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THE RHETORICAL EDUCATION
OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WOMEN WRITERS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate

School of the Ohio State University

By

Tania S. Smith, M. A.

*****

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how eight British women writers from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century honed their abilities to write, speak and conduct themselves effectively—in other words, how they pursued an education in rhetoric. Eight rhetorical biographies (of Hester Thrale Piozzi, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, Elizabeth Montagu, Anne Grant, Catharine Macaulay Graham, Mary Hays, and Elizabeth Hamilton) bring to light these women's processes of rhetorical education and practice over nearly a century across two generations within three broad genres. The rhetorical biographies show how eighteenth-century women learned and produced rhetorical theories and applied them over the course of their lives.

I demonstrate that while technically excluded from advanced formal education, these women were educated in a variety of classical and contemporary rhetorical theories and traditions through the interactive schools of conversation and epistolary correspondence. These informal schools, which were also important forums of rhetorical performance, assisted these eight women to stretch the boundaries of women's discursive practice to include more genres and a larger audience. By observing and critiquing rhetorical performances within communities of mentors, peers, and texts, eighteenth-century women writers acquired theories which they used to guide their own rhetorical practice. Although facets of all of the well-known rhetorical theories and traditions...
circulating in eighteenth-century culture were brought to these women through conversation and correspondence, among the most important regarded discourse in conversation and conduct and in the belles lettres. These two rhetorical traditions as their base, combined with effective pedagogical methods, assisted British women writers of two generations from various local and religious backgrounds to contribute greatly to the growing pedagogical, theoretical, and performative traditions of rhetoric.
DEDICATED TO MY HUSBAND,

PHILIP KING SMITH
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

[...] the realm of rhetoric has been almost exclusively male not because women were not practicing rhetoric—the arts of language are after all at the source of human communication—but because the tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals used by many women as rhetorical.¹

[...] we are forced to retell the story of rhetoric, to move it out from the traditional oral, civic, argumentative and pedagogical tradition if we are to find more than a very few women in rhetoric before 1820.²

Instead of writing women into the history of rhetoric, let us proceed to write rhetoric into the history of women.³

In eighteenth-century Britain an increasing number of women produced skillful and influential texts and speech without the benefit of advanced formal education at a university or academy. As the century progressed, more and more women became eminent for rhetorical skill—conversational salons⁴ became schools of courtesy, wit, and belletristic criticism; women instructed and persuaded through influential correspondence networks; and ultimately, more and more of them entertained, instructed, and moved the

³ Raymie E. McKerrow, “Corporeality and Cultural Rhetoric: A Site for Rhetoric’s Future.”
⁴ As many scholars have pointed out, the “salons” that grew in mid-eighteenth-century Britain were different from the Paris salons, yet the term is useful to designate a tradition or long-standing practice among a group of people of both sexes to meet together for the purpose of intellectual conversation.
public through print media in a growing variety of genres. The fact of women's activity in the realm of eighteenth-century rhetorical discourse leads to curiosity about the processes by which women attained rhetorical expertise and the cultural conditions that increasingly enabled individual genius and industry to flourish. While many have ascribed their surprising eminence to unusual natural gifts of eloquence, it would have been nearly impossible to achieve what they did as women, and in increasing numbers, without opportunities, education, and encouragement provided by their community and culture. The question naturally arising from this situation and premise is "What kinds of informal training or self-education in rhetoric assisted them to achieve such mastery in these forms of discourse?" We need to understand more about how women overcame gender obstacles to learn to use the tools of oral and written rhetoric so well. Unraveling this paradox of women's technical exclusion and practical inclusion in eighteenth-century British rhetoric will help us understand the versatility and ubiquity of rhetoric, characteristics which increase the relevance of rhetoric to all human communication across genders and cultures.

Therefore, this dissertation explores how eight British women writers from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century honed their abilities to write, speak and conduct themselves effectively—in other words, how they pursued an education in rhetoric. In the following chapters, I pursue a carefully-designed method of investigating eighteenth-century women writers' rhetorical education. Eight rhetorical biographies built from textual sources of a variety of genres bring to light these women's processes of rhetorical education and practice over nearly a century, and these eight are organized so
that we can compare their education and practice across two generations within three broad genres of rhetoric. This biographical view of rhetorical process enlarges our view of historical women's rhetorical education beyond the theoretical content of their education and the products of their practice. In addition, instead of focusing on a formative period alone, rhetorical biographies show how eighteenth-century women learned and produced rhetorical theories and applied them over the course of their rhetorical lives.

By such a method, I demonstrate that while technically excluded from advanced formal education, these women were educated in a variety of classical and contemporary rhetorical theories and traditions through the interactive schools of conversation and epistolary correspondence. These informal schools, which were also important forums of rhetorical performance, assisted these eight women to stretch the boundaries of women's discursive practice to include more genres and a larger audience. By observing and critiquing rhetorical performances within communities of mentors, peers, and texts, eighteenth-century women writers acquired rhetorical theories which they used to guide their own rhetorical practice. Although facets of all of the rhetorical theories circulating in eighteenth-century culture were brought to these women through conversation and correspondence, among the most important rhetorical theories regarded discourse in conversation and conduct and in the belles lettres. Rhetorics of women's conversation and conduct, often articulated in conduct literature, were of primary importance to these women's rhetorical education and performance in every genre, establishing their ethos and providing them with a sense of rhetorical agency within and around the cultural
norms established for their gender. Belletristic rhetorics theorized the composition and reception of multiple genres of writing and artistic expression, and as they were disseminated in the periodical press, they provided criteria for critical reading and discussion in these women's communities. With these two rhetorical traditions as their base, combined with effective pedagogical methods, British women writers of two generations of varied backgrounds contributed greatly to the growing pedagogical, theoretical, and performative traditions of rhetoric.

The history of women's rhetorical education explored in this dissertation is first of all an attempt to recover a missing piece in rhetorical history, a response to recent questions regarding what kinds of rhetorical activities women were engaged in during the British eighteenth century. Winifred Bryan Horner, in her 1996 review of eighteenth-century rhetorical history, wrote that "Much remains to be done in the area of activities outside of [universities], as well as in the contributions of women and their part in this important period." Thomas Miller's 1997 history of English studies traces the history of rhetoric and English education back to the early eighteenth century, relying largely on institutional history and men's rhetorical practices. However, Miller acknowledges that his "failure to use gender as a category of analysis is one of the most serious practical limitations of my historical account." 

Several doubts and concerns face the scholar of eighteenth-century women's rhetoric. As already mentioned, eighteenth-century British women's rhetorical education has too often been ascribed to individual genius and industry alone because women's
advanced education was not institutionalized. The lack of rhetorical studies of women in this era compared to women of the nineteenth century leaves the impression that not enough evidence exists before 1800 to write a history of eighteenth-century women's rhetoric. Currently, the end of the eighteenth century seems to be a boundary before which women's rhetorical history has difficulty finding figures and texts. It is held that only in the nineteenth century did women finally learn Classical rhetoric and begin participating orally in public discourse in large numbers. It is true that relatively larger numbers of women participated in nineteenth-century British and American rhetoric due to the opening of women's colleges, yet the roots of women's rhetorical education and practice predate the institutions that welcomed them. Perhaps in the Western world formal education has now become so universalized that it is hard to imagine anything outside of an institution worthy of the term "education." We ought to remember that even in ancient Greece and Rome, rhetoric was a pedagogy and practice before it was codified and institutionalized for the education of larger numbers of men. Another misconception is the assumption that in order to call what these women did "rhetorical," we must transform the definition of rhetoric beyond recognition. As the following chapters will show, these concerns and doubts have less foundation than has been assumed.

Simply to prove that many women learned and practiced rhetoric in eighteenth-century Britain, however, would be too easy to do. My research answers some more specific questions about women’s rhetorical education and practice. It illustrates how women’s rhetorical education and practice related to the four or five eighteenth-century
schools or types of rhetoric usually named—neoclassical, stylistic, elocutionary, belletristic, and psychological-philosophical. It investigates how women learned to practice rhetoric in specific genres: conversation and conduct, the familiar letter, and the essay. It describes the pedagogical activities, relationships, and texts that were involved in their rhetorical training. And in general, through all their education in theories, genres, and through a variety of methods, is the question of gender. How did they overcome the prejudices and obstacles that were specific to women’s discourse in their communities and the culture at large?

One ultimate question underlies this study of rhetorical education: the question of the relative influence of cultural forces, only one of which is gender ideology, upon women’s rhetorical education and practice. The biological origins of rhetorical talent are mysterious and beyond the reach of this historical study. But by gathering data on a number of eighteenth-century women rhetoricians from a variety of contexts, we can begin to answer the question of which historical, cultural, and personal contexts constrained and enabled their rhetorical development. This question can be subdivided into several more specific ones: Did these women achieve rhetorical eminence by chance or hard work in spite of constraints, or were certain contextual features usually present? Was an increasingly enabling culture responsible for allowing more and more women to develop rhetorical skill? To what degree did earlier women’s rhetorical action create more fertile conditions for women’s rhetorical development, and develop a women’s

7 These are the categories named in Michael Moran’s *Eighteenth-Century British and American Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*, with the exclusion of the amorphous category of “women’s rhetoric” which I intend to elucidate.
"tradition" of rhetoric? In answering these questions, this dissertation inquires into both individual and historical contexts in order to explore the question of how, in Burkean terms, scene and agent contribute to rhetorical education.\(^8\)

While the basic aim of my work is to situate a number of eighteenth-century women's writing and learning activities within the context of rhetorical history, its larger aims are more broadly theoretical and practical. As Kathleen J. Turner explains, rhetorical historians not only do important historical work, "[history] standing as a distinct and valid approach in and of itself," but history also "tests theory and complements criticism."\(^9\) As I discuss in my conclusion, the findings of this study should encourage scholars of rhetorical history to use alternative research methods and sources and to ask questions about pedagogy and process including activities outside of formal institutions. Teachers of rhetoric may also be encouraged by these women's examples to use writing groups, to engage in long-term mentoring relationships, to train rhetors in and through multiple genres, and to continue to consider the ways in which categories of identity (such as gender) and our own historical context may constrain or enable rhetorical education in a variety of genres. Just as classical men's rhetoric has been seen as a fruitful source for modern pedagogy, so may eighteenth-century women's rhetorical traditions have useful applications that transcend their period and gender.\(^10\)

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\(^8\) Rhetorical history brings to light "both the commonalities among and the distinctiveness of rhetorical situations" (scenes) "and responses" (agents), according to Kathleen J. Turner, p. 15.

\(^9\) Turner 15

\(^10\) Texts that apply Classical rhetoric to modern rhetorical education include Edward Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* and Sharon Crowley and Deborah Hawhee's *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*.  

