 1809, the same year as the publication of *Sepulchres*. As the first monument in the country to be paid for by public subscription, the national significance of such an event must have been considerable; Godwin and More, then, were writing in a period of intensified public interest in memorialisation. Whether or not she read Godwin's essay, it is clear that More's writing at this time had Godwin, among other things, in its sights; his renewed activity was doubtless regarded by More as revolutionary iconoclasm; however democratically limited and implausible his scheme of national memory was, it was an attempt to wrest national history from the establishment elite. Thus, in her essays *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society; and An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*, republished together in revised form soon after *Sepulchres*, More redoubled her efforts against Godwin's appropriation of associationist theory.

⁴⁶ Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London: Routledge, 2010), 225.

By this time, Godwin was no longer writing radical novels and treatises. In 1805, he and Mary Jane Godwin opened their children's bookshop and publishing company, T. Hodgkin's, at the Juvenile Library on Tottenham Court Road, later moved to The Strand under the name of the French and English Juvenile and School Library. This might be read as a retreat, and his anonymity suggests that in a sense it was, but such a movement towards the domestic education favoured by reformists like More was an alternative, and potentially even more effective vehicle for his politics than either *Political Justice* or *Caleb Williams*. In its first year, the Juvenile Library published Godwin's *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1805) under the pseudonym of Edward Baldwin, as his reputation at that point made necessary. In his introduction, Godwin makes familiar Enlightenment claims on the pedagogic efficacy of 'simple' conversation, adopting Trimmer's use of the fable in *Ladder to Learning* (1789, 1792) to generate delight in moral lessons. Julie Carlson notes that 'Godwin's *Fables* patiently unfold the initial context or final conclusion of each fable [...] and forges connections between the world of the fable and the contemporary world',⁴⁷ which might again remind us of Barbauld.

'The Stag Drinking', one of the fables Godwin adapts from Aesop, provides a critique of the established system of government analogous to his writing in the 1790s. But the fable's sensory description of the deer, as well as the dogs which 'tear it almost to pieces'⁴⁸ is also strongly reminiscent of Barbauld's hunted hare in *Lessons*. Godwin makes clear his disapprobation for the sport of the elite, leading the child towards acquiescence with his views in familiar, conversational prose: 'For my part, I do not

⁴⁷ Julie Carlson, *England's First Family of Writers: Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Mary Shelley* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 236.

⁴⁸ William Godwin [as Edward Baldwin], *Fables, Ancient and Modern. Adapted for the Use of Children*, 9th Edition (London: M. J Godwin and Co., 1821), 17.

quite like this hunting of the deer. Do not you think it is cruel, to call the frightening a poor creature [...] a sport?⁴⁹ The fable's connection to *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* is furthered by a gendered inflection of establishment motifs which calls to mind Caleb's sensualised subordination to Ferdinando Falkland. A primer for Godwin's utilitarianism, the moral reads, 'Another time, when I undertake to decide the value of a thing, I will consider, not merely whether it looks beautiful, but what use is to be got from it. I now know that swift legs are more worth having than the most magnificent horns that ever were seen.'⁵⁰ Godwin's educational writing, like that of Wollstonecraft and the writers considered in this thesis, was closely bound up with his politics.⁵¹ Though *Fables* received mostly favourable reviews, Trimmer, for one, considered it highly objectionable.⁵² Though she seems not to know who the author is, her review of *Fables* suggests that she recognised it as a worryingly liberal addition to the genre. Like More, she engages in self-censorship, purposefully omitting particularly troubling sections of book, and bemoaning its misappropriation of a form she had adopted in her own writing for children.

In an addition to the revised essay, 'An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World' of 1809, More refers to Locke's *Human Understanding* as 'a monument of wisdom',⁵³ perhaps with the urn somewhere in mind. Having worked in through the 1790s to rehabilitate Enlightenment thought into conservative politics,

⁴⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁵¹ Julie Carlson is one of the first scholars to have fully recognised this. See her excellent Julie Carlson, *England's First Family of Writers: Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Mary Shelley* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 232-45. Also see Robert Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised: Politics in the Juvenile Library'. in *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. Robert M. Manquis and Victoria Myers, 125-48 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

⁵² Sarah Trimmer, Review of William Godwin's 'Fables, Ancient and Modern'. *The Guardian of Education*, 1806: 282-96.

⁵³ More, *Thoughts; and An Estimate*, 164.

More now seeks to register victory in the war of ideas. If, as Sutherland argues, More wants to ‘sever the masculinist rhetoric of late eighteenth-century popular democracy from its revolutionary roots and appropriate it’,⁵⁴ this necessitates a refutation of the viability of that rhetoric. In her preface to the original *Estimate*, More writes that

Philosophy [...] (as Unbelief, by a patent of its own creation, has lately been pleased to call itself) will not do nearly so much mischief to the present age as its primitiva apostles intended: since it requires time, application, and patience to peruse the reasoning veterans of the sceptic school: and these are talents not now very severely devoted to study of any sort, by those who give the law to fashion; especially since [...] the same principles may be acquired on cheaper terms, and the reputation of being philosophers obtained without the sacrifices of pleasure for the severities of study; since the industry of our literary chemists has extracted the spirit from the gross substance of the old unvendible poison, and exhibited it in the volatile essense of a few sprightly sayings.⁵⁵

Perhaps thinking of Priestley’s condensed *Hartley’s Theory* in her chemical analogy, More claims that the very fashionability of philosophy weakens it, its dissemination through compendiums targeted at those with only a superficial interest. Notwithstanding her dismissal of Hume, More’s additions to her *Thoughts; and An Estimate* show her taking the domestic threat more seriously in 1809. While seeking to avoid appearing reactionary, she writes in her preface to this new edition that ‘The awful and unparalleled public events which have occurred’ since the initial publication of the essays in the 1790s ‘seem to furnish no new reason why the standard of Religion [...] should be lowered.’⁵⁶

More maintains that the elite must remain vigilant; in a period of warfare abroad and increasing fears over public disorder in Britain, she seeks to recover associationist

⁵⁴ Sutherland, *Hannah More’s Counter-Revolutionary Feminism*, 33.

⁵⁵ Hannah More, *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World. By One of the Laity* (London: T. Cadell, 1791), 16-17.

⁵⁶ More, ‘Preface’ to *Thoughts; and An Estimate*, vi.

theory from its reappropriation by radical thinkers like Godwin. In a renewed effort to align philosophy with piety in ‘An Estimate’, More breaks with her generalised approach to philosophical tradition by giving a *précis* of a select few philosophers. Demonstrating through these examples that ‘as much rhetoric and logic too may be shown in defending revelation as in attacking it’,⁵⁷ she reserves her most enthusiastic praise for theists, and in opposing their work to Hume’s ‘Essay on Suicide’ (1777) adds a footnote in which she taunts the posthumous Hume in his own materialist language.

More’s note is worth quoting in full:

The Essay on Suicide was published soon after Mr. Hume’s death. It might mortify his liberal mind (if matter and motion were capable of consciousness) to learn, that this his dying legacy, the last concentrated effort of his genius and his principles, sent from the grave, as it were, by a man so justly renowned in other branches of literature, produced no sensation on the public mind. And that the precious information that every man had a right to be his own executioner, was considered as a privilege so little desirable, that it probably had not the glory of converting one *cross road* into a cemetery. It is to the credit of this country that fewer copies of this work were sold than perhaps ever was the case with a writer of so much eminence. A more impotent act of wickedness has seldom been achieved, or one which has had the glory of making fewer persons wicked or miserable. That cold and cheerless oblivion which he held out as a refuge to beings who had solaced themselves with the soothing hope of immortality has, by a memorable retribution, overshadowed his own last labour: the Essay on Suicide being already as much forgotten as he promised the best men that they themselves would be. And this favourite work became at once a prey to that eternal night to which he had consigned the whole human race.⁵⁸

While her primary target here is Hume, the subtext contains a virulent attack against Godwin’s necromanticism, as suggested by ‘the glory of converting one *cross road* into a cemetery’. Riding roughshod over Godwin’s scheme as well as Hume’s grave, More’s caricature highlights the impracticality and, more dubiously, the historical ‘impotence’

⁵⁷ Ibid., 165.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 164-5. Original emphasis.

of the materialist philosophy they shared. More's attack is ingeniously multilayered; in terms of book history, her additions are a foil to Hume's removal of 'On Suicide' and another essay, 'Of the Immortality of the Soul', from his original *Five Dissertations* (1756), and the subsequent insertion of 'Of the Standard of Taste' in their stead in a newly bound volume entitled *Four Dissertations* (1757). Arguing against the Thomistic notion of suicide as a violation of divine order and questioning the doctrine of eternal life respectively, the essays caused an outcry amongst its prepublication readers, and the threat of a lawsuit from one. They were eventually published anonymously in France in 1770 and England in 1777, but More was probably thinking of the 1783 edition, which appeared under Hume's name. Evidently aware of the controversy surrounding its publication, More casts 'On Suicide' as entirely ineffectual in subverting the twin doctrines of immortality and immateriality, which could now, she implies, be safely referred to and refuted in open discourse. Of course, that More thought it necessary at this point to address Hume's essay, if only to dismiss it, could conversely be read as indicative of a growing apprehension of materialist philosophy and its revolutionary links to suicide; even as she claims victory against Hume, his inclusion here (and Godwin's ostensible exclusion) betrays an acute desire to neutralise the ongoing effects of such writings on the elite.

Whereas Hume's body is consigned to the 'cold and cheerless oblivion' of More's footnote, the body of the female philosopher, as grotesquely exemplified by Hamilton's Bridgetina Botherim at the start of the century, finds no such presence in More's writing. By writing such burlesque out of her *Cœlebs*, More suggests that the Female Philosopher had failed to become a reality in fashionable circles; ironically, she cannot achieve embodiment because women's attention is in More's view predisposed to be consumed by physicality itself. As Mr Stanley puts it:

I have known twenty women mismanage their affairs, through bad education, through ignorance, especially of arithmetic, through a multiplicity of vain accomplishments, through an excess of dissipation, through a devotedness to personal embellishments, through an absorption of the whole soul in music, for one who has made her husband metaphysically miserable.⁵⁹

It is revealing that this discussion is added to a section on the causes of irreligion in the youth of the elite, in which she seeks to counter, as she does in ‘An Estimate’, the belief that religion ‘is the declared enemy to wit and genius.’⁶⁰ More is concerned not so much with the question of religion’s conversability in fashionable circles, but with how – and whose – philosophy can be safely incorporated into devout conversation. The subtext here is that More’s extraordinary success in the print market showed that unlike the ‘new philosophers’, she could write accessibly in the language of the elite. Indeed, as Emma Major notes, More ‘did actually speak’ the language of the established clergy and was thus able to ‘inform clerical practice’⁶¹ in a way that freethinking writers like Godwin, Hays, and even Priestley, could not. William Cowper declared that the original essays were ‘universally read’,⁶² and like her other publications they sold exceptionally well: the joint reprint was the tenth edition of *Thoughts*, the sixth of *An Estimate*. It was published in August 1809, on the same day as a new (tenth) edition of *Cœlebs*.⁶³ This begs the question, why did More choose to engage more directly with Godwin at this point, over a decade after the publication of *Caleb Williams*, when *Sepulchres* seems to

⁵⁹ Ibid., 294.

⁶⁰ More, *Thoughts; and An Estimate*, 164.

⁶¹ Major, *Madam Britannia*, 300.

⁶² Cowper to James Crosgwell, 15 June 1791, *The Letters of the late William Cowper, Esq., to his Friends.*, ed. John Johnson (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1820), 501.

⁶³ ‘Advertisements & Notices’. *The Morning Chronicle*, no. 12557 (9 August 1809).

have garnered little attention and did not run beyond the first edition.⁶⁴ Whether or not More considered Godwin a continuing threat to domestic morality, both writers seem to have been working with an increasing historical awareness; both were attempting to lay stake to a language which could shape the events of the previous decade in national memory. As such, it was natural for the dominant model of memory to play a role in this ideological process, and considering the evangelical practice to which More had applied associationist theory, she may well have considered Godwin's scheme a vandalisation of British philosophical heritage.

While making repeated appeals to the spirituality of the body, More keeps the distinction between worldliness and religion firmly intact, using analogy to distance her reformist writing from both philosophical and 'worldly' materialism. To conclude by returning briefly to *Village Politics*, More transfigures the body politic of Burke's *Reflections* into an adaptation of Aesop's fable of the belly:

The hands said, I won't work any longer to feed this lazy belly, who sits in state like a lord, and does nothing. Said the feet, I won't walk and tire myself to carry him about; let him shift for himself; so said all the members; just as your levellers and republicans do now. And what was the consequence? Why the belly was pinched to be sure; but the hands and feet, and the rest of the members suffered so much for want of their old nourishment, that they fell sick, pined away, and wou'd have died, if they had not come to their senses just in time to save their lives, as I hope all you will do.⁶⁵

Repeatedly adopting dissociative as well as associative techniques, More worked consistently to address people's souls and minds by appealing to their bodies. In common with her radical opponents, her use of association is rooted in a Lockean

⁶⁴ On the underwhelming response to *Sepulchres*, see Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 323.