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Definitions of rhetoric and rhetorical education

In any history of rhetoric, it is important to respect the definitions of rhetoric that are current in the period and culture being studied. Eighteenth-century definitions of rhetoric varied. For the most part, they assumed the rhetor was male and that he would have access to the traditional spheres of rhetorical activity in public institutions and print. The average eighteenth-century British subject, associating “rhetoric” with its specialized terminology, seemed to consider the province of rhetoric limited to the stylistic techniques of tropes and figures such as metaphor. Most eighteenth-century British writers associated rhetoric with public oratory, and secondarily to the stylistic beauties and persuasive intentions of published writing in almost all major genres. Among the authors who wrote treatises or theories of rhetoric, there tended to be more specific definitions. In belletristic rhetoric, although some genres and styles of writing were considered more rhetorical than others, all public writing had the potential to be rhetorical. Belletristic rhetoric even expanded into the realm of the visual arts and the appreciation of nature, for it focused on issues such as taste, beauty and sublimity, trying to understand the mind’s reception of beauty and moral truth. Some authors, most notably John Locke, seemed to consider aspects of traditional oral and written rhetoric to be intrinsically deceptive, so they constructed a new system of communication based on stylistic simplicity in writing, the substitution of conversation for traditional academic debate, in order to focus on training the faculties of the mind for the collective pursuit of
truth. Elocutionary and neoclassical rhetorics tended to confine themselves to a focus on oral rhetoric—with the exception of Ciceronian rhetoric, which had a place for the rhetoric letter-writing and history-writing, and the utility of writing in the composition of a speech. Elocutionists often extended the sphere of classical rhetorical delivery to include the delivery of sermons, oral reading in church and in the home, stage performance, and everyday conversation and deportment.

In general, because of the association of the term “rhetoric” with higher education, authority and public display—masculinity in general—rhetoric was not normally considered proper or necessary training for women. Nevertheless, eighteenth-century British culture acknowledged that women could, and did, practice what was considered rhetoric in domestic and mixed-sex forums of discourse. The difference was that “rhetoric,” when referring to a woman’s communication, almost always had a negative connotation because of its associations with masculinity and deception. When men and women intended to praise women’s rhetorical skill, they usually named it with other terms, most commonly “eloquence.” As Joseph Priestley observed in 1761, rhetorical terms “seem to be gradually growing out of use, as the knowledge of those terms is not found to be of any use to the writer or speaker; and it is esteemed more elegant to express

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11 the seventeenth and early eighteenth century was affected by the Ramist split between logic and rhetoric, as seen in Mary Astell and John Locke’s use of the term “rhetoric” to refer to matters of style and the belief that figurative language obscured truth.

12 This is not to say that women were forbidden a knowledge of the elementary principles of rhetoric. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapters, in some cases women were encouraged by their mentors, tutors, or women writers to study modern rhetorical treatises and/or the works of classical rhetoricians. In several publications intended for women and for ladies’ boarding schools, they were welcomed into a rudimentary knowledge of rhetorical terminology.
those diversities of style and address by more obvious and intelligible words." If rhetorical terms were generally falling out of common usage, and were rarely applied to women’s discourse without a negative connotation, why should rhetorical historians require that eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical education and practice employ terms which would have been both arcane and culturally inappropriate?

It is reasonable to grant that if a rhetorical theorist is excluded from a particular rhetorical tradition and its vocabulary, a more accessible vocabulary will be used in formulating such rules. Rhetorical traditions of non-western European cultures do not use the term rhetoric to define what we would call rhetoric. Why then should women, also excluded from the western rhetorical tradition, be required to define themselves and their work in the terminology of a tradition denied to them? Even women who were conversant with western rhetorical traditions, as women, had neither the inclination nor the cultural freedom to adopt rhetorical terminology to describe their own words and actions. In the eighteenth-century and earlier, it was just as uncomplimentary, contradictory, and ridiculous to imagine a woman warrior as to imagine a woman rhetorician; therefore, to openly study or practice rhetoric as a woman necessarily involved relinquishing a rhetorical identity, and made it necessary to handle rhetorical terminology with care.

As the feminist historian of rhetoric Andrea Lunsford explains, rhetoric was historically defined as masculine “not because women were not practicing rhetoric—the arts of language are after all at the source of human communication—but because the

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13 The Rudiments of English Grammar 38

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tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals used by many women as ‘rhetorical.’”\(^\text{14}\) Modern rhetoricians like Lunsford have widened the definition of rhetoric, and for the most part, such a widening does not require abstruse reasoning, far-fetched premises, or a complete break from traditional definitions—it is simply calling a rhetorical practice a rhetorical practice. In most cases, the rhetorical forms, strategies and goals eighteenth-century women used were very similar to those that men used—that is, when the unequal conditions of gender difference are removed from our perception of it. But these gender conditions and prejudices were (and still are to a certain degree) nearly impossible to remove from the perception of rhetorical activity. Women’s “rhetoric” could not be recognized as rhetoric by most historical guardians of “the tradition” primarily because the male “clothing” of rhetoric seemed one with the “body” of it—the schools with their texts and declamation exercises; the public sites of senate, bar, and pulpit; the booming voice and gestures; the assumption of political, moral and intellectual authority; the confidence in one’s performance of linguistic virtuosity. But take away from eighteenth-century man or woman access to schools and public forums of speech, take away the right to express authority and verbal confidence, and we see both men and women learning and practicing persuasion, instruction, and entertainment in the forums and forms that remain to upper-and middle-class subjects: conversation, physical conduct, letter-writing and oral reading, and the venues of print publication available to them.

One of the greatest barriers to calling women’s rhetoric “rhetoric” has been the private / public distinction, which has persisted in rhetorical history longer than in literary

and social history. In practice, men and women’s realms were not as cleanly divided between public and private realms as prescriptive literature dictated. Gender lines dividing public and private were blurred by women’s social class and the genres in which they communicated. For instance, when Queen Elizabeth wrote a letter to her advisor or another monarch, even if it was a poem or a dry report of fact, it was potentially, and probably, a rhetorical act. But when an eighteenth-century middle-class woman wrote a letter to her brother or sister, however persuasive it was, it was below the consideration of most rhetoricians. Eighteenth-century rhetorics could still have been applied to the discourse of what we now consider the “private” sphere, where women were active.

Jürgen Habermas has argued convincingly that the division between private and public was not as clear in this century as historians had previously represented it. Habermas’s revolutionary theory of the public sphere was based on his study of eighteenth century invocations of the “public.” His work aided historians by breaking down imaginary boundaries that traditionally excluded women from historians’ definitions of the public sphere. He did this by demonstrating that the new public world of the Enlightenment formed itself “within the private realm of civil society” in “the critical discussion leading to the formulation of a rational consensual judgment.”15 In other words, the discourse that went on in drawing rooms, in literature and the theater – often including the discourse of women – was a “public within the private.”16 As a result of the inclusive opportunity provided by this definition, some feminist historiographers began to celebrate women’s participation in the Enlightenment public world through the

15 Keith Michael Baker, “Defining the Public Sphere” 187-88, as quoted in Guest 5
16 Guest 11
conversational salons of Paris. However, Margaret Jacob warns against extreme and unguarded celebrations of women’s freedom in the historical public sphere, noting that a strictly feminist and nationalistic view of the public can tend to exaggerate the roles and status of women in the formation of public opinion. In Jacob’s 1994 article “The Mental Landscape of the Public Sphere: A European Perspective,” she discovers that women did play an increasing role since the formation of the public world in England around 1690 and France since 1720. At the same time, she found that women’s roles, like political ideologies, were highly contested in this public sphere, neither overcome completely by “masculinist” discourses, as some French women historiographers have claimed, nor centered in the more feminist mixed-sex salon tradition. Harriet Guest’s book Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810 uses Habermas to make a similar modest claim: as her title suggests, she asserts that there were “small changes” over these sixty years in women’s position in relationship to learning and patriotism, so that in the 1790s several women writers like Mary Hays, Catharine Macaulay, and Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld were able to articulate “claims to political identity.” Habermas’s fruitful redefinition of public is useful for my study to the extent that it is accompanied by the awareness that as “public” and/or “domestic” rhetors, women and men experienced both constraints and freedoms, allowing for significant change in women’s rhetorical practices over time. As these and other recent historians of women’s lives and writing have argued, distinctions such as private/public and feminine/masculine can no longer be

17 “the maturation of the European public sphere owed more to English freethinkers, republicans, and Huguenot exiles, to the clandestine and the materialist, than it did to the Jansenists or to the polite, aristocratic, and refined women and men of the Parisian salons.” (Jacob 97)

18 Guest 17
the basis of excluding women's communication practices from the realm of rhetoric, even in cultures which seemed to restrict women's activity and language to the domestic sphere.

A modern definition of rhetoric is necessary and not inappropriate precisely because of the blindness of traditional rhetoricians to women's rhetorical practices. Robert Connors was well aware of the tensions between definitions like Lunsford's and historical definitions. In his earlier work, Connors, defining rhetoric as "persuasive public discourse" of an agonistic and oral variety, claims that rhetorical education was a scholarly endeavour in which students took "rigorous classical courses."19 Based on this definition of rhetorical education, he claimed that "through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries [... ] women continued to be completely excluded from the capstone discipline [rhetoric] of traditional education."20 In 1999, defending his statement from feminist criticism, Connors described the kind of scholarly gymnastics he felt was necessary to fulfill the feminist project in rhetorical history: "we are forced to retell the story of rhetoric, to move it out from the traditional oral, civic, argumentative and pedagogical tradition if we are to find more than a very few women in rhetoric before 1820.21 The following chapters demonstrate, however, that a position that assumes an essential, exclusive difference in women's and men's rhetorics before 1820 is based partly on the overemphasis of rhetorical *form/forum* or genre rather than rhetorical *function*, and partly on ignorance of the existing evidence in the textual record. Based on

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19 Connors "Women's Reclamation of Rhetoric in Nineteenth Century America" p. 67-69
20 ibid. p. 68
21 Connors 1999
the evidence of these women’s rhetorical lives, I shall describe some traditions of
eighteenth-century British women’s rhetoric which encompassed oral genres, had
immense civic relevance and influence, were often argumentative, and which could
neither have existed nor spread without a pedagogical tradition.

Late twentieth-century feminist rhetoricians are finally able freely to imagine and
speak of a woman rhetorician as a positive figure worthy of honor rather than ridicule,
and this makes possible a reassessment of historical women as rhetoricians. Therefore,
one task of feminist historiographers of rhetoric is a belated attempt to award women
recognition for their real participation in a broader tradition of rhetoric—rhetoric as a
human activity that cannot be limited to a single gender, class, culture, or time period.
How many cogent arguments have been made to demonstrate that John Locke both
learned and used rhetoric despite his explicit disavowal of rhetoric in his Essay
Concerning Human Understanding?!22—yet how few before the 1990s thought it
worthwhile to make the same argument about women speakers and writers who explicitly
disavowed the knowledge, as well as use, of rhetoric.

Because of the ongoing debate on the definition of rhetoric, it is necessary to
make explicit the definitions of rhetoric that operate in this particular study. Like Jane
Donawerth, I ascribe to a broad definition of rhetoric as the “art of communication.”23

22 Peter Walmsley names Paul De Man, John Richetti, John Sitter. In Locke’s Essay he writes, “all the art
of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath
invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the
judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats: and therefore ... where truth and knowledge are concerned,
cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them.” (Book III
Chapter x; from The Rhetorical Tradition 1st ed., p. 710)

23 Donawerth Rhetorical Theory xv
Rhetorical practice, for the purposes of this study, is broadly defined as intentional acts of communication carefully designed and delivered to achieve predetermined desired effects on a particular audience. Rhetorical theory includes, but is not limited to, the concepts and terminology employed by "traditional" rhetoricians of European countries. A rhetorical theory classifies or names communication strategies and effects, and proposes how rhetors can create and manage their messages successfully, though it need not be embodied in a unified "extended treatment" in prose, as Donawerth defines it. Rhetorical education, therefore, is the process by which people learn to discover the content and craft the form of their communication by attending to or constructing rhetorical theories that help them negotiate their identity, purpose, audience, and discourse conventions. The main elements of rhetorical education are individual aptitude and knowledge, mentors and/or authors who guide the learner through realistic rhetorical practice, and the use or development of theory to inform both the composition and criticism of messages. This learning process is inseparable from the processes of socialization and identity formation and is as much an education in ethics and ideology as it is an education in the invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery of discourse. Rhetorical education increases one's chances of rhetorical success by enhancing a rhetor's awareness of the various factors and processes involved in successful communication.

\[\text{Ibid}\]
Previous scholarship

Valuable historical work has already been written about women's rhetorical contributions, but these are mainly on individual women's works before Mary Astell in the 1690s and after Mary Wollstonecraft in the 1790s. There is a conspicuous gap of a whole century of women's rhetorical history between these women where little work has been done. In addition, in women's rhetoric before 1820, it is rare to find scholarly work which has a broad historical frame and includes a number of women, with the notable exception of Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold*, which places several key European women rhetoricians within the context of the rhetorical tradition from its beginnings to the Renaissance. Most rhetorical histories of women before 1820 are based on a rhetorical criticism of a single work of a genre deemed to be politically significant in some way, or to be significant as an illustration of feminist rhetoric, such as Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

The debate on women in rhetorical history between Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Barbara Biesecker in 1991-92 has special relevance to studies like this which focus on individual women as subjects. Campbell was a pioneer in introducing a number of women speakers to the canon of rhetorical history, but Biesecker expressed suspicion that what Campbell had done was not radical enough, and could easily be used against women by encouraging "tokenism" rather than a revision of our historical perspective on

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25 Cheryl Glenn, Andrea Lunsford, Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Sutcliffe, and Molly Meijer Wertheimer have edited or written historical surveys of women's contribution to rhetoric over centuries, important works that have laid a foundation for my study. However, only one essay on a woman rhetor between Astell and Wollstonecraft appears in their four volumes.
rhetorical theory and practice. Similar concerns have been expressed by Diane Helene Miller and the historian Robert B. Shoemaker. However, this study does not encourage mere tokenism. While including women in eighteenth-century rhetorical history, one must broaden definitions of *rhetoric, rhetor, and rhetorician,* and introduce new historiographical sources and methods. In doing so, it reclaims not only women’s rhetorical history, but potentially much of men’s rhetorical history as well—the rhetoric practiced outside of universities, the process of rhetorical education, the intermixing of private and public spheres and genres. There is a precedent to believe that these may result from women’s inclusion—since Campbell’s revolutionary introduction of women, the rhetorical history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has opened up to new possibilities: it has expanded to include both women’s and men’s informal and private rhetorical education, writing, speech, and the corporate practices of social movements and clubs. In a similar way, this exploration of eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical education begins to take rhetoric in the direction of women and informal education in this culture and century. By means of investigating a number of women’s rhetorical biographies, we can begin to see “gendered structures and institutions,” “changes as well as continuities in representations of gender, and “the differences among and within

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26 Diane Helene Miller urges historians of rhetoric to “[look] for gendered structures and institutions, rather than gendered individuals” (376). See Shoemaker’s introduction to *Gender in English Society 1650-1850.*

women" that Diane Helene Miller recommends as focal points for future rhetorical historians of women. Historical work that brings these varied social factors to light, without ignoring the agency of individual women and their mentors, will help us to better understand the variety of rhetorical practices and processes of men, women, and groups who take (and make) the opportunities existing in their shifting rhetorical situations.

The whole tradition of rhetoric changes before our eyes as we explore women's participation in it. This ongoing revolution has been effected through numerous articles on historical women rhetoricians in the past twenty years, and has recently intensified in four of the most important books on women's rhetorical history in the 1990s— Reclaiming Rhetorica (1995), Rhetoric Retold (1997), Listening to their Voices (1997) and The Changing Tradition (1999). Because of this body of scholarship, in our new millennium it is no longer an uncontested assumption that rhetoric means male, agonistic, public, oral discourse: the term rhetoric has been "reclaimed" for women's historical performances in conversation, writing, artistic and bodily forms of communication.

Today, women's rhetorical historiographers work in a new rhetorical situation: we look at history partly through the texts of scholars who have introduced a host of rhetorical foremothers and have articulated various aspects of the relationship between rhetoric and gender. For example, Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald's new anthology Available Means (2001) could not have been possible without the work of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell on early

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28 Diane Helene Miller 376
American women public speakers, a large number of whom are included in their collection. Nor could they have included Diotima as a rhetorician without C. Jan Swearingen’s article arguing that we can reconstruct women rhetors from secondary texts like Plato’s even if their primary texts have been lost. Susan Miller’s book on nineteenth-century American rhetorics of commonplace writing complements Ann Ruggles Gere’s similar presentation of literate practices in women’s clubs during that era. My study builds on this rich tradition of work in women’s rhetoric by extending rhetorical history further in the directions of pre-nineteenth century women, informal pedagogy and a variety of genres.

While the field of American women’s rhetoric in the nineteenth century has grown exponentially since the 1990s, including several books which cover a long period and more than one rhetor, the study of British women’s rhetoric in the eighteenth century has hardly grown at all. In Lunsford’s 1991 book, Christine Mason Sutherland introduced Mary Astell, and Jamie Barlowe introduced Mary Wollstonecraft as rhetoricians. Since then, more rhetorical analysis has been done on Astell and Wollstonecraft, but little has been done to discover other rhetors in the century. Before the year 2000 there has seemed to be a difficulty in expanding scholarship on eighteenth-century women between and beyond Astell’s Proposal and Wollstonecraft’s Vindication, with the exception of Vicki Tolar Collins’s work on British Methodist women of the eighteenth century. However, notable recent progress can be seen in the addition of Lady

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29 Man Cannot Speak For Her, 1989
30 “A Lover’s Discourse: Diotima, Logos, and Desire” in Lunsford’s Reclaiming Rhetorica (1991)
Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) to Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald’s 2001 anthology of women’s rhetorics, and the inclusion of Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth in Jane Donawerth’s new anthology *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900*.

I believe a large part of the difficulty rhetorical historians have had when going beyond the three Marys (Astell, Wortley Montagu, and Wollstonecraft) is political as well as generic. Sutherland believes that twentieth-century feminist readers were interested in Astell because she appeared to be an early feminist; the same applies to Wollstonecraft and Wortley Montagu. But in representing them to modern readers, modern feminist scholars of rhetoric often tended to overlook the conservative aspects of these historical women’s politics, their concessions and compromises with the patriarchal system, and their inconvenient moral and religious beliefs. Instead, in texts like Ritchie and Ronald’s the focus is still upon “transgressive forms” and transgressive subject matter such as “the necessity of an education, the perils of marriage, the catastrophe of abuse, the conditions of women’s poverty, or the pleasures of women’s sexualities.”

While it is true that looking at transgression in form and content helps to blur the boundaries between public and private that have excluded women from rhetoric in the past, the emphasis on certain kinds of feminist transgression excludes the majority of eighteenth-century women writers whose rhetorics do not fit this political model of subversion and transgression. Therefore, one of the first steps in exploring women’s rhetorical history in the eighteenth

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31 *Available Means*, Introduction xx-xxi
century is to refuse to limit oneself to a consideration of feminist rhetorics defined by contemporary feminism, and look at what was considered feminist in these women’s own era and communities.32

Another obstacle has been genre. Because eighteenth-century British women did not write rhetorical treatises, their work has long been considered a province of literary history and criticism rather than rhetoric. Although scholars have begun to study literature as rhetoric, these literary studies have tended to be more hermeneutical than heuristic, more about reading literary texts rhetorically than about authors learning and composing rhetorical literature.33 The combination of scholarship in rhetoric and literature has produced some valuable insights into literary and cultural criticism and theory, but rarely have historians of rhetoric shown how authors acquired their rhetorical skill and engaged in rhetorical praxis, and rarely have literary biographers related authorial careers to rhetorical traditions.34

Rhetorical historians have in general avoided biography and have preferred rhetorical criticism and the history of rhetorical theory, yet their work could easily be used to launch a study of the processes of historical writers. For example, Barbara

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32 In addition, many literary historians of women writers have already taken this step and thereby enriched the view of women’s participation in eighteenth-century literary history. Many of these more balanced views of women’s religious and political stances are in the form of biographies. For example, Patricia Demers’ study of Hannah More and Ruth Perry’s biography of Mary Astell.

33 See Wayne Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, for example.

34 Craig Kallendorf’s collection of essays on rhetoric and literature are mainly rhetorical criticism of products, rather than processes or rhetorical education. Bridget Hill has provided us with an understanding of Catharine Macaulay’s career as a writer, as William McCarthy has elucidated Hester Thrale Piozzi’s literary life, yet these writers do not draw on rhetorical theory or history. Mahwah, NJ: Hermagoras Press, 1999.
Warnick's *The Sixth Canon* has helped scholars understand how eighteenth-century English belles-lettriste rhetoric drew on seventeenth-century French treatises to produce a "sixth canon" of "aesthetic creativity and response" that included response to literature.\(^3\) What is now needed is to build on works such as Warnick's by exploring how both men and women used or adapted these and other rhetorical theories to write literature, and to speak and act according to the rhetorics of propriety set up by these theories.