⁶⁵ Hannah More, *Village Politics. Addressed to all the mechanics, journeymen, and day labourers, in Great Britain*, 2nd Edition (London: F. and C. Rivington, 1792), 10.

understanding of the interrelations between object and mind, but she modulates this with dualist language, consistently placing ‘the *material* substance, [...] the body and limbs, [...] the organs and senses’ in subordination to ‘the immaterial and immortal’.⁶⁶ She is certainly not unique among the writers in this thesis in this spiritualism, but while Barbauld and Hamilton are certainly not materialists, neither do they assert dualist Christian dogma in such an outright and programmatic way. Indeed, Barbauld’s reflections on the nature of the soul are often equivocal; the rhetorical questions in her late poem ‘Life’ (1825), for example, accommodate multiple metaphysical positions. Her suppler model of association can be more immediately visualised as a ‘web of society’⁶⁷ than a stratified and rigidly structured matrix. Running through and vitalising this mechanism in More’s work, however, is spirit.

⁶⁶ More, *Strictures*, 1:56.

⁶⁷ Barbauld, ‘Johnson’ in *The British Novelists* (London, 1820), 26:iii.

5. Sense and speculation: Elizabeth Hamilton's female philosophy

A review in *The British Critic* (1802) situates Elizabeth Hamilton's *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* (1801) firmly in the Hartleyan tradition.

Notwithstanding Hamilton's insistence, in the introduction to her two volume work, that it was founded on her own 'observation and experience',¹ the reviewer surmises that Hamilton is 'a metaphysician of the school of Hartley' and that her book, in contrast to More's *Strictures*, is the product of 'studying and meditation'.² The reviewer voices anxiety over the radicalisation of Hartley's theory, but is pleased to find Hamilton's work untainted by this: 'there is, in her book, nothing of that materialism, which Priestley and some other pupils of that school have so unfairly represented, as the necessary consequence of the principles of their master.'³ 'Hartley', the reviewer continues, 'was a pious man', and though his philosophy, rather than Christianity, is the 'prominent feature' of Hamilton's *Elementary Principles*, it 'breathes sentiments of purest piety'.

Although the *British Critic* reviewer aligned Hamilton with More as opposed to Priestley, there is a certain level of political ambiguity in her work. This is reflected in contemporary scholarship, where she has been variously represented as anti-Jacobin and Jacobin, as a radical, conservative and moderate feminist.⁴ In a recent study, however,

¹ Elizabeth Hamilton, *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1801), 1:xii.

² *The British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review* 19 (1802), 232.

³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴ For readings of Hamilton as an anti-Jacobin see, for example, Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel* and Eleanor Ty, 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned: Elizabeth Hamilton's Parodic Novel'. *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 22, no. 4 (October 1991): 111-129. Jacobin readings include Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) and Anne K. Mellor, 'Romantic Orientalism Begins at Home: Elizabeth Hamilton's

Claire Grogan argues that the Jacobin/Anti-Jacobin binary is ‘limiting’ for ‘interpretations of works from the political middle ground’ such as those of Hamilton.⁵ Hamilton, Grogan insists, is ‘neither compulsively anti-revolutionary (like Jane West or Hannah More for example) nor characteristically pro-revolutionary (like Wollstonecraft or Hays) but consciously incorporates elements which can be attributed to either political extreme in her works.’⁶ Indeed, Hamilton repeatedly claims philosophical freedom from political partisanship. She would have agreed, I think, that there was none of Priestley’s metaphysics in the book, but the reviewer’s claim that unlike More, Hamilton’s study of the human mind came at the expense of ‘acquaintance with the living world’⁷ would surely have disappointed her. For Hamilton, everyday sensory experience was fundamental to her philosophy; in fact, she sees ‘the living world’ as the only useful space in which to apply philosophy. Furthermore, as her attitude to Priestleyan materialism suggests, her wish to remain distinct from particular schools of thought is both the cornerstone of her ambitious educational project, and a marker of her

⁵ “Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah”. *Studies in Romanticism* 44, no. 2 (2005): 151-164. On Hamilton as a feminist, see Claire Grogan, *Politics and Genre in the Works of Elizabeth Hamilton, 1756-1816* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), especially Chapter 3, and Mellor’s ‘Romantic Orientalism Begins at Home.’ William Stafford classes Hamilton as a conservative feminist in *English Feminists and Their Opponents in the 1790s: Unsex’d and Proper Females* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 38. On Hamilton’s moderate feminism, see Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 14. For a discussion of the problems of such polarisation, see Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988). Johnson argues that ‘Many of the novels written in the “war of ideas” are more complicated and less doctrinaire than modern commentators have represented. It does not suffice to denominate writers as “conservative” or “radical” according to whether they were “for” or “against” the French Revolution’ (xxi). Also see Miriam L. Wallace, ‘Crossing from “Jacobin” to “Anti-Jacobin”: Rethinking the Terms of English Jacobinism, in *Romantic Border Crossings*, ed., Jeffrey Cass and Larry Peer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 99-112.

⁶ Grogan, *Politics and Genre*, 3. As Grogan shows in her excellent study, even *Memoirs*, Hamilton’s most recognisably anti-Jacobin publication, ‘is also a vehicle for other less conservative ideas (55).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷ *The British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review* 19 (1802), 232.

political liberality: as Hamilton puts it, she is ‘at no pains to adopt, or to avoid, the peculiar phraseology of this or that particular school.’⁸

In this chapter, I argue that Hamilton’s politics can be comprehensively read in her attitude to and use of the philosophy of mind; as I want to suggest, this both shapes and is a key enabling factor of her political vision. The chapter focuses on Hamilton’s *Elementary Principles* alongside her satirical novels, *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796), and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800). Although commentators have not always paid attention to the important intertextualities between Hamilton’s educational writing and her fiction, I argue that these constituted a sustained attempt to forge and popularise her female philosophy, and that what emerges from a reading of the two as they shaped and informed each other is a feminist propadeutic of philosophy that is valuable in terms of understanding Hamilton’s political stance, and helps open up discussion beyond Jacobin/anti-Jacobin binary.

Common Sense through female education

Hamilton appears to have understood the potential pitfalls of adopting too strong, too French, or too Priestleyan, an associationist stance. In an addition to the second edition of *Elementary Principles*,⁹ she defends her investment in associationism as the foundational theory of her didactic work. The letter is worth quoting at length, because it offers an idea of Hamilton’s philosophical and political strategy through its linking of

⁸ *Memoirs of the late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton*, ed. Elizabeth Benger (London: Longman, 1819), 2:4.

⁹ The book originally appeared in 1801 under the title *Letters on Education*. Unless otherwise indicated, I refer to the revised second edition (1801-2).

two issues with which this chapter is concerned – the utility of ‘systems’ and the nature and value of memory:

The laws of association have been made use of by some writers to explain all the phaenomena of the human mind; they have been made the basis of systems which have met with opposition, and of theories which are now nearly exploded. With the object of our present enquiry these are totally unconnected. The principles upon which it proceeds, are not implicitly adopted from any author, however celebrated; they are not chosen to suit any system, however plausible. Of systems I have none, save the system of Christianity. Of theories I cannot be said to adopt any; since I follow none one step farther, than reflection upon the operations of my own mind, and observation upon those of others, fully justifies. Nor do I mean to stand bound for *all* the opinions of every author, whose sentiments I may occasionally quote. I make it a principle never to despise truth, even when it is spoken by an enemy; nor shall I ever be led to reject it, because the person by whom it is advanced, has in some points embraced opinions opposite to my own. Silently to steal the sentiments of such persons, where they happened to suit me, while I pronounced a general censure against the authors, is a line of conduct that is, in my mind, *firmly associated with the idea of dishonour*. A memory not tenacious respecting particulars may sometimes betray me into seeming ingratitude, as I am conscious that I often forget the source of information; but the same defect in the power of retention precludes me from using the exact words of any author, whose writings are not immediately before me.¹⁰

The passage is telling of Hamilton’s attitude towards philosophy as a whole. While she dismisses the ‘systems’ and ‘theories’ stemming from associationism, she is markedly magnanimous in doing so. She seeks to disassociate herself from quarrels over its uses, achieving a level of autonomy and political disinterestedness that her male philosophical counterparts often had not. Being ‘unconnected’, however, has another important function: it opens up a space for her own distinctive philosophy of mind. Similarly to More, she proclaims Christianity as her sole moral guide in this philosophy, though More would perhaps have taken exception to its description as a ‘system’. But

¹⁰ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1:18-19.

where More shields herself from too close an association with the philosophers from whom she draws, Hamilton claims the freedom to adopt ideas from wherever she wishes, even, presumably, from Priestley. Encoded here is a criticism of conservative thinkers adopting the ideas of the Hartleyan school while vilifying its proponents, and she seems to suggest that she is physically incapable of doing the same, having a ‘defect in the power of retention’. As I discuss later, Hamilton’s poor memory for quotations performs a dual function in her writing, both forming part of her critique of how philosophy was done, and underpinning her claims about the originality of her own work.

Hamilton becomes bolder in her claims to originality in a later passage, where she claims that ‘The effects of association occurred to [her] mind, long before [she] was in possession of the word which I now make use of to express them.’¹¹ Her citing of Lord Kames’ *Elements of Criticism* (1762) as having been her introduction to the theory suggests a gravitation towards the Scottish Enlightenment, commensurate with her nationality.¹² Her allegiance to Common Sense philosophy is clear throughout the text from her quotation of Dugald Stewart’s *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792), and as Jane Rendall argues, from the parallel organization of the texts and altered title of the second edition.¹³ But, as I argue here, Hamilton’s *Elementary Principles*, when read in the context of her other writing, communicates a distinctly feminine philosophy. Indeed, this is suggested by Hamilton’s next move, where she conceals a critique of the male philosophical tradition in the apparently self-deprecating confession that she thought of Locke and Hartley ‘as philosophical writers, far too

¹¹ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1:20.

¹² Hamilton was born in Ireland to an Irish mother and Scottish father, but lived in Scotland for most of her life.

¹³ Jane Rendall, “‘Elementary Principles of Education’: Elizabeth Hamilton, Maria Edgeworth and the Uses of Common Sense Philosophy”. *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 5 (2012), 7.

abstruse for my simple judgement to comprehend'.¹⁴ Her tone in this letter is occasionally apologetic, but underlying this is a defence of her philosophical self-education; her claim to have not been particularly familiar with the texts that had become closely associated with reformist writing both allows her to distance herself from their politics and to carve out a distinctive philosophical position of her own.

This philosophy is sophisticated, detailed, and above all, pragmatic: 'I must', Hamilton writes, 'beg your patient attention to minute detail, as it is by a reference to facts alone, that the danger of systematizing and arguing from mere hypothesis can be avoided'.¹⁵ In this way, she is positioning herself in alignment with Stewart's Common Sense school (and Hamilton closes the first letter with a quotation from his *Elements*), but it is also a particularly domestic application of what Richard De Ritter identifies as the 'comprehensive view' of her work.¹⁶ The visual politics in Hamilton's writing, according to De Ritter, convey a fundamentally privileged perspective. While I agree with his account, I want to shift the focus of this visuality onto the senses, and the approaches to the material, embodied, and practical through which Hamilton's politics function.

Hamilton's apparent modesty in confessing the limits of her education and 'simple judgment' barely conceals the boldness of her claim to have come to understand associationist psychology even before she had a name to put to it. Educated women who conversed regularly with eminent male philosophers (as Hamilton did) would no doubt be familiar with this strategic humility. Indeed, she seems to play on shared experience of this, making an oblique criticism of men in her address to her female readers: 'Thus,

¹⁴ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1:20.

¹⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶ Richard De Ritter, 'Female Philosophers and the Comprehensive View: Elizabeth Hamilton's "Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education"'. *European Romantic Review* 23, no. 6 (2012): 689-705.

my friend, are we often deterred from seeking for information, not only upon subjects which are the peculiar province of the learned, but likewise upon those points that are interesting to every rational being.¹⁷ Driving home her inclusive view of the philosophy of mind, Hamilton concludes with a nod to Stewart and a plea for greater inclusivity: ‘greatly do I wish to see this subject divested of all extraneous matter, cleared from the rubbish of systems and hypothesis, and rendered so plain to every capacity as to become a part of common education.¹⁸ What Hamilton is attempting to initiate here is a philosophy of mind made accessible to women, but one cleared of ‘rubbish’ and rendered useful by its alignment with everyday experience. Hamilton seeks a feminine reformation of philosophy itself.