Women's literary history and literary biography is far ahead of rhetorical history in examining the development of individual female rhetors of this period, and the culture of literary criticism that formed an important part of a published writer's audience. For example, Cheryl Turner has researched the complexities of eighteenth-century women writers' relationships to their colleagues, publishers and readers, and Laura Runge characterizes how gender ideology and gendered language influenced eighteenth-century literary criticism.\(^3\) Literary history has already discovered these and other important elements of eighteenth-century women's rhetorical education without naming them as "rhetorical," and what is now needed is to read these texts and historical women writers' texts from a rhetorical point of view and thus complete the picture of women's authorship in history from a more interdisciplinary, process-based perspective.

Rhetoricians can learn about eighteenth-century women's rhetorical history by reading literary history, literary biography, and criticism on eighteenth-century women's

\(^{35}\) Warnick, Foreword, p. x.

writing. In fact, Diane Helene Miller claims that feminist rhetoricians have already begun to build on the groundwork laid by feminist literary scholars. Not only do literary and rhetorical history draw on similar sources of evidence, but new historicism and feminist literary criticism since the 1980s have broken down genre hierarchies and have restored a focus on the writer and her rhetorical context, so that much of the work literary scholars do is in fact rhetorical criticism. For example, Deirdre Coleman’s 1994 article in *English Literary History* on white abolitionism and English women's protest writing in the 1790s places in its rhetorical context Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld’s poetic epistle to William Wilberforce which praises his heroic efforts to abolish the slave trade. The women’s literary histories and biographies mentioned above also save valuable time in research by compiling in one text many pieces of evidence of the processes of rhetorical education such as collaboration and mentorship.

I call on interdisciplinarity because I would like to extend women’s rhetorical history not only to include a variety of women’s political stances and a variety of print and oral genres and their composition processes, but to expand in the direction of the history of rhetorical pedagogy. Although important work has been done and continues to be done through rhetorical criticism of historical women’s speech and writing, rhetorical criticism of texts, even the excellent rhetorical criticism of women’s texts in *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, can never fully answer the objections of those who say women’s performances were a result of naïve eloquence or isolated cases of self-education.

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37 "feminist rhetorical critics naturally took advantage of the progress already made by feminist literary critics." (361)
We need to understand the conditions that gave rise to historical women's rhetorical awareness and skills, as well as individual rhetorical acts or products. This use of metalanguage is important because it not only helps historians to discover the theories that informed women's rhetorical education, but it reinforced in these women's minds the rhetorical principles that were learned by observation and practice. Like many other ancient and modern rhetorical theorists, I understand both metacognition and metalanguage to be essential in rhetorical education.38 Pierre Bourdieu, who writes as a social scientist rather than a rhetorician, and values unconscious practices over the conscious ones, nevertheless makes a similar distinction when he contrasts the “rule” and the “habitus”: “institutionalized education,” he explains, “convert[s] practical schemes into explicit norms” but “diffuse education . . . moves directly from practice to practice without passing through discourse.”39 Although much apparent education in language can and does occur without the mediation of metaconsciousness, such “education” lacks the element of agency and reflection which rhetoricians have continually valued.40 This dichotomy between conscious rhetoric and unconscious eloquence will remain to haunt women's rhetorical history despite all we do to demonstrate that their rhetorical products

38 Rhetorical treatises, from Aristotle's to modern treatises, assume that rhetorical terminology (such as ethos, pathos, and logos) is a metalanguage that assists a rhetor to "observe[e] in any case the available means of persuasion" (Rhetoric 153). Ann E. Berthoff names many language theorists who agree that "consciousness of consciousness" is essential to language education, among them Vygotsky, I. A. Richards, Coleridge, Freire, Burke, Cassirer, Susanne Langer, Edward Sapir.

39 Bourdieu 103.

40 Isocrates: "men who have been gifted with eloquence by nature and by fortune, are governed in what they say by chance, and not by any standard of what is best, whereas those who have gained this power by the study of philosophy and by the exercise of reason never speak without weighing their words, and so are less often in error as to a course of action." (Antidosis 54)
were so good that they were *likely* crafted with a background of rhetorical theory and training. We need to find out which rhetorical theories women really knew, which examples they carefully imitated, and which pedagogical methods helped them to acquire such knowledge and skill, or we will not understand how women’s rhetorical performances came about through culture, not just by a mixture of good luck and natural genius. This cannot be done without engaging in rhetorical biography, the writing of a woman’s rhetorical life rather than simply a focus on a particular rhetorical product. Also, without a comparison of many women’s rhetorical biographies, we cannot make any generalizations about women’s relationship to rhetorical traditions in a historical period.

**Sources and methods**

To find the evidence for women’s rhetorical education in cultures where women were not admitted to institutions of higher education requires not only a general, nontraditional definition of rhetoric and rhetorical education but also a unique methodology and body of historical data.

Since eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical knowledge, like other forms of knowledge, was mainly learned individually, and in private and semi-public sites, we would be misguided to seek for evidence of the type usually used in rhetorical histories: rhetorical textbooks used in schools; rhetorical treatises directed at learned men; public, formal educational institutions and their records. A keyword search for “Ladies” and

As my research demonstrates, the bulk of eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical education was disguised in texts by other names and carried out orally or in unpublished letters. Letters, diaries, the works they read, and their own published works can tell us how they represented their own and other women’s rhetorical education and practice. The texts which they read and critiqued can help us understand which theories and models came to them in textual form; the letters and diaries of friends and family, and public reviews of their published work can tell us how others viewed their rhetorical education and performance, information which often provided important feedback to the rhetoricians themselves.

Through eighteenth-century letters, diaries, and published literature, we can discover the sites and methods of women’s rhetorical education. At home, women learned rhetoric alone in the library or letter-writing closet, with tutors, and with family and friends in the drawing room and around the tea or dinner table. They learned by national and international travel, by attending public lectures and assemblies, by observing speech and action in theatres, churches, marketplaces, and sometimes the House of Commons. One could truly say that men also learned rhetoric by these means, yet traditional histories of education and rhetoric rarely roam beyond the schoolrooms, textbooks, and famous schoolteachers. The historical texts and methods which are

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necessary in order to understand the bulk of women's rhetorical education are also those which will enrich our understanding of men's rhetorical education. Textbooks and curricula, after all, only tell us what is taught to large numbers of people, not what is actually learned by individuals, and often tell us little about pedagogical methods and their impact.

Therefore, in my research I have made use of a rhetorical perspective of genre which both validates my focus on particular genres and helps to explain how a woman's gender meant restricted access to writing and reading various genres. These perspectives, developed in the 1980s and 90s, are well articulated by Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway, Carolyn Miller and William Benoit. Starting from Miller's basis that "a theoretically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of the discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish," we see that an author's choice of genre is not merely based on her familiarity with the linguistic conventions of the genre, but it also depends more strongly on the actions that are possible and practical for her in a particular rhetorical situation. Genre is a rhetorical choice open to those who are familiar with a variety of forms, yet each situation provides a rhetor with a limited selection of appropriate genres. In genre theory, genres can also be viewed as "actions" on the part of discourses, whose function it is to regulate writers and speakers. For this reason Freedman and Medway recommend that modern pedagogy and theory about genre

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41 Freedman and Medway's *Genre and the New Rhetoric* (1994); Miller's "Genre as Social Action" (1984); and Benoit's "Beyond Genre Theory: the Genesis of Rhetorical Action." (2000)

42 "Genre as Social Action" p. 24
be “critical,” not merely descriptive: we should ask questions such as “How do some genres come to be valorized? In whose interests is such valorization? What kinds of social organization are put in place or kept in place by such valorization? Who is excluded?” Genre has been used to exclude women from the history of rhetoric, and even when they are included, certain genres are valorized as being more “rhetorical” than others.

However, it is important to point out that such valorization or exclusion is not able completely to restrict the rhetorical freedom on the part of the rhetor, who can use genres subversively and creatively. Freedman, Medway, and others emphasize the ways in which genre is a constraint acting upon a writer. However, Kenneth Burke warned rhetoricians about the social scientist’s tendency to impose agency on the scene, the “‘agentification’ of scene” which characterizes philosophical materialism. Benoit uses Burke’s warning to point out that scholars need to reemphasize the importance of authors or speakers as the conscious, intentional agents of rhetorical action who can transform genres and, through them, transform the ideologies and institutions associated with those genres. Well-educated rhetors are creative. They can smuggle purposes and discourses of other genres into the genres that are suitable to their gender and situation. Eighteenth-century women writers engaged in this kind of blending and disguising of generic forms, content, and aims in order to expand their rhetorical possibilities in the face of generic constraints. As I demonstrate in chapters one and two, letter writing and conversation

43 See Kenneth Burke, from A Grammar of Motives, in The Rhetorical Tradition 1017
were genres which were gradually feminized over the century as more women became known for their excellence in these genres. In order to gain readership in more masculine and authoritative nonfiction genres such as the essay, political pamphlet, and treatise, women showed that their arguments flowed naturally out of feminine roles valued in their communities, such as the civic-minded Roman matron and the motherly moral preceptress.

Because eighteenth-century British women wrote in so many literary genres, literary historians have already populated their eighteenth century canon with a large number of women. However, while literary scholars have begun to study rhetorical features of literature, it is important to distinguish some literary approaches to rhetoric from a rhetorical view of literature: the latter is the perspective that I take in this study of women’s rhetorical education. Many literary critics and literary historians have tended to have an expressivist, aesthetic and formalist interest in written genres. That is, their consideration of genres usually demonstrates how readers interpret the cultural ideology and author’s express their subjectivity through the aesthetics of form of various texts. Although such scholarly work is immensely useful in discussions of hermeneutics and subjectivity, its focus on arguments of textual interpretation often exclude a view of rhetorical production, intention, and wide-ranging effects. Authorial intentionality is a complex issue, still in debate among aesthetic theorists, but “arguments about intentions” cannot be avoided in a rhetorical view of textual production.44

44 Paisley Livingston in “Arguments about Intentions” describes the various positions taken on authorial intentionality, describes Jerrold Levinson’s “hypothetical intentionalism” and posits a “moderate intentionalism” (616).
Trevor Ross explains that it was only in the late eighteenth century that poetry or literature shifted from a focus on invention and production (rhetoric) to an emphasis on consumption (criticism). To put it simply, the eighteenth-century view of written genres was more rhetorical than the post-Romantic view of them.\(^4\) In post-eighteenth century literary scholarship, rhetoric often appears as a term to name certain formal generic and stylistic features noticed by critical readers. However, a rhetorical view of literature uses the term "rhetoric" more broadly, to encompass all the action in a rhetorical situation. Such a view enables us as writers and teachers to understand the authors' strategies of learning and composing and to make such an understanding the basis of creative imitation and pedagogy. The disciplinary division of rhetoric and literature has not only perpetuated the genre biases that have existed since the Romantic era, but it has discouraged scholars from engaging in rhetorical criticism of women's literature and rhetorical biography of women writers.

Women's rhetorical education in the eighteenth century and earlier was so varied in its sites and methods, its oral or literate forms and genres, and geographical and domestic settings, that it is difficult to unify or understand as a general movement. Indeed, given the evidence, there is no foundation to claim that a small number of eighteenth-century women were representative of their sex, or that "woman" was a stable category over time and place.\(^6\) Women writers often had little in common besides the

\(^4\) Patricia Meyers Spacks asserts that literary critics "remain the heirs of Romanticism" ("Forgotten Genres" 48)

\(^6\) The variableness of gender identity and gender ideology is now a commonplace of women's studies; see Denise Riley's "Am I That Name."
general similarity that they shared of all being British women who wrote and published in English an era in which few women did so—and this fact of their female authorship or conversational wit was interpreted differently in different contexts.

Nevertheless, a fruitful way of understanding general and local trends or factors in women’s rhetorical education in this culture is to engage in comparative biography of women who have been successful as rhetors, examining how they have learned, used, and transformed genres. The comparison of more than a few women enables a historian to distinguish more general features of the rhetorical education of women in a certain culture from features which are particular to individual women’s social, political, religious, and geographical backgrounds. This kind of historical method provides us with a certain kind of rich historical narrative and analysis that is impossible to achieve by other means.

Three broad genres of rhetorical practice comprise the main framework of my study. I consider conversation and conduct as two overlapping genres in one, and the other two genres are letter-writing and nonfiction prose. Conversation and conduct and letter-writing were the among the most common and influential fields of women’s rhetorical practice in the eighteenth century besides poetry and the novel, and expository and persuasive prose was relatively less common. The genres are arranged in an order

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47 Like Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald who exclude poetry from their anthology of women’s rhetorics, I also admit to making an arbitrary decision to deselect poetry and novels as genres under examination, despite their popularity among women writers. I made this choice to keep my project within the reasonable scope of a dissertation. In my future work I hope to explore these excluded genres, especially the novel, to demonstrate the rhetorical practices of authors whose genres are still often considered the province of literary studies rather than rhetorical studies (despite rhetorical studies of narrative such as those by William Booth and James Phelan and the rhetorical criticism of fiction such as that found in Craig Kallendorf’s collection).
that roughly corresponds to their place along the continuums of common to rare among women, and from local, familiar audiences to wider and more varied audiences. This pattern of genres roughly parallels the patterns of education and innovation within the rhetorical lives of each of these women as they experimented with genre and built up a wider reputation and readership. Nevertheless, all systems of chapter-organization are made for convenience and belie the interpenetration of categories, so it should be noted that they are not arranged in a sequence of difficulty, nor are they representative of discrete “stages” in an educational program. There was a challenging rhetorical complexity and potentially a very wide audience for rhetorical performance in each of these genres, and these eight women often employed all three genres, and more, throughout their rhetorical lives.

Chapters in this dissertation focus on eight women authors born between 1720 and 1760, the bulk of whose published texts were written between 1750 and 1820. This specific historical period reveals the change in women’s rhetorical situation before and after the American and French Revolutions. It also covers women’s rhetorical activity during “the rise of sensibility” in literature which culminated in the Romantic era, and the new developments in rhetorical theories of aesthetic taste, physical and vocal delivery, and the psychology of persuasion. Table 1.1 lists the women arranged by date of birth, along with their primary genres and regions of residence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author*</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Genres in which she published or earned fame</th>
<th>Regions of residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Montagu</td>
<td>1720-1800</td>
<td>Letters, conversation, essays</td>
<td>Cambridge, London, Berkshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hester Thrale Piozzi</td>
<td>1741-1821.</td>
<td>Conversation, diary, poetry biography, letters, essays</td>
<td>London, Italy, Wales, Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld</td>
<td>1743-1825.</td>
<td>Conversation, educational texts, poetry, criticism, essays, letters</td>
<td>Warrington Academy; London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Grant</td>
<td>1755-1838.</td>
<td>Memoirs, letters, essays, educational writing, conversation</td>
<td>Glasgow, New York, Laggan (Scotland), Edinburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Hamilton</td>
<td>1758-1816.</td>
<td>Biography and history, educational theory, letters, novels, travel literature</td>
<td>Belfast, Edinburgh, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Shackleton Leadbeater</td>
<td>1758-1816</td>
<td>Conversation, poetry, letters, anecdote, dialogue</td>
<td>Ballitore, Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Hays</td>
<td>1760-1843.</td>
<td>Novels, essays, letters, biography, educational theory</td>
<td>Southwark, Hackney, London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* I use both of the last names of those women who married and whose publicity as conversationalist or author is associated with both names.

Table 1.1 The eight authors chosen for this study

My initial procedure in choosing these women as subjects was to discover which British women of the century had rich and accessible library holdings in unpublished letters or diaries as well as a variety of published writing. This large initial selection was narrowed and revised based on the following criteria:

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48 "Accessibility" refers to holdings accessible to myself in Ohio, in addition to archives accessible during a two-month research trip to libraries in Manchester, Edinburgh, Dublin, Oxford, and London.
1. Only women who demonstrated mature rhetorical expertise and flexibility by performing in more than one genre. This flexibility made it probable that genre was a matter of conscious choice, and that they were able to compare their practice of rhetoric in more than one genre.

2. A balance between women from two generations—six women born between 1720 and 1743, and five born between 1752 and 1767. Thus I was able to include women from both generations in each of the four main chapters to demonstrate women’s rhetoric in a certain genre over a long historical period.

3. A balance between well-known authors and lesser-known authors. Some very influential and well-known women writers have been excluded from my list of eight women but their educational works and influence still play important roles in the dissertation.49

4. Inclusion of a few well-known women such as those in the “Bluestocking” circles (Montagu, Thrale Piozzi) and Unitarian-Presbyterian Dissenter communities (Aikin Barbauld, Hays, Macaulay Graham) as well as figures at the fringes of these social circles largely due to their provincial status as Irish and Scottish women (Grant, Shackleton Leadbeater, Hamilton). This ensured that my findings would not represent only on a single social network of women.

By uniting this group of rhetorical biographies in a single work, I am able to compare women’s rhetorical education and practice of two generations of women, including women from a variety of geographic and social locations. Rhetorical histories

49 Throughout these rhetorical biographies I occasionally refer to other eminent women writers such as Elizabeth Carter, Frances Burney d’Arblay, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Hannah More.
of the three genres join together with rhetorical biographies and close textual readings to provide "an understanding of rhetoric as a process rather than simply a product." I reconstruct the women's cycles of praxis from theory to action to reflection, demonstrating their learning processes before, during, and after their rhetorical performance in conversation/conduct or writing.

Conspicuously absent from this selection is a criterion that women chosen be easily classifiable as "feminists" in the modern senses of the term. Although my historical project itself is feminist in its claim that women's rhetorical education and practice is as important as men's, I work against a tendency in women's history to resurrect and heroicize mainly those historical women who were "subversive" of patriarchy in their rhetorical aims and methods. As I mentioned earlier, Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft have been invited into the history of rhetoric based on their feminist sympathies. At the same time, several more conservative women authors have been overlooked despite the fact that their work is more directly related to rhetoric. For example, Hester Thrale Piozzi wrote an essay on rhetoric, eloquence, and oratory, and Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld participated in the rhetorical education of boys and wrote an elocutionary handbook for women. They, as well as Anne Grant and Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, would surely not be classified today as feminists without grave reservations, but this is no reason why they should not be studied as women rhetoricians.

50 Kathleen Turner, p. 15. As well, Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences" recommends that scholars engage with large periods of time such as centuries, and at the same time pay attention to the experiences of individuals.
I use gender as a primary category of analysis not because I wish to essentialize features of female communication, or to valorize feminist rhetoric over other kinds of rhetoric used by women. Rather, gender is an important and valid category of analysis because women writers of the eighteenth century, regardless of political, religious, and other identities, all faced the difficulty of overcoming gender prejudices against themselves as public rhetors.

In the following chapters, I first introduce the history of each genre in relation to women, and then present, in succession, biographies of two or three different women’s rhetorical practice and education in these genres. In my conclusion I will return to the questions of how women’s rhetorical education related to the four major theories of rhetoric current in the period, which educational processes, relationships, and texts were common features of these women’s education, and most importantly, how the culture in general and individual contexts contributed to their eminence and the overall increase in the number of women practicing influential rhetoric in these genres.

Eighteenth-century rhetorical textbooks for women

Having established my basic claims, the scholarly contributions of my work, and my theories and methods, I would like briefly to introduce some background information about the rhetorical textbooks that were accessible to, or addressed to, eighteenth-century British women. Such an overview of women’s rhetorical texts (handbooks, theoretical
treatises, and the like) demonstrates how this study contributes to, and differs from, the
traditional vein of rhetorical history which takes account of such texts and their cultural
contexts.

Texts intended for eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical training varied
according to a woman’s era and social rank. Upper-class women of the Renaissance and
Enlightenment eras were occasionally given classical educations, and it is probable that
women not only studied the philosophy and history of the era, but something regarding
the rhetorical theories and practices of the era. Mary Astell’s second part of *A Serious
Proposal to the Ladies* (1697) outlines a curriculum of study for women in which she
refers them to Bernard Lamy’s *Art of Speaking* (1676 in English), John Locke’s *Essay
Concerning Human Understanding* (1693), and the Port-Royal *Logic* of Antoine Arnauld
and Pierre Nicole (1674 in English). While she asserts that women are not meant to
become public speakers, she makes many observations about her own manner of
argumentation, the ways in which women should persuade each other in conversation,
basic principles of written composition, and critical reading methods.

With the exception of epistolary handbooks, which abounded in this period, there
are few textbooks which address rhetorical instruction to women until the second half of
the eighteenth century, with the exception mentioned earlier of *Lady’s Rhetoric* (1707),
“Containing Rules for Speaking and Writing Elegantly.”51 Epistolary rhetorics and books

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51 See the entry in the *Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue* bibliographic database.

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of model letters were increasingly directed toward both sexes and women as the eighteenth century progressed; I discuss these texts and the feminization of the epistolary genre at greater length in the chapter on letter-writing.

Some more general mid-eighteenth-century rhetorical texts were intended for self-directed learners of both sexes. The popular *Circle of the Sciences* series, an early encyclopedia edited by John Newberry, devoted a volume to Rhetoric entitled *Rhetoric Made Familiar and Easy to Young Gentlemen and Ladies* (1746). Newberry’s series was printed under royal authority, but dissenters published their own version of rhetorical instruction in Isaac Watts’ *Logic*, and its supplement, *The Improvement of the Mind* (published posthumously in 1752). Watts clarifies in his prefaces that both men and women are included in his intended audience. In *The Improvement of the Mind*, Watts gives directions for reading, conversation, disputing (in schools and in conversation), and written composition.