As I mentioned above, Hamilton’s additions between the first and second volumes suggest some level of concern about appearing over-zealous in her adoption of associationist psychology. Again, she calls on Stewart’s *Elements* with the apparent intention of marking out a Common Sense perspective. As Rendall states,

Stewart’s ‘Christianity was unquestioned. For moderate Whigs seeking to demonstrate their hostility toward revolutionary radicalism without sacrificing their hopes of social and educational improvement, Common Sense philosophy offered not political or religious orthodoxy but a route both Christian and progressive towards combating ‘the sceptical tendency of the present age’.’¹⁹

However, a crucial difference between Hamilton and Stewart is the former’s consistent emphasis on women as nonpartisan, practical, and thus superior treasurers of philosophical learning. Hamilton is tacitly critical of the entire philosophical tradition

¹⁷ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1:20.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1:20-1. In his *Elements*, Stewart repeatedly refers to the speculations of contemporary metaphysicians as ‘rubbish’. Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1792), 1:15, 1:46.

¹⁹ Rendall, ‘Elementary Principles of Education,’ 5.

following Locke; she sees it as having failed to bring about any real change in society. For her, the reason philosophers had been unable to engender real human progress was that they had not perceived what for Hamilton was readily obvious: that the foundational building blocks of the mind were the most significant, and that since it was women who were generally responsible for this, their rational education ‘would do more towards the improvement of the species than all the discoveries of science, and the researches of philosophy.’²⁰ This makes for a closer affinity between Hamilton and Wollstonecraft than can be accounted for under readings of her work as strictly conservative. At the same time, however, women’s very exclusion from politics in the narrow sense allows Hamilton to claim the freedom to forward ideas associated with various, and often opposing political positions.

As with Barbauld, the sensory perception of objects, or affect, in today’s terms, forms the very foundation of the intellect: ‘A child who has been accustomed to pay attention to its perceptions, has received, from the various objects of sense, a fund of ideas which are ready to be brought into use; these, by the power of association, assist the mind in forming new conceptions.’²¹ Hamilton is discussing very early education here, ‘the first link of the chain’,²² something which she insists has not been granted proper significance in the (male) philosophical tradition:

That it is by means of the senses that ideas are first acquired, is a fact, which, I apprehend, to be now established beyond the reach of controversy. It has, for more than half a century, been generally admitted by philosophers; but the belief of it has, as far as I know, induced little additional attention towards that period of life, when the knowledge acquired by the senses first begins to be communicated to the mind.²³

²⁰ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 2-3.

²¹ Ibid., 39.

²² Ibid.

²³ Hamilton, *Letters*, 2:40.

The philosophy of mind has had a limited impact on human progression because it has remained the domain of men, whose involvement in education generally came at a later stage of the child's development. As Thaddeus summarises, 'Men, Hamilton argues, are remote from daily reality. They generalize from "superficial knowledge," and even that knowledge is deluded, based as it is on only one or two "assumed" habits. Men's knowledge, then, is both incomplete and wrong.'²⁴

In her chapter on 'Perception' in *Elementary Principles*, Hamilton regrets that 'It is sufficient that children learn to prate by rote upon subjects which require the powers of judgement and reflection to comprehend. They repeat the ideas of others, and we are satisfied'.²⁵ The instilling of words without ideas creates prodigies, she argues, but these are 'a species of forced plants', which may at first 'appear fair and flourishing', but in fact have 'neither strength nor flavour'. Her choice of the navy as an analogy ('Soon would the navy of England cease to be our pride and boast, if it were built of timber from the hot-house') underlines again her notion of the connectedness of education to civic life, and the importance of women's domestic role in this process. She clarifies her use of the term 'perception' as 'denot[ing] the impression made upon the mind by all the objects of sense', echoing Locke, and ties it to the universal human capacity for 'reflection' by stressing that it is 'understood by every one who reflects on what he does, when he hears, sees, feels, &c.'²⁶ Again, this signals a comprehensive philosophy which is in her view free from political prejudice, but inclines towards Scottish Enlightenment: she uses 'perception' and 'impression' to figuratively describe ideas, as Priestley does, but she also asserts that there is a clear difference between perceptions of sense and reflection; like Reid and Stewart, Hamilton is no imagist.

²⁴ Thaddeus, 'Elizabeth Hamilton's Domestic Politics'. 266-7.

²⁵ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 2:33.

²⁶ Ibid., 34.

In Hamilton's view, the experience of providing early education makes women practical philosophers by nature; they see it first-hand, from the everyday observation of childhood development. Although it is likely that Hamilton perceived that clearing the 'rubbish' of abstract philosophy meant it could be safely incorporated into orthodox religious and moral schema, she uses this propadeutically to make associationism accessible to women. In order to achieve this, Hamilton seeks to encourage perception, attention and finally speculation in women within the framework of their domestic roles. The purpose of *Elementary Principles*, therefore, is two-fold: it is about disseminating associationist thought to women, and about effecting an alteration in women's habitual and embodied psychology.

De Ritter persuasively argues that Hamilton was by no means straightforwardly anti-philosophical. As he puts it:

Hamilton represents domestic life as the ideal environment in which to cultivate philosophical disinterestedness, allowing women to gain a more integrated view [...] Metaphors of vision thus lead Hamilton to consider the possibility of expanded social roles for women, incorporating claims to the kinds of public influence and philosophical abilities more typically associated with men'.²⁷

I want to stretch this claim further; as I see it, what Hamilton forwards is a reformulated, domestic philosophy of mind. For Hamilton, women are not merely capable of developing philosophical perspectives on life, they are in fact better placed and better equipped to do so than men. The 'integrated view' that De Ritter describes, then, can be read as both the objective of Hamilton's philosophy, and the embodied, sensory psychology through which she seeks to achieve that objective. De Ritter's discussion of Hamilton's 'comprehensive view' is an account of the metaphorical

²⁷ De Ritter, 'Female Philosophers and the Comprehensive View'. 690.

significance of perception from a generalized perspective—of connections moving from the individual mind outwards. The ‘prospect view’ of women’s overseeing of the domestic ‘machine’ for Hamilton is, De Ritter points out, a position of privilege.²⁸ I want to suggest that this functions similarly on a physical level: as with Barbauld, Hamilton’s associationist psychology is not just about the mind, it is fundamentally about the connections between minds. As I demonstrate here, she applies associationism in a different manner to Hays and Barbauld, but with essentially the same objective: she sees it is a means of shaping the world. I move on now to discuss *Memoirs*, but return to the subject of vision shortly.

Parody and the politics of association.

In her obituary for Hamilton, Maria Edgeworth writes that the central purpose of *The Modern Philosophers* was ‘to expose those whose theory and practice differ, to point out the difficulty of applying high-flown principles to the ordinary but necessary concerns of human life, and to show the danger of bringing every man to become his own moralist and logician.’²⁹ The critique of individualism here is certainly one that Hamilton would have endorsed. Edgeworth does not cast her friend as strictly anti-Jacobin; rather, she indicates that Hamilton’s targets were more general. Nevertheless, it is easy to see why the book might be read as anti-Jacobin: *Memoirs* associates Godwin’s New Philosophy with the French revolution, sexual libertinism and atheism. It both ridicules the New Philosophers’ rejection of natural filial affections in the name of utility, and their denial of the practical moral and social benefits of religion in the

²⁸ Ibid., 693.

²⁹ *The Times*, October 1816.

name of necessity; it warns of the potential abuse of a system that ‘teaches, that by cancelling the bonds of domestic affection, and dissolving the ties of gratitude, the virtue and happiness of the world is to be increased’.³⁰ It is somewhat surprising, then, that the materialism commonly considered related to, if not a shaping factor of these wrongs, escapes her derision. Considering the central target of her parody is Mary Hays, it is yet more surprising that Hamilton does not take aim at the founding premise of the female philosopher’s system; after all, as I explained in my introduction, materialism underpins Hays’s necessitarianism, and thereby her feminism. In fact, Hamilton appropriates sensational psychology (though never all-out materialism) in *Memoirs*. She repeatedly ridicules Hays for her impractical belief in ‘mind over matter’, her Godwinian belief that ‘Moral and physical causes act reciprocally upon each other; the resolute and vigorous mind hardens the body; even the power of disease has been removed, by mental energy and exertion.’³¹ As I outlined in my introduction, this did not infer a denial of desire for Hays, and Hamilton exploits this seeming double standard in her satire of the female philosopher.

Repeatedly stressing the abstracting tendency of the New Philosophy, that is, its removal from the everyday, Hamilton shows how Hays’ philosophy in fact tends to pull the subject away from the material world, though it is absurdly unsuccessful in this respect. Writing to Stewart in 1810, Hamilton claims that her objection to the materialist position is that the precise nature of mind is essentially unverifiable, echoing the ambivalence of Locke and Hartley on the subject. This was one of Stewart’s central criticisms of materialism, outlined in his introduction to *Elements*: ‘by saying that [mind] is material, [materialists] surely forget, that body, as well as mind, is known to

³⁰ Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, ed. Claire Grogan (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000), 191-2.

³¹ ‘Reply to J. T. on Helvetius’. *Monthly Magazine*, June 1796.

us by its qualities and attributes alone, and that we are as ignorant of the nature of the former, as of that of the latter.³² But against previous normative immaterialism Hamilton states that she has no prejudice against materialist philosophers, and extricating herself from both sides of the materialist controversy, she insists:

The doctrine of materialism has appeared convincing to so many persons, whose wisdom and virtue I in hold estimation, that I am far from entertaining any prejudices against it: and if the arguments in favour of it have failed to produce conviction in my mind, it is because they seem to me, however plausible, to fall short of that degree of *proof* necessary to thorough conviction. I may say the same with regard to the opposite doctrine of spiritualism: but instead of fluctuating between two opinions, I rest in a belief that the object of enquiry is placed beyond the reach of human intellect; and, consequently, that the disputed concerning it, like the disquisitions concerning a future state [...] are founded on data which superior light may prove to be erroneous. It is therefore to those operations of the human mind that are obvious to human observation, that I have confined my enquiries [...]³³

Hamilton states her wish to apply philosophy and avoid the abstract. Like Stewart and others in the anti-materialist camp, as well as Priestley, Hamilton believes that the most important application of the philosophy of mind is in education.³⁴ Speculation over the fundamental nature of mind is pointless, because unverifiable. This Common Sense attitude to metaphysics was developed in her first satire, *Hindoo Rajah*, which I discuss briefly now.

When the Indian Raja Zāārmilla travels to Britain, he meets the Stewartian Doctor Severan. Severan represents to his friend the system of the Godwinian Mr. Axiom as ‘a philosophy which despairs the slow process of experiment, and chiefly glories in contradicting common sense. Its main object is to shew, that the *things which*

³² Stewart, *Elements*, 1:5.

³³ *Memoirs of the late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton*, ed. Elizabeth Benger (London: Longman, 1819), 2:132-4.

³⁴ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1:20.

are, are not, and the things which are not, are; and this is called Metaphysics.³⁵ The public disagreement between Hays and Hamilton began with the publication of *Hindoo Rajah* and escalated with Hays' subsequent anonymous review. Because Hamilton and Hays had been friends, this disagreement had an unpleasantly personal aspect. In the review, Hays writes that 'Had the design of these volumes been less evidently systematic, they would have been more generally interesting', and contends that 'little knowledge and great assumption are manifested' in Hamilton's attacks on speculative philosophy. She accuses her of arguing *ad hominem*, with the aim of smearing both she and Godwin.³⁶ In fact, *Hindoo Rajah* takes a more comprehensive survey of contemporary philosophy: Mr. Axiom is a materialist, believing in a future state (like Priestley), and thinks the soul is in a 'certain stamina' situated 'in that part of the brain which approaches the nearest possible to the very top of the nose'.³⁷ Young Sceptic is an atheist, who seduces his cousin. She kills herself when she discovers she is pregnant, and he then 'tragically', the philosophers agree, commits suicide. Amongst these philosophers is the character of Miss Ardent, a Wollstonecraftian figure who wishes that 'Chastity [...] be considered as a weakness',³⁸ and looks forward to the genuine age of reason, when 'the perfection of the female understanding will [...] be universally acknowledged.' This is something with which Hamilton must surely have agreed, and the author's sympathy is also apparent in Zāārmilla's description of Miss Ardent: 'She pants for that blessed period, when the eyes of men shall no longer be attracted by the charms of youth and beauty; when mind, and mind alone, shall be thought worthy the

³⁵ Elizabeth Hamilton, *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1796), 2:181.

³⁶ Mary Hays (?), 'Review of "Letters of a Hindoo Rajah"'. *The Analytical Review*, October 1796, 431. Authorship attributed by Marilyn Brooks in *Correspondence*, n. 85, 313.

³⁷ Hamilton, *Hindoo Rajah*, 2:192.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:212.

attention of a philosopher.³⁹ While Hamilton fears that such arguments have become confused with a desire to ‘drive the chariot of state, and guide the steeds of war!’,⁴⁰ there is also a level of admiration at play here.