While the *Circle of the Sciences* text on rhetoric was reprinted throughout the remaining decades of the eighteenth century, I have discovered no other rhetorical handbooks for women in the *English Short Title Catalogue* between 1750 and 1770. After that date, the titles of works including rhetorical instruction tend to focus on moral education. J. Hamilton Moore’s *The Young Gentleman and Lady’s Monitor; and, English Teacher’s Assistant* (2nd edition 1777) was “Calculated to Eradicate Vulgar Prejudices and Rusticity of Manners; Improve the Understanding; Rectify the Will; Purify the Passions; Direct the Minds of Youth to the Pursuit of proper Objects; and to Facilitate

52 "Ladies" appears in the title of the second edition of 1748 and all successive editions. It was a popular series with volumes sold separately, and the fifth edition of the rhetoric was printed in 1789.
their Reading, Writing, and Speaking the English Language, with Elegance and Propriety” (title page). The words of the title allude to faculty psychology used in Bacon, Locke, and Campbell’s rhetorics, but in the preface and excerpted readings, Moore’s text touches on drawing-room elocution and letter-writing as well as conduct and belletristic principles. Ann Murry’s *Mentoria* (1778) briefly covers the elocution of conversation and reading and discusses the dangers and benefits of rhetoric, contrasting it with logic. Both Murry’s and Moore’s works are included in a reading list appended to Mary Weightman’s *The Polite Reasoner: In Letters Addressed to a Young Lady, at Boarding School in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire* (1787) which teaches skills of observation and good conduct. Also included in Weightman’s reading list are the following works which cover various aspects of rhetoric but focus on elocutionary rhetoric:

- Scot’s Lessons in Elocution
- Sheridan’s Lectures on the Art of Reading
- Walker’s Lessons in Elocution
- Watts’ Improvement of the Mind
- Burgh’s Art of Speaking
- Dramatic Pieces for Young Ladies
- Elegant Extracts in Prose
- Enfield’s Speaker
- Enfield’s Exercises in Elocution

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53 The English Short Title Catalogue lists a first edition with a questionable date of 1773. Five other editions up to 1796 were published in New York and London, and there were two editions in Ireland in 1781 and 1788.

54 *Mentoria: or, the Young Ladies Instructor, In Familiar Conversations on Moral and Entertaining Subjects: Calculated to Improve Young Minds in the Essential, as well as Ornamental Parts of Female Education.* This text was reprinted in ten London editions in the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, and it was also printed in Ireland and America.

55 Weightman published *The Juvenile Speaker*, a reader for elocutionary practice, in the same year.

56 Weightman, *Polite Reasoner*, appendix.
Around mid-century and later, eighteenth-century women in the middle ranks began more often to attend girls’ boarding schools, but these schools had more to do with the basics of literacy and numeracy, needlework, singing, drawing and dancing. These subjects were only an elementary foundation for a rhetorical education in conversation and conduct. However, a few of the above elementary texts in rhetoric were directed toward girls’ boarding schools. In addition, in 1786 appeared the second edition of George Neville Ussher’s *Elements of English Grammar [...] Designed Particularly for the Use of Ladies’ Boarding Schools* to which was appended *A Concise Treatise of Rhetoric.*\(^{57}\) This work emphasizes the tropes and figures, referring to Blair’s and Walker’s works on rhetoric.

In women’s domestic, boarding-school, and self-directed education, therefore, there were texts available to introduce them to the elementary principles or terms of rhetoric. Besides the textbooks mentioned above which were explicitly directed to young women, there were other introductions to the “arts and sciences” or “grammar and rhetoric” or “composition” written for young students in general. To list a few, elementary texts by John Bascroft (1770), Abraham Crocker (1772), Richard Turner (1783), and Philip Withers (1789) covered elements of rhetoric such as elocution and the figures and tropes. In the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, anthologies such as *The Beauties of English Prose* (1772) either provided explicit instruction in writing and speaking, or offered essays and excerpts from periodical writers and moralists such as Addison, Hume, Lord Chesterfield, and others, which were to be used in oral reading.

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\(^{57}\) the first edition, Glocester and London, 1785, lacks the treatise of rhetoric.
practice and moral education. Many of the excerpted essays in these anthologies discuss rhetorics of conversation and deportment, written composition, taste, and the rhetorics of the sublime in language and art. These texts filled similar functions as the texts by Murry, Moore, and Ussher without directing the knowledge specifically to young women. Such works were likely selected by some ladies’ boarding schools and by some governesses of young women such as Mary Weightman.

This brief list of rhetoric texts that were available to women of the eighteenth century demonstrates that only the mere rudiments of the art were explicitly taught to women, and only in the latter part of the century, through textbooks. The above works available to women or written for women define rhetorical terms, give instructions for domestic oral reading and pronunciation, and/or offer instruction in the rhetorics of conversation and conduct. In the following chapter on letter-writing is included a survey of epistolary handbooks for women.

It is important to note that among the women authors whose rhetorical biographies are constructed here none of them allude specifically to any of these texts except those by Isaac Watts and John Locke and the well-known periodical writers such as Addison and Steele whose works were found in anthologies of the “beauties” of prose. Nevertheless, the elementary rhetorical handbooks are introduced here to demonstrate that there is some textual record of this culture offering education for women including some elements of rhetoric.

In the following chapters we shall discover that the texts used in women’s rhetorical education were not limited to the genres of rhetorical handbooks and
elocutionary readers, and that textbook instruction was only one type of pedagogy among many. As the following chapter illustrates, numerous "conduct books" and social mores taught women idealized ethical and bodily rhetorics which were to be performed mainly, but not exclusively, in the arena of conversation. While these texts provided static, disembodied prescriptions and opinions, more powerful pedagogies were involved in community mentorships as men and women engaged in guided imitation and rhetorical critique of conversational content and manner. Prescriptive epistolary rhetoric also abounded in handbooks before and during the eighteenth century, yet published letters of real men and women were more often mentioned by the women themselves as models of imitation, and correspondence with mentors was an important means by which women engaged in the rhetorical criticism of letters. There were no popular textbooks or handbooks on the writing of pamphlets, essays, histories or treatises, but the "schools" for these rhetorics were the social interactions of conversation and letter-writing, in which women engaged in oral readings of essays and histories, and often analyzed their rhetoric. Other important guides to a woman's successful performance in all of these genres were the well-known popular rhetorical theories articulated by Hugh Blair, Joseph Priestley, Thomas Sheridan and others, which were either directly encountered by women through reading or attending lectures, or dispersed through various cultural sites. Through all these avenues, classical, bellettristic, elocutionary, and psychological rhetorics each made a contribution to eighteenth-century women writers' rhetorical education.
CHAPTER 2

CONVERSATION AND CONDUCT:
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND HESTER THRALE PIOZZI

This twofold genre of rhetoric comprising both conversation and conduct was the most important genre for women rhetors of the eighteenth century. It was the basis upon which their rhetorical skills and knowledge were built, and it was the main "school" in which their rhetoric was learned. The terms "conversation" and "conduct" were commonly used in the Enlightenment to articulate the norms of everyday speech and behavior for the various classes and both genders of society.

In this chapter I shall first explore the historical and rhetorical significance of this realm of communication, especially for women, as they are articulated by both Classical and Enlightenment rhetoricians and writers. Following this general history of the rhetorics of women's conversation and conduct are three rhetorical biographies. In this chapter is included that of Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821), and in the following chapter are the rhetorical biographies of Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld (1743-1825) and Mary Shackleton Leadbeater (1758-1826). Through these two chapters elucidating the education of women writers in conversation and conduct, I shall argue not only that this
was indeed a significant genre of women's rhetorical practice that had its theories and pedagogical traditions, but I shall also demonstrate how it was learned and deployed by women of different social, religious, and geographical situations over two generations.

From the time of ancient Greece, conversation and conduct has been the common link between the male and female rhetorical worlds, a site which made permeable the borders between "public" and "private", masculine and feminine, realms of speech and action. Across the centuries in Europe, both conduct and rhetoric have been systems which describe means by which to gain glory and influence. Both systems imply a process of training and an art of making the right verbal and bodily choices at the right time. The advent of the Christian era had the potential to increase the rhetorical status of conversation and conduct: the New Testament continually emphasizes the great power of everyday conversation and conduct of men and women to influence moral conduct and religious belief: Jesus' private conversations with his male and female disciples are recorded as great teachings, and the apostle Paul argued that his everyday discourse and example was more influential than the monologic rhetoric practiced by Roman orators. ¹ Nevertheless, the masculine and public bias of traditional rhetorical theory has largely obscured the rhetorical nature of everyday conduct and conversation, especially that of women. Only late in the twentieth century have conversation and conduct been officially

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¹ 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5

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recognized as rhetorical matters, as seen in the inclusion of Baldesar Castiglione’s and Christine de Pizan’s writings on conversation and conduct in the textbook *The Rhetorical Tradition*.\(^2\)

A brief survey of Classical and Christian rhetoric and Enlightenment conduct literature can merely hint at the significance of conversation and conduct, especially that of women, to the rhetorical tradition. As Christine Sutherland writes, “women have been an important—a vitally important—part of the human activity from which the particular rhetorical tradition has sprung,” and therefore “the inclusion of women’s discourse brings the tradition back to its own roots, rather than adding something new and alien.”\(^3\)

Historically, pedagogies of conversation have a clear connection to the widely-known male traditions of rhetorical practice. Instruction in conversation played important roles in classical rhetorical education. Although it was not considered as the main field on which male rhetors achieved their glory, it was a means of instruction and a site in which to practice and polish one’s style. As for conversation as a mode of instruction, dialogue was the oral and textual form of Socrates and Plato, who were suspicious of the seductions and one-sidedness of extended discourse in speech and writing.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) *The Rhetorical Tradition*, 2nd ed. (2001) contains selections from Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* and de Pizan’s *The Book of the City of Ladies* and *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*.