Associationism does not escape Hamilton’s satire in *Hindoo Rajah*, unlike in *Memoirs*. An attempt on the part of the philosophers to turn sparrows into bees is founded on the ‘power of *external circumstances*’⁴¹ (the experiment eventually kills the birds). But a story Zāārmilla relates in the very next letter re-emphasises the importance of associationist psychology in education. Julia, Caroline and Olivia are sisters (the latter two being twins) educated by different people: the eldest, Julia, at a fashionable boarding school, Caroline by Captain Ardent’s younger sister Lady Grey, and Olivia by his elder sister, Miss Ardent. After a carriage accident in which a man is seriously hurt, Julia runs back to the house, where she has a hysterical fit. Olivia runs for help and medicine, stirring those who had been occupied with Julia to follow her to the scene of the accident. Caroline remains to comfort the injured man, and administers the cordial brought by her sister. The man is saved, and Caroline and Olivia both self-deprecatingly put this down to the actions of the other. What Hamilton suggests here is the complementarity of her own and Wollstonecraft’s approaches to education. Upbraiding Julia for her accusation that her sisters lacked sensibility, Lady Grey asserts that true sensibility inspires action. Unable to comprehend the union of feminine feeling with philosophy, Mr. Axiom attributes her words to Hume, and Mr. Puzzledorf to his own writing – they cannot place it in the male tradition, Hamilton implies, because it is truly her own, inspired only by feeling for ‘the doctrines and examples of Jesus Christ and his

³⁹ Ibid. 2:215.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2:216.

⁴¹ Ibid., 2:227.

Apostles'.⁴² However, by showing Olivia's actions after the accident to be as essential and commendable as Caroline's, Hamilton suggests that she is open to Wollstonecraftian thought. This puts some pressure on Janice Farrar Thaddeus' assertion that 'Hamilton never suggested that women should assume any characteristics defined as male, but rather that women could effect extraordinary changes by wielding the power of their domestic accomplishments.'⁴³ While this was the general tendency of her own approach, Hamilton seems to encode sympathy for Wollstonecraft's perspective, even as she presents an alternative female philosophy based on devotional feeling.

Anne K. Mellor observes that 'Hamilton's evocation of Mary Wollstonecraft in 1796, in the figure of Miss Ardent, is presented as a viable alternative to the female behavior practiced by Charlotte Percy and Lady Grey'.⁴⁴ I agree that Hamilton is more sympathetic towards Wollstonecraft than might be supposed, but her portrayal of Miss Ardent is not quite as straightforward as Mellor suggests. Miss Ardent is certainly admirable in the extent of her knowledge, which, as Mellor points out, reflects that of Hamilton in her expertise on Indian history, but she is equally presented, through the eyes of Dr. Severan and the bewildered Zāārmilla, as 'masculine' and therefore unamiable.⁴⁵ Because these dichotomous views are filtered through two differently prejudiced male perspectives, Hamilton's satire demands that the reader question how such women ought really to be seen. Moreover, since Lady Grey is depicted in entirely glowing terms, without the ambivalence that surrounds Miss Ardent's character, the Wollstonecraftian model of female behaviour is not presented as a truly viable subject

⁴² Ibid., 259.

⁴³ Janice Farrar Thaddeus, 'Elizabeth Hamilton's Domestic Politics'. *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 23 (1994), 270.

⁴⁴ Mellor, 'Romantic Orientalism Begins at Home'. 161.

⁴⁵ Hamilton, *Hindoo Rajah*, 2:199.

position – it is simply too progressive to be accommodated. However, since after the accident Caroline and Olivia are equally indispensable, Hamilton communicates a hopefulness that future generations of daughters will find a way to blend learning and domesticity for women to be of the greatest utility to society. She wishes them, in other words, to be Lady Greys and Miss Ardents, by adopting a comprehensive view and embodying her own philosophy as well incorporating elements of Wollstonecraftian heroism.

Hamilton yet again stresses the importance of education in a move that reveals hints of liberalism, as well as a commitment to the Lockean philosophy. By using a moral narrative about sisters, she shapes a feminist philosophical debate in a recognisable form for women readers, and provides a thought experiment for this in her study of the twins. Zāārmilla remarks that, notwithstanding the similarity of their looks, ‘the opposite characters impressed by education is visible in each.—While over the graces of Miss Caroline is thrown the bewitching veil of timidity, and her every action is bound in the silken fetters of decorum; the adopted daughter of Miss Ardent speaks her sentiments with an energy that has never known restraint.’⁴⁶ By placing the episode of the sparrows directly prior to this story, Hamilton has divergent applications of associationist doctrine compete. It shows women applying philosophy to true utility through education, where Sceptic’s madcap plan succeeds only in making a bad smell.

After mocking the philosophers (Miss Ardent excluded – she merely watches the men for entertainment), Hamilton reasserts the importance of education. She also expresses a hope that later generations of women will grasp what Wollstonecraft, perhaps, had not: ‘that to be weak, and to be amiable, are two very different things.’⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Hamilton, *Hindoo Rajah*, 2:252-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2:252-3.

As Mellor argues, Hamilton's 'multiple narrative viewpoints first destabilise the existing construction of gender in England and then generate a more liberating vision of the social roles of women.'⁴⁸ Mellor also identifies some elements of *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* as Jacobin in terms of its satire on the British political system.⁴⁹ In showing how the circumstances of Julia, Caroline and Olivia's different educations shape their responses to the disaster, Hamilton approaches the psychological causation narrative of the Jacobin novelists, while at the same time making clear the potential for this psychology to be taken to extremes. I would argue, however, that *Hindoo Rajah* is not concerned with the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin debate at all. Indeed, this is suggested by the innocuousness even of Young Sceptic, the book's philosophical seducer, who of course reappears in *Memoirs* in the more dangerous form of Villaton. Hays was mistaken, too: this section of *Hindoo Rajah* was not about certain philosophers in particular, it was a satire on the male philosophical tradition as a whole.

Memoirs of Modern Philosophers

Where the parody of philosophy in *Hindoo Rajah* is mostly gentle and generalised, *Memoirs* is cuttingly direct. In large part a response to Hays' attack, it follows three female protagonists: Julia Delmond, whose unregulated sensibility leads to her seduction by the scheming and false New Philosopher, Vallaton; Harriet Orwell, a paragon of female virtue and Christian rectitude; and Bridgetina Botherim, a grotesquely embodied caricature of Mary Hays. The effectiveness, as well as the

⁴⁸ Mellor, 'Romantic Orientalism Begins at Home'. 133.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 157.

cruelty, of Hamilton's attack on her erstwhile friend hinges on how she genders the issue of abstract philosophy. For instance, against Bridgetina, Harriet insists,

I do not think that there is any thing either slavish or disagreeable in the task [of caring for one's family]: nor do I think a woman's energies, as you call them, can possibly be better employed. Surely the performance of the duties that are annexed to our situation, can never be deemed mean or ignoble? For my share, I always feel exalted from the consciousness of being useful.⁵⁰

Echoing Barbauld's advertisement to *Lessons*, Hamilton has what De Ritter describes as 'an expansive understanding of the domestic sphere';⁵¹ she, like Barbauld, insists that the care of young children is 'neither undignified nor confined'.⁵² Through this manoeuvre, Hamilton implies that applied philosophy of mind, that is, embodied psychology, is not only safe ground for women, but in fact fits more easily with women's domestic roles than it does with radicals like Hays. To put it simply, associationism belongs for Hamilton on the side of the pragmatic woman and her enlightened domesticity. Like Hays, she sees women's education as necessary to their individual well-being, but unlike Hays, she contextualises this within community, rather than what she sees as an abstract notion of society: 'a well-informed mind, exerting its powers to promote the happiness and comfort of those within the reach of its exertions, might be little less usefully employed than in forming speculations upon *general utility*'.⁵³ As I hope to show now, however, Hamilton has more in common with Hays than may at first appear.

Both Hamilton's Harriet Orwell and Hays' Emma Courtney marry men in the medical profession, and there is a hint of agreement between them in Emma's care of

⁵⁰ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 102.

⁵¹ De Ritter, 'Female Philosophers and the Comprehensive View'. 698.

⁵² Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1:2.

⁵³ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 180.

the dying Augustus Harley and Harriet's care of the stricken Julia. However, whereas Emma voices a regret that she is debarred from the profession, Harriet aligns it with domesticity. Hamilton makes clear that it is she, rather than Henry Sydney, who provides the greater part of Julia's care, appearing more adept in this role, which might suggest that Hamilton too saw women's exclusion from the profession as wasteful. Her use of narrative frames also resembles that of Hays: at the start of the novel, the fictional reviewer of *Memoirs* writes to its editor, who had 'discovered' the manuscript. Distancing herself from the narrative by two removes, perhaps partially as a dig at what she perceived as the cowardice of Hays' anonymous review of *Hindoo Rajah* and subsequent denial of its authorship, Hamilton's reviewer writes that 'the character of Bridgetina, appears [...] as an excellent antidote to the poison; calculated to make an impression upon those whom serious disquisitions would have been addressed in vain'.⁵⁴ By offering her philosophy in the feminised form of the novel – the same vehicle for philosophy chosen by both Hays and Godwin in his *Caleb Williams*, Hamilton, as a reviewer in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* concurs, uses 'the same means by which the poison is offered [...] the best by which their antidote may be rendered efficacious'.⁵⁵ As we have seen, More's conservative writing was also characterised as an antidote to poison.

In transforming the poisonous mode of her opponents, Hamilton also adopts an associationist narrative of early impressions, habits, and consequences that coincides with the mechanistic rhetoric of both Hays and Godwin. This is turned against the New Philosophers, but, as Eleanor Ty argues, parody also complicates *Memoirs*, which 'perches precariously between dependence and independence, between mockery and

⁵⁴ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁵ *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* 7 (September 1800), 39-46.

admiration of the parent texts and their philosophies.⁵⁶ But crucially, the parody also opens a sure and stable space for her own philosophical vision, a middle way which exploits the insights into the human mind provided by philosophy, applies this to the matter of living, while maintaining the overarching importance of Christianity as moral guide. To engage with Ty's term directly, it is not only Godwinian philosophy that is 'refunctioned' in Hamilton's text, but philosophy as a whole: Hamilton seeks to create a new model for female philosophy.

Whatever Hamilton thought of Godwin, she certainly did not think women should be dissuaded from reading his work. Unlike Hays, whom she mostly approximates in her quotations, Godwin's *Political Justice* is directly referenced in footnotes. Further, the fictional reviewer recommends its publication on the following grounds:

To impute evil intention to the author of every speculative opinion that has an evil tendency, is equally illiberal and unjust; but to expose that tendency to the unsuspecting, is an office of charity, not only innocent, but meritorious. From the use that is made by Vallaton of some of the opinions promulgated in Mr. Godwin's *Political Justice*, it appears to me to have been the intention of your author not to pass an indiscriminate censure on that ingenuous, and in many parts admirable, performance, but to expose the dangerous tendency of those parts of his theory which might, by a bad man, be converted into an engine of mischief, and be made the means of ensnaring innocence and virtue.⁵⁷

Priestleyan 'habitual devotion' is also occasionally discernable in *Memoirs*, appearing in a far more favourable light than Godwinianism. The narrator describes the Dissenting minister Dr. Sydney: '[standing] for some moments contemplating the beauty of a tree in full blossom, and [...] expatiating on the charms of nature; and as the association of his ideas led "from Nature up to Nature's GOD," was making observations on the

⁵⁶ Ty, 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned'. 118-9.

⁵⁷ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 6.

striking proofs of the divine benevolence with which we are every where surrounded'.⁵⁸

Sydney later writes to his son that 'the study of Nature leads us up to Nature's GOD.

Thus does the material world itself give evidence of the probability of a revelation',

closely echoing Priestley, as well as Barbauld, whose Presbyterianism was dissenting

only south of the border. As a Scottish writer, Hamilton was able to approvingly adopt

the associationist devotional rhetoric of Priestley and Barbauld far more openly than

Hannah More, but she is similarly mindful of the hazards of translating this to female

profession. When Harriet counsels Julia on the benefits of religious devotion, she

entreats her to 'Call it not enthusiasm [...] a constant reference to the Divine will, and

an habit of modelling to it our thoughts and actions, cannot fail of having the happiest

influence upon our conduct.'⁵⁹

Memory and attention

In contrast to Harriet's devotional ingenuousness, Bridgetina constantly parrots extracts

of Godwin's *Political Justice*, and in doing so appears incapable of original thought.

Harriet reflects on Bridgetina's ability to quote from memory:

Memory, though an original faculty, is capable of improvement. It will be strong in proportion to the strength of the impression made upon it, and the impression most frequently recurring will of course become the strongest. Thus it happens, that trifling people are found only to remember trifles; that the vain and the selfish can so well recollect every minutiae of every circumstance in which they were themselves particularly concerned; and that even among those who pique themselves on superior taste, so many are found capable of retaining the *exact words* of a well-sounding author, while to the few is confined the more estimable power of impressing the *sense* and *substance* in the mind.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 164.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 166-7.