\(^3\) “The Past and The Future” *The Changing Tradition* 10, 11

\(^4\) This choice may have had a female influence: Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong conjecture that Aspasia, one of Socrates’ instructors in rhetoric “may have invented the so-called Socratic method”—the main site of her rhetorical instruction was her conversational salon in fifth-century Athens. Her teaching method involved repeated questioning. The fruitfulness of her conversational school is demonstrated by her composition of Pericles’ funeral speech, and the education of “so many good speakers,” as Socrates testifies in Plato’s *Menexenus*, paragraph 235. (Jarratt and Ong 13-15.)
Cicero's treatise on the education of the orator and his discourse on the lives of orators are written as conversations. He favored the form of conversation for instruction because it was pleasing, relaxing and agreeable, more so than reading straight exposition.\textsuperscript{5} In \textit{De Officiis} Cicero divides the power of rhetoric into two parts: \textit{sermo} (conversation) and \textit{contentio} (the speech of public argument), saying that while rhetoricians have formulated rules for \textit{contentio}, they have wrongfully neglected to theorize \textit{sermo}. Cicero states that conversation is equally worthy of rhetorical study; it simply takes place in a different setting: "in social circles, in philosophical debates, and in meetings of friends. It should also follow after banquets."\textsuperscript{6} The topics of conversation, he explains, are not merely household matters, but also politics, professions, and learning.

In Cicero's view, women's rhetorics of conversation differ not in subject matter, but in manner and function. The conversation of women had a role in the transmission of linguistic tradition. The best of women's conversation was idealized as "pure" language uncontaminated by lower-class, regional pronunciation or the jargon of professional usage, kept pure by their domestic isolation and upper-class education. Cicero was innovative for his time not only in dwelling on conversation as a rhetorical art, but also in focusing on women's importance in training orators through conversation.\textsuperscript{7} For orators, conversation—often with women—was a means of practicing and polishing one's

\textsuperscript{5} Atticus tells Cicero that Cicero's History of Eminent Orators "furnished such an agreeable train of conversation" that he was urged to hear it from Cicero's own mouth, and this is the purpose of Atticus and Brutus waiting on Cicero. \textit{Brutus} section V

\textsuperscript{6} from \textit{De Officiis} 1.132. See John Tinkler 284 and Robert W. Cape, Jr. 117.

\textsuperscript{7} "The way Cicero introduces the importance of a woman's speech in contributing to a young man's \textit{eloquentia} suggests that it was a novel idea: matres etiam ("even mothers" or "mothers too"). The idea that a mother's speech influences her son's was not new, but Cicero may have been innovative by dwelling upon women's speech. There is no indication of a similar treatment of the subjects in the rhetorical handbooks before his time." (Cape 116).
rhetorical style. The Gracchi were supposedly nurtured by the “elegance and purity” of
their mother Cornelia’s language; Cicero likewise praised the agreeable nature of Laelia’s
conversation, and he appreciated conversing with her sisters the Muciae and their younger
female relatives, the Liciniae. He claims that Caesar’s great oratory was partly credited
to his conversations with the families of the very same women. By becoming a master of
the “language of polite conversation,” Caesar developed the art of a pure elegance of
expression. His conversational wit and humor at the bar helped him to win cases over
those who had more serious orations. Therefore the practice of men’s and women’s
conversation as rhetorical instruction, and the idea that conversation is worthy of
rhetoricians’ attention, has an ancient origin.

Robert W. Cape, Jr. observes that women’s conversation in Cicero and Quintilian
seems to have been generally considered as “derived from and productive of men’s
[speech];” a woman was “a ‘speech vessel’ which nourishes but does not actually
generate good speech,” in much the same way as ancient medical lore portrays the
female’s role in biological reproduction. Over the centuries, the “purity” and “chastity”
of women’s reproductive conduct was the condition that regulated the patrilineal descent
of property to male heirs; in much the same way, the “purity” and strength of women’s
language in conversation partly regulated the flow and descent of rhetorical riches among
men. This idea of women’s key role in propagating and nurturing men’s rhetoric, both in
style and in purity of language, supports Christine Mason Sutherland’s claim that women

8 Brutus section LVIII
9 Brutus section XXXVII, LXXII and LXXV
10 Cape 118, 127n10.
have never really been completely excluded from male rhetorical traditions: “We are anterior to, rather than exiled from, that rhetorical tradition; our part in it has been to feed it, to support it, to enable it.”

In the classical tradition conversation was closely linked with matters of moral conduct. Cicero’s treatment of *sermo* in *De Officiis* claims that conversation, when conducted well, promotes decorous, polite, sociable conduct in its participants. Conversation ought to be pleasant to all and never tempt its participants to “anger, covetousness, laziness, or idleness.” In conversation, especially in the company of women, participants could soothe the tempers and heal the wounds inflicted by *contentio*. Mixed-sex conversation influenced men's and women's moral conduct and dispositions in ways that public oratory was unable to. It was more personal, more interactive, less combative.

In the Christian tradition the two terms *conversation* and *conduct* have also been intimately connected with each other, with religious rhetoric in general, and with women’s rhetoric in particular. This is especially evident in the King James English translation of the scriptures made in 1611. An important passage on how Christian women ought to “win” or persuade their unbelieving husbands uses the term *conversation* to refer to women’s conduct in general, only a part of which is verbal:

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11 Sutherland “Women in the History of Rhetoric: The Past and the Future.” 10
12 *De Officiis* 1.132-137.
13 Cape 118
Likewise, Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives: while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.\footnote{I Peter 3:1-2. The NIV version reads: "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."}

The passage goes on to discuss that such “conversation” (behavior) ought to be “adorned” not by external beauty of clothing and hair, but rather by “a meek and quiet spirit”—a style or clothing, as it were, of the communication delivered in obedient conduct and in speech (calling her husband “lord” [verse 6]). This “conversation” was recommended to make her an effective advocate—to plead on behalf of God—without violating gender decorum. Instruction in the kind of conduct which will help a woman “win” a man to religious belief is obviously rhetorical instruction adapted to women. Perhaps due to the effect of this very verse in combination with examples such as Esther in the Old Testament, tales of women’s persuasion of their husbands abound in Christian tradition.\footnote{For example, Clotilda, wife of Clovis, King of France converted her husband to Christianity in the year 496. In 597 Bertha convinced her husband King Egbert to be baptized by St. Augustine. St. Catherine of Sweden (14th century) persuaded her husband to take a vow of chastity and join her in acts of devotion and charity.}

The term “conversation” was also used in Early Modern England to describe sexual relations, so illicit conversation of a woman with a man could imply the full range of verbal and physical intercourse. Although this application of the term $\textit{conduct}$ to women’s speech and conduct is important, the usage is not limited to women,
demonstrating that it is a rhetorical realm shared by both sexes. The Bible’s use of the word *conversation* in non-gendered contexts mingles the idea of conversation and conduct with Greek rhetorical terminology and ideas of citizenship.16

There are Classical and Christian precedents for treating conduct as an important aspect of rhetorical *ethos* and the canon of delivery. The connection between conduct and *ethos* is clear. Aristotle declares the rhetorician’s *ethos*, his expression of good character “may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.”17

Isocrates,18 Cicero,19 and Quintilian20 also placed a great emphasis on the moral virtue of the perfect orator, and incorporated ethics into rhetorical training. Yet male definitions of virtue have clearly differed from female ones—while men’s virtue can be shown in devotion to the state and in protection of their own honor, women’s virtue is commonly depicted by their sexual chastity and sacrificial devotion to family and God. The term

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16 *Conversation* happens to represent the meaning of several Greek words which were commonly used in rhetorical theory: *anastrepho* (to overturn or return; figuratively to busy oneself, remain, live, abide, behave self) and its variant, the rhetorical term *anastrophe* (figuratively, to behave); *politeuma* (a community; figuratively citizenship), *politeuomai* (to behave as a citizen), and *tropos* (a turn; figuratively mode, style, deportment, character, manner). This Biblical understanding of the word *conversation* is reflected in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century usage, as Johnson’s Dictionary definitions attest. (Strong’s Concordance Greek Dictionary of the New Testament; Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*)

17 from Rhetoric book I, in Bizzell and Herzberg, p. 154

18 Isocrates, in Against the Sophists and Antidosis, denies that virtue can be taught to people whose natures are disposed toward immorality, yet he claims that good rhetorical training assists in the formation of “honesty of character,” “just living,” “sobriety and justice.” (from Against the Sophists in Bizzell and Herzberg, p. 49)

19 Cicero felt it relevant for a rhetorician to discuss matters of dress, lifestyle, and decorum alongside matters of conversational speech in De Officiis (On Duties). In De Oratore, Cicero traces the origins of rhetorical instruction back to the time of when philosophy was “at the same time the preceptress of living rightly and of speaking well.” (De Oratore book III section XV)

20 see Quintilian Institutes of Oratory book XII.
conduct also has an ancient connection to rhetorical delivery, the bodily conduct of a discourse: manner and air, bodily deportment, gestures, tones, and even dress, as we see in Cicero’s De Oratore.\textsuperscript{21}

The tradition of didactic texts about conversation and conduct continued through Europe alongside the study of rhetoric, as courtesy books for princes and courtiers often included remarks on letter writing and more public and formal modes of speech. Guides for conversation and conduct became increasingly popularized, and more were written specifically for women, during the Enlightenment. The civil war and interregnum of the seventeenth century brought religious and civil authority into question, and arguments for women’s spiritual equality and its implications were made by men and women. This was an era which saw a surprising number of female preachers and prophets such as the Quaker leader Margaret Fell. With the restoration of the monarchy, revolutionary men and women were largely silenced, and society felt a need for a new articulation of men’s and women’s participation in religion and public life. As Jacques Carré and Niels Haastrup argue, the shift in class structure caused by the economic and social upheavals of the seventeenth century necessitated that England invent a means by which men and women could climb the social ladder without causing such extreme destabilization of the political structure. Without classical precedents (Cicero himself noted the lack of works on sermo), English culture invented its own distinctive rhetorics of conversation and conduct which embodied the new Enlightenment norms of civility and taste. Rules of

\textsuperscript{21} These associations in terminology are reinforced by two modern translations which use the term “conduct” in a chapter which focuses on matters of ethos and ends with delivery. De Oratore book II section XLIII; one translation by Watson and another by Sutton and Rackham.
propriety and decorum multiplied, and theorists discussed the religious and political foundations and effects of these new rhetorics, modifying the systems much as other rhetorical theories were modified over time.

The conversation and conduct of both men and women was a favorite topic in the literature of the Enlightenment—According to Dieter Berger, "The number of courtesy works on conversation [. . .] has been estimated to amount to over two hundred titles between the years 1650 and 1800." In addition to books whose titles fit the tradition, rules of conversation and conduct were laid down in sermons, in periodical essays, and exemplified through popular didactic fiction. Throughout this period of close attention to conversation and conduct, the styles and physical sites of women's talk and action were kept distinctly different and separate from men's.