Again, Hamilton appropriates associationist philosophy here, but memory, while the essential to that theory, is double-edged. As Margaret Doody has argued, this was the case for Locke too, and she provides a compelling discussion of the troubling gendered and class-based implication of both overactive and deficient memories in his work and beyond.⁶¹ Indeed, Bridgetina's imbecility recalls Locke's anxiety over 'ideas without words', and Harriet's ability to argue from common sense and experience contrasts with Bridgetina's unthinking regurgitation of passages of *Political Judgement* learnt by rote. In Hamilton's book, this not only acts to demonstrate the propriety of women's study of philosophy, but also its superiority over an abstract philosophising which fitted more comfortably in the supposedly masculine sphere of metaphysical speculation. As I noted earlier, Hamilton herself claimed to have a poor memory. In a letter of 1801, she writes that 'my poor brains have been of late so completely fused in the furnace of metaphysics, that they have become a complete *calx*. I have been obliged, in pursuit of hints, to wade through volumes: keeping neither common-place book nor memorandum, have been forced to stupefy myself in search of passages in my memory, while every trace of the place in which I had found them was lost.'⁶² Even in seeming to downplay her abilities, Hamilton demonstrates her scientific knowledge, using a chemical analogy to suggest the substance of her metaphysical mind, even in the stupefaction of memory.

Hamilton believes that those who do not pay proper attention to sensory perceptions do not build strong memories, and thus live in the here and now. Doody's argument that 'Locke makes the irrational, affectional memory feminine'⁶³ is

⁶¹ See Margaret Doody, "A Good Memory is Unpardonable": Self, Love, and the Irrational Irritation of Memory'. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 14, no. 1 (2001), 67-94.

⁶² Hamilton to Hector McNeill, *Memoirs*, ed. Elizabeth Benger, 2: 11.

⁶³ Doody, "A Good Memory is Unpardonable", 71-2.

particularly useful as a means of understanding this, because it helps to illuminate an important departure from Lockeanism in Hamilton's novel. I want to suggest that what Doody terms 'female or matrilineal unwritten memory—familial or affectional memory' is inextricably bound up with 'sensible objects' in this discourse. This is apparent in the passage Doody examines from Locke, which pathologises women's long-lasting grief over the death of their children. Perhaps with material practices of memorialisation in mind, Locke writes that 'Till time has by disuse separated the sense of that Enjoyment and its loss from the *Idea* of the Child returning to her Memory, all Representations, though never so reasonable, are in vain... [women] spend their lives in mourning, and carry an incurable Sorrow to their Graves'.⁶⁴ Because memory is gendered by such claims, Bridgetina's failure to read Henry Sydney's emotions can be read as a failure of sense perception and hence also the feminine affective memory described by Doody.

Hamilton's *Memoirs*, like her *Elementary Principles*, explores what philosophical and scientific discourse on body and mind means specifically for women. Her insistence on the domestic application of ideas from such discourse does not entail a belief, however, that women should not be confined to drudgery – indeed, Bridgetina only ever appears intelligent when placed in contrast to her mother, who does little but wait on her feckless daughter. Neither, though, can women become useful through abstract philosophy alone. It is not that Hamilton disagrees with Hays on the effects of women's subjection and the limitations of their education; far from it, she seeks a viable feminist alternative to Hays' misapplication of philosophy, what Edgeworth called her 'middle path'. In Hamilton's writing, this path involves a close attention to physical circumstances, which in turn supports affective memory. Bridgetina's memory, in this

⁶⁴ Locke, *Human Understanding*, 399.

sense, is gendered masculine – it is tied to an individualist ideology whose legal constitution forbids her participation. It is little wonder, then, that she wants to erase ‘distinction[s] of sex’⁶⁵ by joining the Hottentot tribes. Furthermore, whereas in Doody’s account memory determines civic and psychological integrity, Bridgetina’s genius for memorisation acts to eclipse the self: just as those who do not remember at all are void of ideas and incapable of reflection, those who remember too precisely, in regards to texts especially, leave no room for individual reflection. Ty is right, then, in stating that *Memoirs* ‘as a whole celebrates rather than condemns the power of woman’s capacity for emotion, and the expression of this feeling’,⁶⁶ indeed, the crucial point of Hamilton’s burlesque is that Bridgetina’s affectional capacity has been warped by supposedly masculine modes of thinking. However, I do not agree with her in seeing Hamilton’s parodic characterisation of Bridgetina as to some extent engendering compassion and even admiration, picking out her capacity for memorisation in particular as a positive attribute. In fact, her rote learning would have been easily distinguishable from intellectual brilliance by readers, and her friends being momentarily duped by her parroting is itself comedic. Furthermore, although, as Ty points out, the book replicates Hays’ ideas through parody, it distorts them while providing close approximations of her Wollstonecraftian complaints about the subjection of women. Moreover, as I have already indicated, Hamilton’s quotation of Hays is intentionally inaccurate.

Bridgetina’s limited education thus paradoxically reinforces the premises of Hays’ argument, though not the conclusion; they agree, at least, that women’s education is deficient, but disagree on the best way to go about rectifying this. Real learning,

⁶⁵ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 101.

⁶⁶ Ty, ‘Female Philosophy Refunctioned’. 125.

Hamilton suggests, involves the social affections as they functioned within the wider domestic economy. Accordingly, women's influence relies on their ability to communicate linguistically and affectively with others. Bridgetina's conversation frequently baffles her friends, she has not developed a true understanding of the mind and the role of familiar conversation in societal change, and is unable to persuade because she merely repeats what she has read without applying it to particulars. As Grogan observes, Hamilton 'suggests [...] that the reader and she share a common nationality characterized by specific codes of conduct, behaviour and language competence.'⁶⁷

In her argument against Julia's necessitarian stance on remorse, Harriet claims that she is 'not qualified to argue from books, [so is] under the necessity of appealing to [her] feelings.' She asks Julia to 'consult these, [...] they will declare themselves of a different party from your favourite authors.'⁶⁸ Harriet succeeds in making a lasting 'impression' on Julia's mind, and she determines to confess her relationship with Vallaton to her father. This has an immediate physical effect on the convalescent Julia: 'Not sooner had this resolution taken possession of her mind, than she found herself restored to tranquillity. Vivacity once more sparkled in her eyes, and the elastic spirits of youth recovering their tone, bid defiance to the puny evil of confinement'.⁶⁹ Such embodiment is also apparent in the death of Julia's father, when Maria Sydney reports to her brother that 'In proportion as he becomes weaker, the more powerful emotions subside'.⁷⁰ Hamilton shares with Hays, then, the same underlying nerve-based rhetoric, with, however, an important difference: Hamilton detaches embodied psychology from

⁶⁷ Grogan, *Politics and Genre*, 59.

⁶⁸ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 167.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 292.

romantic love. When Henry is recovering from a gunshot wound to his arm, his physical frailty causes a loss of interest in Harriet, with whom he is in love: ‘No sooner did returning health begin to re-brace the unstrung nerves, and re-invigorate the feeble frame, than the mind reverted to the objects of his former interest; and through (contrary to the usual practice of lovers in similar circumstances) he had not during his delirium once mentioned the name of Harriet, her image now reassumed its wonted place in his breast.’⁷¹ Significantly, Henry’s love for Harriet depends on the health of his body. This at once reaffirms the mind-body relation, while at the same time suggesting Hamilton’s resistance towards the narrative potential of disordered nervousness; whereas sickness enables the disclosure of romantic love in *Emma Courtney*, in *Modern Philosophers* romantic love is a social matter – as in More’s *Cœlebs*, it is associational in that it is solidified and acted upon through consultation with various members of a community or network, rather than explored though an individualistic, introspective rendering of nervous impulses. Divested of sexual associations in this way, Henry’s love for Harriet appears in marked contrast to the distempered ‘nervous’ passion of Hays’ Augustus Harley.

Hamilton parodies Hays’ use of this rhetoric, as Bridgetina closely echoes Emma Courtney’s introduction to her necessitarian memoir: ‘The history of my sensations are equally interesting and instructive. You will see there, how sensation generates interest, interest generates passions, passions generate powers; and sensations, passions, and powers, all working together, produce associations, and habits, and ideas, and sensibilities’.⁷² Taking aim at the Jacobin novel’s fixation with causes and necessity, Hamilton has Bridgetina continue to relate her ‘history’ after ‘stretching her

⁷¹ Ibid., 334.

⁷² Ibid., 174.

craggy neck, wiping the rheum from her eyes, and fixing them on the sharp point of her turned-up nose':

The remoter causes of those associations which formed the texture of my character, might, I know, very probably be traced to some transaction in the seraglio of the Great Mogul, or to some spirited and noble enterprise of the Cham of Tartary; but as the investigation would be tedious, and, for want of proper data, perhaps impracticable, I shall not go beyond my birth, but content myself with arranging under seven heads (I love to methodise) the seven generating causes of the energies which stamp my individuality, observing, that the knowledge of *mind* is alone to be attained.⁷³

While professing to trace psychological 'causes' outside the self, Bridgetina's philosophy is inescapably individualistic, comically and unkindly embodied here by the focus of eyes on the end of her own nose. As De Ritter argues, 'Bridgetina's squint functions as a physical manifestation of the perceptual distortion that ensues when individuals become concerned with abstract theory, rather than practical application'.⁷⁴ It also cruelly perpetuates the widespread notion that Hays was physically unattractive: in a grotesque embodiment of her own psychological perspective, Hamilton objectifies Hays by making her 'a thing, ugly and petticoated', just as Coleridge had. Because she falls back on a manipulation of the gendered nervous paradigm, Hamilton's feminism is limited by her focus on Bridgetina's body. As Ty notes, 'Hamilton adopts a somewhat masculine means of controlling what society sees as a disruptive female force' but the 'parodic version of Hays's Emma Courtney, unlike its original, is non-threatening to the patriarchal order, precisely because she is so comic. [...] The potentially disturbing force is thereby contained and neutralized'.⁷⁵ In doing so, Hamilton exploits and perpetuates the association of the New Philosophy with the French and their supposed

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ De Ritter, 'Female Philosophers and the Comprehensive View'. 692.

⁷⁵ Ty, 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned'. 119.

sexual libertinism. Sexual desire is the true foundation of the philosophy of both Bridgetina and Vallaton (who at the crisis of the book, tempts Julia to London by speaking French). Though the danger is clearly French, it is at risk of becoming domestic.

Materialism and the misdirection of psychology

Although she distrusts the distempered introversion of progressives like Hays and Godwin, Hamilton nevertheless considers the study of one's own consciousness to be the proper object of metaphysics, rather than on what Stewart regarded 'speculations upon subjects which are placed beyond the reach of the human faculties'.⁷⁶ As Janice Farrar Thaddeus asserts, 'Rigorously, Hamilton returned to the infinite variety of reality, and generalized from what she found there.'⁷⁷ This is inverted in *Memoirs* as philosophical speculation disfigures the body. Throughout *Memoirs*, Bridgetina's grotesque embodiment is most forcefully asserted at moments when she is particularly insistent in her attempts to transcend the physical in pursuit of Henry Sydney. This has the effect of both comically deflating her philosophy, as well as her apparently 'rational regard' for Henry; it is a degrading inability to achieve transcendence in either. In a particularly humiliating episode, Bridgetina's rapturous soliloquy on what she mistakenly believes a proof of Henry's love for her is interrupted by a drove of pigs, which surround and terrify her, until 'a violent push from a huge untoward beast laid her prostrate on the ground'.⁷⁸ As Gilmartin notes, such a 'comic lapse into self-communion is a typical feature of anti-Jacobin narrative, and so too is the rude collision

⁷⁶ Stewart, *Elements*, 1:7.

⁷⁷ Thaddeus, 'Elizabeth Hamilton's Domestic Politics', 275.

⁷⁸ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 158.

with the material world that abruptly brings it to an end'.⁷⁹ This debasement is particularly striking because it is closely preceded by a discussion, during which Bridgetina congratulates Vallaton on his having broken an arm: 'I cannot but congratulate you [...] on the glorious opportunity you now enjoy of proving the omnipotence of mind over matter. What is pain to those who resolve not to feel it? Physical causes sink into nothing, when compared with those that are moral. Happy had it been for the world if not only your arm, but every bone in your body had been broken, so that it had been the means of furnishing mankind with a proof of the perfectibility of philosophical energy!'⁸⁰ Unable to escape the base materiality of the body, Bridgetina's philosophy literally falls on its face. As Mrs. Fielding observes towards the end of the novel, Bridgetina's system 'annihilates every future hope, and reduces us to a level with the beasts that perish!'⁸¹ However, Hamilton's portrayal of Bridgetina also reinforces environmental psychology: education deforms mind and body.

As I discussed in my introduction, contrary to the conflation of Hays' thought with Godwin's in past scholarship,⁸² Godwin had distanced himself from materialism in *Political Justice* by reasserting the 'omnipotence of mind'. Unlike Bridgetina, Hays certainly did not concur with him in this respect. While Hays' *Emma Courtney* is very liberally interspersed with philosophical quotations, it is Helvétius, not Godwin, whom she cites most frequently. It is unlikely that this would have escaped any serious reader (let alone Hamilton, who demonstrates an understanding of the materialist debate) and this omission cannot, therefore, be put down to a straightforward misunderstanding of Hays' philosophical position, even taking into account her professedly poor memory.

⁷⁹ Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution*, 155-6.

⁸⁰ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 154.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 378.

⁸² Adams, 'Mary Hays, Disciple of William Godwin.'

Rather, Hamilton makes a deliberate decision to represent Hays/Bridgetina as a ‘disciple of Godwin’. As I want to suggest, Hamilton’s attitude towards the philosophy of mind is by no means straightforward; she is no anti-materialist, but in fact draws on certain elements of materialist thinking. Seen in this light, her refusal to engage with Hays on her own terms can be most coherently understood as part of an effort to rehabilitate sense-based psychology.

Hamilton appears to write unequivocally against Hays on sexual distinctions, but in *Memoirs*, Henry Sydney defends Wollstonecraft’s critique of Rousseau:

The inconsistency and folly of his system [...] was, perhaps, never better exposed than in the very ingenuous publication which takes the Rights of Women for its title. Pity that the very sensible authoress has sometimes permitted her zeal to hurry her into expressions which have raised a prejudice against the whole. To superficial readers it appears her intention to unsex women entirely. But—”.

At this point, Bridgetina interrupts, ‘And why should there be any distinction of sex?’⁸³ Hamilton seems to suggest that Hays obstructs the right understanding of her mentor and friend. As Grogan notes, ‘In her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft, drawing extensively on Locke and Hartley, included a lengthy chapter on the association of ideas. Grogan implies that Hamilton needed to disassociate herself to an extent from Wollstonecraft in favour of Stewart, of whom she writes ‘prudent women educationalists found another authority, whose name conveyed both personal respectability and philosophical orthodoxy.’⁸⁴ I agree that Hamilton certainly holds Wollstonecraft at a distance (for instance by having her male characters voice her attitude toward the feminist), but want to see this in terms of her politically disinterested assumption of a number of perspectives. Hamilton does not always seek to disassociate

⁸³ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*, 101.

⁸⁴ Rendall, ‘Elementary Principles of Education’, 6-7.

herself from Wollstonecraft; indeed, she seems to imagine an amalgamation of their perspectives. Moreover, as I have shown, she also draws on Priestley, thus engaging in an appropriation of associationist psychology's feminist potential, detaching it from Hays' approach. This forms a more politically and religiously orthodox model, but one which consciously incorporates ideas from opposing camps.

In his discussion of the picaresque in *Memoirs*, Kevin Gilmartin argues that the 'narrative is calculated to prove that there can be no Jacobin liberation of female desire, and in this sense Hamilton achieves her satirical ends through a rigorous resistance to picaresque outcomes. [...] Bridgetina is regularly thwarted in the routine act of rising from a chair or crossing a village lane, and Hottentot Africa remains a distant fantasy.'⁸⁵ Contrastingly, the markedly Wollstonecraftian figure of Miss Ardent does achieve a liberation of sorts, as she escapes the country for a space more hospitable to her progressive theory of cohabitation. We learn that 'Mr. Axiom has persuaded Miss Ardent to accompany him to the Continent, on an experiment of *abstract principle*.' Severan 'seems to doubt whether the result of this experiment, will bring peace to the poor Lad's bosom' and adds that 'it would be no less surprising, to see the flame of the taper brighten, on being plunged into the mephitick air, than that a female, who bids defiance to modesty and decorum should preserve her honour and her peace'.⁸⁶ But this severity is not necessarily representative of either Hamilton's own attitude or that of her readers. *Hindoo Rajah* is a much gentler satire, but the difference in Hamilton's treatment of characters based on Hays and Wollstonecraft nevertheless suggests her attitude to the latter was more sympathetic.

⁸⁵ Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution*, 155.

⁸⁶ Hamilton, *Modern Philosophers*,

Hamilton provides several female characters as paragons of her domestic politics, which are to varying extents self-modelled. The unmarried Miss Fielding in *Memoirs*, for instance, instructs and improves the young, and in order to ‘raise a little fund for charity [...] composed several little treatises, chiefly intended for the benefit of her own sex, [...] calculated to restore that intellectual vigour which the whole course of their present mode of education tends so effectually to destroy’.⁸⁷ The word ‘little’ here is used in the same way as it is in Barbauld’s *Lessons* and ‘Baby-House’, which again both belies and enables its political scope and ambition. In comparison to the more straightforwardly conservative Jane West’s novels, Hamilton’s narrative gives greater scope to minute psychological events. Marilyn Butler writes that West’s *The Advantages of Education* (1793)

makes no use of the experiential techniques of the sentimental novel. The plot poses contrasted characters in opposition to one another. The purpose bears no relation to Maria’s sensations—which actually in this context are suspect—but to the ethical courses open to her. No English novels before or since have been so unremittingly ethical as the conservative novels of the generation following 1790: no other novels, surely, have consciously rejected emotional experience as a proper field of interest.⁸⁸

In her *Letters to a Young Lady*, West is dismissive of philosophy’s relevance for women: ‘Without wasting our time in a philosophical analysis of the peculiar construction of our intellects, or the physical organization of our bodies, we may rest assured that we are endowed with powers adequate to the design of our creation; namely, to be the helpmate of man.’⁸⁹ While Hamilton’s *Memoirs*, in common with West’s writing, resists to some extent the interiority – what Butler calls the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 252.

⁸⁸ Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, 97.

⁸⁹ Jane West, *Letters to a Young Lady, in which the Duties and Character of Women are Considered*, (London: Longman, 1806), 1:39.

‘experientiality’ – that typifies both *Emma Courtney* and *Caleb Williams*, and indeed, Bridgetina’s sentimental introspection often provides the material for Hamilton’s burlesque, she does not share West’s anti-philosophical perspective. Both the intellect and the medical care of body are represented as suitable, and in fact desirable, spheres of knowledge for women in *Memoirs*. Moreover, reflecting on her plans for a memoir in a letter of November 24, 1801, Hamilton writes from personal experience on the philosophical utility of introspective studies of character formation:

a train of thought [...] has beguiled the tedium of two sleepless nights, and [...] has led me back through all the scenes of my past life;—a life which appears too void of incident and adventure, that to have conceived the idea of leaving a sketch of it behind me, may seem ridiculous. I am, however, convinced, that to my own sex at least it might convey instruction; nor is an accurate account of the formation of those associations which form the character, beneath the attention of the philosopher.⁹⁰

Echoing the introspective rhetoric of Wollstonecraft, Godwin and Hays, Hamilton again insists that women’s lives are a proper province for philosophy.

As Gary Kelly notes, Hamilton ‘uses elements conventionally associated with men’s genres, including satire, burlesque, the learned quasi-novel, the social survey, the Quixotic tradition, the *roman-à-clef*, and the philosophical dialogue, historically used to satirise ‘false’ ideologies. In redeploying them against the attack of ‘modern philosophers’ on domestic women, Hamilton has to become something like the kind of ‘female philosopher’ she deplores’.⁹¹ Similarly, Hamilton adopts a narrative structure that in some respects resembles those of her opponents in its focus on the importance of early education in the shaping of character, and on the formative potential (favourable

⁹⁰ Hamilton to Hector MacNeill, in *Memoirs of the late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton*, ed. Benger, 2:17.

⁹¹ Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution*, 144.

or otherwise) of literature, but she is careful to point out the way that this narrative, in the hands of Jacobin novelists, is overwrought and rendered absurd by being given too great a scope. Whereas Caleb Williams and Emma Courtney trace the origins of their psychology in the wrongs of society, the narrative trajectories of Hamilton's novel begin with the domestic, and keep pulling back into the domestic: characters' histories are traced, they move outwards, but consistently turn back to focus on their place within the domestic community, and on the ties between the individuals of that community. Hays' characters are by contrast disassociated from community; their autonomy, as Hamilton sees it, is a misapplication of psychology, a failure to recognise the proper causal scope of association.

Pegs and Plato: Hamilton's domestic philosophy

Responding in *Elementary Principles* to her fictional correspondent's scepticism, Hamilton argues that the influence of early associations on later life depends on their 'frequent repetition'.⁹² By focussing on common, everyday occurrences, Hamilton guards against speculative applications of the philosophy of mind: 'we need be under no apprehension concerning those slight and transient associations, to which, by a certain class of philosophers, so much has been attributed'.⁹³ What Hamilton proposes instead amounts to a domesticisation of associationist psychology, and her expansive understanding of domesticity as 'neither undignified nor confined' casts this psychology as a matter of supreme public importance. As Harriet Guest observes, in *Elementary Principles*, Hamilton 'attributes a degree of public and patriotic significance to women

⁹² Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1: 26.

⁹³ Ibid., 1:26-7.

in their domestic role which depends on and yet exceeds the cherished modesty and privacy of domesticity'.⁹⁴

Hamilton's philosophical mode is distinctly domestic. In *Elementary Principles*, for example, she uses knitting to demonstrate Hartley's principle of automatic actions, whereby the attention is imperceptible but nevertheless focussed. Hamilton jokes to her readers, 'Should any grave philosopher deign to look into these pages, I will permit him to smile at this simple illustration, which he may, if he pleases, call, *argumentum ad feminam*; but, if it aid my design of exhibiting the power of attention, as essential in every voluntary operation of mind or body, it will fully answer the purpose for which I intended it.'⁹⁵ On memory, too, Hamilton provides a domestic example:

the greater the number of our ideas, the more materials will the laws of association have to operate upon in our minds. These ideas are like so many pegs, on which to hang the new ideas we receive. Where the pegs are weak, or few in number, little will be hung up, all will fall down into the abyss of forgetfulness. Now those whose memory is chiefly employed on objects of perception, are exactly in this predicament; there are no pegs in the minds of such whereon to hang their new ideas, but two, viz. time and place: these are the only associations which assist the memory of the vulgar.⁹⁶

The mind's ability to assimilate new ideas into an associative network depends on the size and strength of the memory, its ability to accommodate and hold onto the objects of perception it receives. In her note to this passage, Hamilton quips,

As Plato had his cave in the mind, and Mr. Locke his dark room, I don't see why I may not drive up a few pegs in it. Placed by my feeble hand, they can do no injury. Whereas, had an ancient philosopher made use of such a figure, the world might have gone by the ears, about their length and dimensions.—See *Berkeley and Hume upon Ideas*⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Guest, *Small Change*, 325.

⁹⁵ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 2:158.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:158-9.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* n. 2:158.

These passages help clarify Hamilton's determined effort to write philosophy for women. Unlike More, she provides clear references to the works of relatively controversial philosophers, and seeks to ensure that potentially non-expert women could understand the ideas she wants to communicate. The materiality of her analogy recalls the 'domestic Muse' of Barbauld's 'Washing Day' (published 1797), a poem which inscribes the physical movements involved in doing the household laundry (the 'coarse check'd apron, with impatient hand / Twitch'd off when showers impend', 'All hands employed to wash, to rinse, to wring, / To fold, and starch, and clap, and iron, and plait').⁹⁸ While Barbauld acknowledges the drudgery of women's domestic labour, the poem is also a celebration of the work, paying homage to wives and servants against the 'sports of children and the toils of men'.⁹⁹ 'Washing Day' also provides a remarkably sensational evocation of childhood memory. Hamilton, then, is participating in and defending a domestic discourse shaped by women, and seeking to initiate a new philosophical tradition which could be readily incorporated into the matrilineal language of domestic disciplines.

By using sensible objects, Hamilton addresses Lockean concerns about teaching words without ideas. She is careful, however, to avoid appearing to patronise her readers, and thus, unlike More, provides multiple references to philosophical works. While doubting that male philosophers will 'deign' to read her work, she adopts the strategic humility I discussed earlier, and mockingly invites accusations of 'arguing *ad feminam*'. She encodes for her female readers a critique of masculine philosophy, and with a humour that belies her seriousness, demands a space for her own ideas. Guest

⁹⁸ *SPP*, 144-7, lines 43-4 and 76-8.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, line 84.

indicates in her discussion of the shifting discourse on domesticity that exclusion from the specialisation of the professions could be framed variously as rendering women unsuited to public life, or as better fit for it because it enabled what Hamilton calls the ‘comprehensive view’.¹⁰⁰ Narrowness of vision, which as De Ritter shows, epitomises Hamilton’s burlesque of Hays, is symptomatic not of her adoption of the wrong kind of philosophy, but of a failure to implement philosophy properly, that is, to its most useful sphere. The greatest threat that the New Philosophy poses is that which it poses to domesticity. In Hamilton’s writing the domestic sphere is both the product and the foundation of female virtue and influence. Virtue is self-perpetuating and contained in this way, and circumscribes female education. Her satire pits domestic philosophy – the use of philosophy within and for the home – against speculative philosophy, which is damaging precisely because it has become detached from everyday life. For her, the only real utility of the philosophy of mind lies in its practical application in the home, because that is where minds are most effectively shaped; this environment, and the minds formed within it, are shaped by women.

Hamilton herself understands such knowledge as necessary to women’s ability to be the ‘directing counsel of parent or husband’,¹⁰¹ and draws on Stewart in this respect. As he writes:

there are two opposite extremes into which men are apt to fall, in preparing themselves for the duties of active life. The one arises from habits of abstraction and generalization carried to an excess; the other from a minute, an exclusive, and an unenlightened attention to the objects and events which happen to fall under their actual experience.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 2:377.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2:380.

¹⁰² Dugald Stewart, *Elements*, 1:230.

Stewart's associationist notion of common sense contains and is shaped by clearly gendered class distinctions, between 'men from inferior walk of life' and those of the professions.¹⁰³ Of the faults of these two classes he continues, that 'The one is the defect of a vigorous, an ambitious, and a comprehensive genius, improperly directed; the other, of an understanding, minute and circumscribed in its views, timid in its exertions, and formed for servile imitation.'¹⁰⁴ The former defect is clearly that of the philosophers in *Hindoo Rajah*, and later, more scathingly, in *Memoirs*. As Thaddeus states, this informs Hamilton's critique of men: her 'generalizations do not conform to theories like Godwin's, male theories that are not rooted in the true complexities of life.'¹⁰⁵ The latter defect in the above passage Hamilton attributes to women. Their lack of speculative ambition means that women's minds are often 'useful [...] in a high degree, when confined to [their] proper sphere, but destined, by the hand that formed [them], to borrow [their] lights from another.'¹⁰⁶ Eleanor Ty has pointed out that the absurdity of Bridgetina's applications of philosophy underlines how ill-suited Godwinian theory was to everyday life and occurrences,¹⁰⁷ highlighting the fact that neither Mr. Myope nor Mr. Sydney can provide a real solution for poverty. Indeed, the only successful character in this wider respect is Mrs. Fielding. It should also be noted here that Hamilton views her reformist project as egalitarian: 'To make fine *ladies* and finished *gentlemen* forms no part of my plan, which has for its object the subjection of the passions, the direction of the affections, and the cultivation of the faculties that are common to the whole human race.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1:231.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1:232.

¹⁰⁵ Thaddeus, 'Elizabeth Hamilton's Domestic Politics'. 267.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Eleanor Ty, 'Female Philosophy Refunctioned'. 117.

¹⁰⁸ Hamilton, *Elementary Principles*, 1:11.

Like Stewart, Hamilton adopts a terminology of economics in comparing the management of a family to the government of a country. She writes that ‘A large family is a complicated machine’,¹⁰⁹ and that ‘the direction of such a machine depends upon too comprehensive an arrangement of ideas, to be ever attained by an attention to particulars.’ This must be achieved through ‘generalization’,¹¹⁰ that is, the ability to direct and apply abstract thought. She then conservatively reasserts with that the proper sphere for female philosophy is ‘the management of a family, far from being an avocation of that mean and degrading nature, which, by some ill-advised advocates for the *rights* of our sex it has been injudiciously represented, calls forth all the faculties of the mind which have passed in review before us.’¹¹¹ In a certain sense, then, Hamilton’s educational writing is itself speculative. She uses visual metaphors, as De Ritter shows, to examine philosophy, but she is also deeply concerned with how the act of seeing might be active, that is, speculative in terms of its economic extension outwards. As a woman, the challenge for Hamilton was to ensure that she neither over-speculated, that is, placed too high a value on her work, nor under-speculated, and thus made no real gains. The philosophical speculation of her ‘little’ work, then, has a scale of vision that was understood through, granted value from, and politicised by her grounding of the nation’s psychology in domestic economy. As Hamilton writes in a particularly illuminating section of *Elementary Principles*,

Be not afraid, my good Friend, that I intend making speculative philosophers of your daughters. The duties of mankind in general, and of the sex in particular, are active; and an ever-wakeful attention to the *minutiae* of which they are composed, is absolutely essential to their performance. Small coin is found necessary even in the richest states;

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2:378.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 2:379.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 379-80.

without it the *petit* detail of transactions of the day could not be carried on. But man is not considered rich, whose stock consists of sixpences: though where his capital is of such a nature as renders it impossible to be converted into ready specie, his wealth is useless, and he may starve in the midst of plenty. Thus it is where the reasoning powers are so entirely occupied by general and extensive speculation to prevent an attention to the lesser, but more essential, concerns of common life. Where a habit of quick and accurate attention to surrounding objects has been established, there is little danger of the mind's being absorbed by speculation, in such a manner as to incapacitate it for the performance of the active duties.¹¹²

This remarkable passage closely approximates the domestic feminist discourse I have aimed to explore in this chapter. It is perhaps also the clearest indication of the point of disagreement between Hays and Hamilton; read in light of this, Bridgetina's speculativeness appears warped, and of course the parody draws attention to this by holding up a warped mirror to her embodiment. Hamilton's emphases on '*minutiae*', '*petit* detail', 'small coin' and 'attention to surrounding objects' recall Barbauld's 'Baby-House'. The conservatism of her reassurance to the reader that she does not mean to make 'speculative philosophers' of her daughters is qualified in the next line, which inclusively asserts the significance of '*minutiae*' to 'mankind'. Claire Grogan comments on Hamilton's knowledge of economics, noting that her 'personal mathematical knowledge arose from running her uncle's household for years, from her active participation in the intellectual circles of Edinburgh and in particular from personal communications with Professor Playfair, joint professor of Mathematics and Geology, at Edinburgh University.' Grogan argues that her 'extremely practical application of mathematical knowledge [...] is intertwined with her use of autobiography or life writing to offer a model of economic awakening rather than sexual awakening',¹¹³ as opposed to Hays and Wollstonecraft. Hamilton's associationism is fundamental to this

¹¹² Ibid., 2:361-2.

¹¹³ Grogan, *Politics and Genre*, 86-7.

routing of feminist thought towards domestic economy that diverges so radically from Hays' sexual and idealist model; it is worth noting that she herself remained unmarried, as are two of her most unambiguously happy and 'useful' characters, Mrs. Fielding and Mrs. Mason (whose names suggest social and economic productivity).

Rendall observes that Hamilton agrees with Wollstonecraft on 'women's potential for intellectual if not social or political equality',¹¹⁴ but I see her position as somewhat stronger than this. As Hamilton sees it, women can and indeed should be the more important force in society. Because this is so inextricably linked to a domestic framework, it is nevertheless a conservative position. Hamilton's writing provides another important, and at the time more acceptable feminist strategy, which she and others may in fact have seen as more radical than it appears today. I want to conclude this chapter with a discussion of some unpublished material that helps shed new light on how just how speculative and potentially radical her educational writing was, in both economical and philosophical senses, and which also offers an opportunity to return to the problematic notion of a 'bond of union' between women writers.

A letter from Joseph Johnson of January 16, 1807 suggests that Hamilton was hoping to establish a ladies' paper of the sort Maria Edgeworth had proposed to Barbauld in the summer of 1804, which, as I discussed in the introduction, the latter had rather perfunctorily rejected. Johnson replies late, but somewhat encouragingly:

With respect to the publication mentioned, the Authors have nothing to do but to send their manuscript in a legible state to the booksellers; furnishing papers, employing a printer and corrector of the press, advertising, vending, in short, every thing else will be his business.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Rendall, 'Elementary Principles of Education', 6.

¹¹⁵ Johnson to Hamilton, Joseph Johnson's Letterbook, Misc 4039. New York, Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, New York Public Library.

Hamilton's educational writing, unlike *Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs*, was not published anonymously. It is interesting, then, that Johnson suggests in his letter that 'The names of the writers should be a profound secret for which reason their hand writing ought not to appear.'¹¹⁶ We can only speculate for now on the content and form of the publication, but Johnson's caution suggests an apprehension, either on his part or Hamilton's, about its reception. It is perhaps surprising, then, that in his next paragraph he implies the content will be similar to her book: 'I have the first volume of your Letters on Education and think a number should contain about fourteen such pages.' Though Hamilton did not give Johnson the names of her co-authors for the work, Johnson's guess that 'Mrs. Barbauld and Miss Edgeworth were of [the] party' makes it seem likely that this would have been an educational publication. It is also possible, I think, that Johnson surmises correctly: Hamilton became acquainted with Edgeworth between June 1802 and September 1803,¹¹⁷ and knew Barbauld through Stewart. Barbauld's short satire on educational theory, 'Letter from Grimalkin to Selima' was written after the publication of Hamilton's *Elementary Principles* in 1801, and Barbauld pinpoints Hamilton alongside Edgeworth in her parody.¹¹⁸ Whether or not Barbauld knew of Hamilton's plans, Johnson's letter gives a sense of a recognisable grouping of educational writers, and of the politically charged nature of pedagogic writing at the time.

Of the three writers treated in this thesis, Hamilton's embodied psychology forms the most consistently determined effort to unite philosophy of mind with feminism. Associationism is central to the domestic politics of Hamilton's writing. As I

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ *Memoirs*, ed. Benger, 1:164. Benger writes that 'at the first interview [Hamilton] was pleased—at the second, charmed,—proceeding in regular gradation, through the progressive sentiments of cordiality, attachment, and affection.'

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 359.

have shown, Hamilton perceived and sought to build on the feminist potential of material psychology, drawing on Stewart's *Elements* in her emphasis on attention, perception, and generalisation. However, while her writing is certainly closely aligned to Common Sense, it is distinct in its consistent focus on women and their domestic roles, as well as its openness to opposing philosophical perspectives. What emerges as a result is a comprehensive and philosophically discrete female associationism; a domestic adaptation of embodied psychology. As her claims to originality in *Elementary Principles* suggests, what distinguishes Hamilton most radically from Hays is her reluctance to subscribe to any particular system, her consciousness of repeating the words of others as if by rote. This itself is a failing of female education, and merely adopting another male philosophy unequivocally will not counteract it, especially if the objects of that philosophy are prone to misappropriation by sexually opportunistic men. Hays' philosophy is represented as disengaged from reality, and her uncritical acceptance of it as a symptom of her limited education. As this chapter has shown, the alternative Hamilton presents in her writing is a material psychology; the philosophies comprehended by her domestic perspective are turned, at least in her understanding of the matter, to philosophically enfranchising women.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the ways in which three women of late eighteenth-century Britain participated in Enlightenment debate on the nature of the human mind and its relation to the external world. It has traced the material and textual practices through which they put theories of mind to use, and has argued that these constitute significant contributions towards the development of early psychology. I have discussed various forms of inscription and exchange in the work of writers holding different religious and political beliefs, and in doing so have shown how women responded to and adapted sense-based psychology in far more innovative and diverse ways than has previously been understood.

The study suggests that ideas used by radical feminist writers had groundings elsewhere that could, perhaps more effectively, be used by women in the shaping of the nation, and that the domesticised associationist model popularised to a large extent by women such as Anna Barbauld enabled others to envisage Enlightenment practices as a material means of engagement in public life. It thus offers a reconsideration of the possibilities for women in the culture of sensibility. The later chapters counter the notion that conservatives such as Hannah More passively absorbed ideas that somehow belonged to radicals; indeed, the determination with which More sought to defend British Enlightenment thought from radicals such as Godwin shows that she considered it to be, if not a conservative tradition, then one capable of being moulded towards Loyalist Anglican ends.

Where Mary Hays' radical feminism resisted gender binaries through materialism, and her arguments were countered, whether or not successfully, in gendered nervous language, enlightened domesticity comprises an important but critically neglected philosophical perspective even in her work. Moreover, while Hays can be understood as a 'lone amateur scientist'¹ striving to carve out a viable discursive space for female philosophy, Elizabeth Hamilton's domestically centred, socially externalised, and politically comprehensive associationism might equally be viewed as an attempt to realise and popularise such a subject position. Though sense-based psychology in its gendered, pathologised form to an extent reaffirmed women's subordinate position in British society by feeding into notions of sexual difference, and while the association of materialism with the French played a key role in misogynist attacks that sought to silence the female philosopher, the domestic application of these discourses often passed under the radar. Nevertheless, the tensions arising from the culture of sensibility are present in Barbauld, More and Hamilton's work, and although these remain unresolved, this thesis works towards a new, material understanding of their different negotiations of a highly ambivalent and often furiously contested discourse.

There is a great deal more research to be done on Barbauld's influence on nineteenth-century British writers such as Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as well as in America, for example in the work of the feminist and abolitionist children's writer Lydia Maria Francis Child. As a monograph, this study will include further research on the transatlantic exchange of children's literature, with a focus on the function of affect in textual objects conceptualised and marketed as gifts. Though beyond the aims of this thesis, its discussions of gift relations may also be of

¹ Walker, *Mary Hays (1759-1843)*, 134.

some relevance to contemporary debate over social policy. The rise of the secular welfare state in the twentieth century fundamentally altered the dynamics of charity in Britain, but More's practices in the Mendips raise a number of questions about the politics and ethics of philanthropy that are pressingly current. Under More's religious vision, charity was a crucial means of strengthening Christian bonds of duty and obligation between classes – it thus reinforced class difference even as it provided relief. How, we might wonder, would conservatives like More view the obligations of and duties towards the poor today, who, contrary to popular opinion, pay proportionately more tax and give more to charity than the rich, even during recession?² Contemporary attitudes towards More reveal how uncomfortable we are with the notion of charity being motivated by evangelical belief; how, then, do we address the continuing provision of vital aid by religious groups? Finally, More's concern about relations between fashionable women's philanthropy and 'display' invites comparisons with gendered responses to public benefaction in the digital era.

It has been beyond the current scope of this study to trace the production of its objects, but I have aimed where possible to consider them in terms of historical, as well as philosophical materialism. Marxist feminism and feminist material studies are not, of course, mutually exclusive; indeed, an attention to materiality can significantly elucidate the physical cultures involved in production. Because of its durability, the urn

² The Equality Trust, *Unfair and Unclear: The Effects and Perceptions of the UK Tax System*, June 2014, <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resources/our-publications/unfair-and-unclear-effects-and-perceptions-uk-tax-system> (accessed 01.07.2014); Yaojun Li, 'The flow of soul: a sociological study of generosity in England and Wales (2001 – 2011)'. in *The Handbook of Research Methods and Applications on Social Capital*, ed. Yaojun Li (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, Forthcoming, 2014). According to Li's finding, taken from the Home Office Citizenship Survey, 'People in higher class and income positions tend to give more money in absolute terms but with the exception of own-account workers who tend to give more, overall class differences in relative giving are negligible among givers and have a positive relationship among all respondents, but the relationship between income and relative giving is negative.'

to John Locke in particular invites further research along these lines – its transportation from Bath, to Cowslip Green, and later to Barley Wood must have been a physically strenuous collective activity, demanding close cooperation between labourers, and shaping verbal and physical languages. The object, in this case, might be understood in Arendtian terms as an agent of political isolation; for Arendt, joint involvement in superintended production reinforces isolation: the seeming ‘togetherness’ of teamwork in fact restricts the freedom and spontaneity on which political action depends,³ as the word ‘team’ indeed suggests. On the other hand, such acts may also have promoted a (perhaps expletatively) resistant vocalisation of autonomy.

More, Barbauld and Hamilton’s stances on gender politics may be less recognisable today than the more radical feminism of Hays and Wollstonecraft, but such radicalism could be counter-productive, as Lucy Aikin observed of Hays in 1803:

She is a great disciple of Mrs. Godwin, you know, and a zealous stickler for the equal rights and equal talents of our sex with the other; but, alas, though I would not so much as whisper this to the pretended lords of the creation—

Her arguments directly tend
Against the cause she would defend.⁴

Yet by stressing the delimitation of radical feminism under the gendered ‘nervous paradigm’, we are at risk of forgetting that women at the time understood that conditions were fraught for polemic engagement in such discourse. Women writers did not naively adopt scientific ideas that could in turn be used against them; they understood the often vexed relations between gender and sense-based psychology, and developed strategies to navigate this. Of course, this can be viewed as patriarchal

³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 161-2.

⁴ Aikin quotes Jonathan Swift’s ‘Furniture of a Woman’s Mind’ (1727, published 1735). Aikin to Mrs Taylor, 27 January 1803, in *Lucy Aikin*, ed. Le Breton, 125-6.

complicity, but it is important that we recognise concerted attempts to work through such bonds, even as we identify their perpetuation. Overstepping boundaries even in the act of writing and publishing, groundings in the domestic did not altogether signify a retreat for Barbauld, More and Hamilton, and though certainly circumscribing women's participation in public life, their educational writing encouraged young women to think of their roles in similarly expansive terms which suggest the elasticity, but also the bounds and tensions of material psychology. In this respect, the study also goes some way towards showing that the associationist psychological framework was not always as passive or rigidly mechanistic as Coleridge and others since have represented it.

The philosophical contributions of More, Barbauld and Hamilton can, I have argued, be understood as a body of practice, and may have survived as such. The materiality of this work was both key to its success as a means of effecting political change and, paradoxically, accounts in part for its invisibility in the history of philosophy and science. But the material turn is a mode of exchange that is intrinsically political; both a shrewd response to the circumstances of disenfranchisement and an insistence on the fundamental and universal power of material circumstance itself. It is not so much that materialist psychology went 'underground', consequently to re-emerge, as Reed posited;⁵ rather, it was grounded, cultivated and clipped back by women writers and educators, and maintained through practical activity. The radical offshoots of materialist ideas seem to call for history of ideas approaches, and though these can also be useful for reading the work of women writers, this study shows that material and sensory perspectives add a great deal more to the picture, allowing us to

⁵ Reed, *From Soul to Mind*, 14.

see their work both through and, as scholars are increasingly looking to do, ‘beyond domesticity’.⁶

The associational perspectives emerging from the work of these writers might be understood in contemporary terms as a social theory of things or affect theory. However we choose to define the material turn, the sensory impact of objects, the mutually affective relations between matter as mind, were intellectually grasped and physically embodied in the educational, devotional, and charitable practices of women writers. The interrelations between materiality and community, both imaginary and real, are often written into their texts in highly purposeful ways, and this interconnectivity is both product and productive of a domestically centred notion of community. As Barbauld’s pedagogic practices, More’s material and textual associations and disassociations, and Hamilton’s comprehensive weaving together of threads of thought from different political casts suggest, the history of ideas and the history of practice run parallel to, and continuously intersect with each other. Ideas in science and medicine did not arise in isolation from practice – they too were products of circumstance, and migrated between connected individuals and interrelated fields. In order to reveal these intimations, this thesis has developed an innovative interdisciplinary approach, a synthesis of literary, material and sensory history. Its focus has been on the history of material psychology, but it brings to light the lasting significance of sensible objects, even to the domestic and particular.

⁶ Kate Singer and Nanora Sweet, *Beyond Domesticity: Felicia Hemans in the Wider World; a special edition of Women's Writing*, April 2014.

Appendix

Table 1. Search results for ‘soul’, ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’ in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (Gale CENGAGE). 5 February 2013.

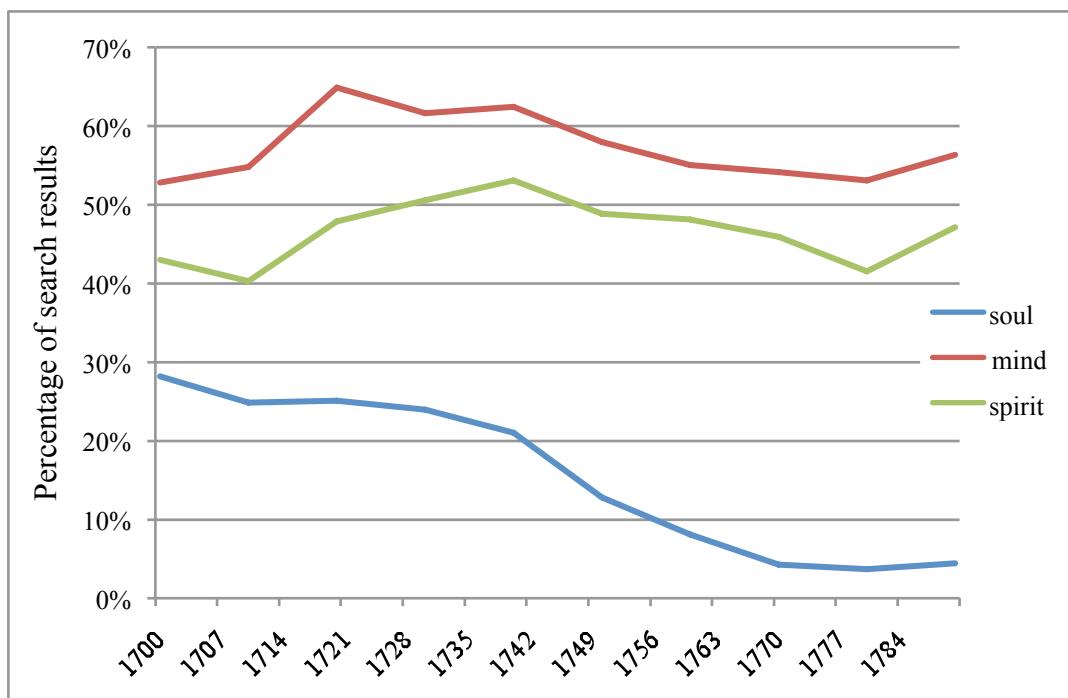


Table 2. Search results for ‘soul’, ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’ in subject area ‘Medicine, Science and Technology.’ *ECCO* (Gale CENGAGE). 3 July 2014.

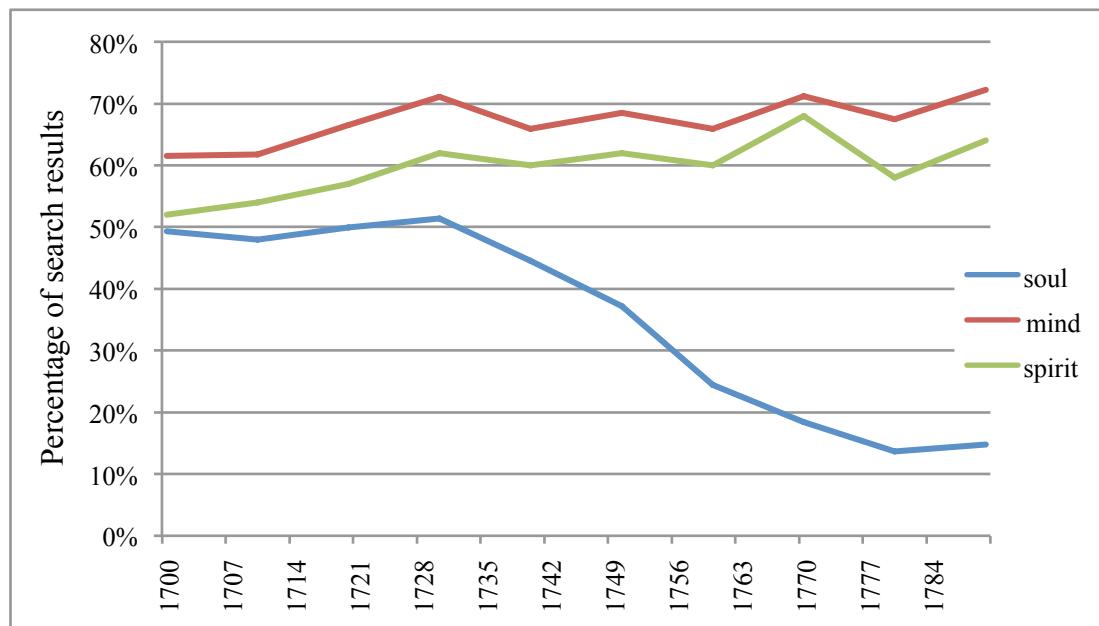
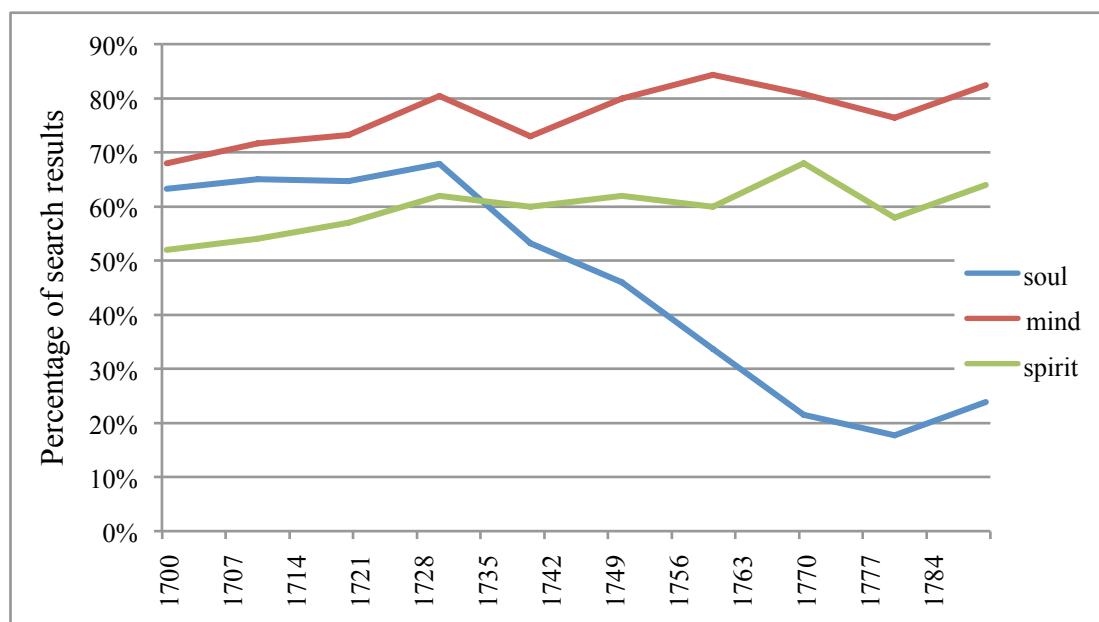


Table 2. Search results for ‘soul’, ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’ in subject area ‘Literature and Language’. *ECCO* (Gale CENGAGE). 3 July 2014



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