As seen in the Biblical and Enlightenment use of the terms, conversation and conduct both highlight the canon of delivery and the appeal of ethos. However, women's speech and behavior has not been discussed using traditional rhetorical terms as delivery and ethos, a fact which has tended to camouflage this realm of discourse from the point of view of rhetoricians and historians of rhetoric. Rhetorical terminology was simply not appropriate for such texts with a broad audience. It was especially inappropriate for texts that theorized or guided women's discourse, for such terminology might encourage women to enter the realms of public male discourse—something conduct book writers often explicitly forbade. Conduct was a more general term, yet even this term had tendencies subversive to the patriarchal ideologies of many conduct book writers.

22 Berger 82

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Conduct, in Johnson’s eighteenth-century dictionary, is a term used to discuss men’s management of behavior in their careers and lifestyle, and the protection of self and resources during wartime and travel. Because of these connotations, when writers apply the term to women, it can imply that women can and should become conscious managers of their own discourse and behavior to some degree, and thereby consciously influence others—in other words, it could imply rhetorical agency. However, most conduct books also tend to subjugate women’s conduct (rhetorical agency) to rules and ideology that operate largely for the benefit of the men who rule them, ideologies that were often concealed under the idea of submitting to Reason. The aim of women’s conduct, in men’s conduct books for women, is not primarily to liberate women as rhetorical agents, but to enlist them with delegated authority and duty to protect the fragile resources of their own chastity and reputation as daughters and wives, and to persuade them to regulate their own temper towards God, their husband, and father, as primary audiences.

Yet conduct was a deeply rhetorical consideration in that it clearly had to do with women’s conscious and strategic use of speech and bodily behavior aimed at pleasing, and sometimes teaching and persuading, an audience.23 Late seventeenth-century women’s conduct books instruct readers in the rhetorics of conversation and conduct much as rhetorical handbooks guided speakers, preachers, and letter-writers in the more familiar texts of the rhetorical tradition. As Classical forensic rhetoric was applied specifically to the situation of the advocate in the context of...

23 Amanda Vickery, in her discussion of historians’ “separate spheres” theory of nineteenth-century domesticity, argues that women did not always entirely conform to gender ideologies, and that even the prescriptive literature offered room for alternative messages and interpretations. She writes that it is important to consider the possibility that women could “deploy the rhetoric of submission selectively, with irony, or quite cynically.” (“Golden Age” 385)
the legal courtroom, Enlightenment conduct rhetorics for women apply specifically to the situations and audiences they would face. Women’s rhetorics of conduct, as practiced by women, functioned to persuade public audiences of a woman’s own virtue, and thus women performed the roles of their own advocates and defenders from suspicion. For example, Lord Halifax’s *Advice to a Daughter* (1688) censures “loud answers and devout convulsions at church” because it may give others reason to believe a woman has a tormented conscience. Halifax’s section on “behaviour and conversation” advises the woman about her talk and deportment outside of the house, the main end of which is to shield her reputation and virtue from the flattery and misinterpretations of seductive men and envious women. This is a rhetoric of defensive warfare on the part of the woman.

Conduct books also taught women strategies to persuade and manage husbands. Lord Halifax’s advice in the section titled “husband” follows the logic and medical metaphor used by Plato in *Gorgias* which describes how the ideal rhetorician ought to diagnose men’s moral illnesses in order to apply the right linguistic cure; the passage also has the same function as Aristotle’s discussion of various human passions and characters in his Rhetoric. Halifax diagnoses the passions of various husbands (the libertine, the drunkard, the choleric, sullen, or covetous man, and the incompetent fool) and recommends that a woman apply the proper rhetorical cure at the right time. Halifax reasons that

> by a wise and dexterous conduct it will be in your power to relieve yourself from anything that looketh like a disadvantage in [marriage]. [...] you may know how to cure your husband’s mistakes and to prevent your own.24

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24 *Works*, “Advice to a Daughter” 279
Such sanguine hopes for the effectiveness of women’s “wise and dexterous conduct” in marriage may have encouraged women to consider themselves rhetorical agents. Yet, as in politics, so it is in marriage—certain systems are more favorable to persuasive rhetoric than others.

The popular conduct book *The Ladies Calling* (1673), (attributed to Richard Allestree) frequently cites classical sources in support of its rhetorical principles for women, feminizing the principles in its commentary. Writing of the virtue of female modesty, Allestree writes, “Zeno has not ill defin’d [modesty], to be the Science of decent Motion, it being that which guides and regulates the whole Behaviour, checks and controlls [sic] all rude exorbitances, and is the great Civilizer of Conversations.” Allestree feminizes this citation by explaining that modesty is evident in “calm and meek looks” on the face, and in a tone that is “sweet and charming; but not to be heard at a distance.” Allestree also teaches his female readers that in the ancient gymnasium, Carneades was reproved by the Gymnasiarch for speaking too loudly in his public lectures, “And sure if it were not allowable in a Philosopher in his School, ’twill less become a Woman in ordinary converse.” Throughout Allestree’s work, it is assumed that women are to be more perfect models of virtue than men in their conversational delivery and in conduct.

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25 besides *The Gentleman’s Calling*, Allestree also published the popular religious handbook *The Whole Duty of Man* “with private devotions for several occasions” and the conversation advice book *The Government of the Tongue*.

26 *The Ladies Calling* 5-6

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The more comprehensive conduct manuals of this era articulated a complete ideology of religion, society, and female identity as the basis of their advice, rather than simply laying down rules of behavior or conversation. Employing epideictic rhetoric as their main mode, they also taught women to engage in epideictic rhetorics of internal persuasion and religious devotion. These systems of private rhetorics and ethics furnished principles that were to become the basis of their speech and behavior toward others. In these two conduct books by Halifax and Allestree, it is evident that women's conversation and conduct, involving both virtuous speech and bodily deportment, is a gendered rhetorical art. It is worthy to be taught by means of epideictic argumentation built upon scripture, classical sources, and cultural commonplaces. Like other rhetorical manuals, conduct books are neither perfect reflections of current practice nor capable of enforcing their advice, but the women who read them according to (and beyond) their intended purpose were likely to find them a useful tool for interpreting women's rhetorical situations and thinking about women's rhetorical intent.

The *delivery* and *ethos* of women's conduct, in gesture, tone, and lifestyle were displayed upon the stage of conversation. But just how public and influential was this stage? As women's conversation became influential on the dramatic stage, as comedies of manners portrayed women's drawing-room discourse before a wide audience, more attention was paid to the dramatic and rhetorical qualities of women's discourse. Women's conversation often crossed the division between public and private realms in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. Many writers, both historical and modern, have claimed that the presence of women in Enlightenment conversation acted as a social
lubricant and softener, enabling people of different professions, ranks, political beliefs, and genders to engage in a peaceful exchange of ideas. At the end of the seventeenth century, in the midst of a pamphlet war over the position of woman. Judith Drake asserted (as it was still a fairly controversial idea) that women were actually qualified for intellectual conversation with men. To be qualified for such improving conversation, a woman need not be as learned as a man, but must have sense, good nature, fidelity and integrity. Only a decade later, the authors Addison and Steele in their periodical The Spectator frequently urged the individual and social benefits arising from conversation among women and men. Thenceforth women’s positive influence in conversation became a commonplace. In 1742, an essay by David Hume expanded upon the Ciceronian view of women’s conversation. He connected the mixed-sex conversational salon with the rise of democracy, rhetoric, and the arts and sciences. His own age seemed to him far more civilized and polite than the republics of Greece and Rome. The cause of the earlier civilization’s rudeness, he reasoned, was their relative neglect of the art of conversation compared with France and England in his own time. He valued women’s conversation for its civilizing influence on men:

As mentioned in my general introduction, the historians Margaret Jacob, Dena Goodman, Elizabeth Macarthur and Daniel Gordon argue that women’s participation in mixed-sex conversation was a crucial element in the development of the Enlightenment public sphere throughout northern Europe (especially France and England) in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Margaret Jacob cites women’s entry into the public sphere as one of many aspects of the “catholicity” of discourse which led to the growth of science and the revolution in America and France. (Jacob 99)

Drake Essay 9; Isaac Watts extends moral qualifications for conversants equally to men and women (Improvement 1.x.XXVII).
What better school for manners, than the company of virtuous women; where the mutual endeavour to please must insensibly polish the mind, where the example of the female softness and modesty must communicate itself to their admirers, and where the delicacy of that sex puts every one on his guard, lest he give offence by any breach of decency.  

Hume considered the “gallantry” and condescension of men toward “the weaker sex” as an index of the civilization of a society, and conversation among women to be a school of civic virtue, good taste, and eloquence.

Hume’s beliefs about women’s conversation were voiced in a context of controversy over the increasing participation of women in public discourse. It was controversial because for centuries women’s conversation had been understood through the Christian and Classical lenses of gendered rhetorical conduct. Notice Hume’s qualifier: “the company of virtuous women.” Gendered rules of conduct not only excluded women from the male rhetorical sites of senate, bar, and pulpit, but were also used as necessary qualifications for conversation with men. Mary Astell writes,

> What an ill Figure does a Woman make with all the Charms of her Beauty and Sprightliness of her Wit, with all her good Humour and insinuating Address; tho’ she be the best Economist in the World, the most entertaining Conversation; if she remit her Guard, abate in the Severity of her Caution and Strictness of her Virtue, and neglect those Methods which are necessary to keep her not only from a Crime, but from the very suspicion of one.

Other causes of the increasing “publication” of women’s conversation from 1650-1800 were the rise of the salons in Paris and the use of conversation in scientific inquiry. Jane Donawerth’s study of Madame de Scudéry discovers a “rhetoric of conversation” at work. She claims that Scudéry’s letters, dialogues, and novels concerning the

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29 Hume “Rise and Progress” 17

30 Some Reflections on Marriage (1700), p. 6-7

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conversational salon advocate “rhetorical education for women” and “appropriate[s] rhetoric for women as a means to political power.” Scudéry seems to be responding to the containment of women’s rhetoric by extending its realm and marginalizing men’s rhetoric. There is something ironic in seeing an advocate of sermo contending with the empire of contentio. Scudéry goes far beyond what Cicero had possibly dreamed in finding rules for sermo: she celebrates rhetoric as a natural talent of women for which they do not need to study, while men must study and apply artifice to acquire the art. Thus women’s lack of formal rhetorical education was not predicated on native imbecility, but upon native virtue and skill. Nevertheless, she believed women’s conversational rhetoric was an art that could be learned, but which ought to be concealed in its performance, much like the arts of hairdressing or flower arranging. In her revision of rhetorical history, men’s public rhetoric finds its origin in women’s conversation. Scudéry suggests that the main purpose of speech should not be power (although it is a means for women to gain glory and wealth), but virtuous pleasure. When men belittled women’s speech as mere play, Scudéry turned the tables on men and laughed at their over-seriousness attitude toward their own speech. When men condemned women’s rhetoric as dangerous and seductive, she pointed out men’s selfish and destructive rhetorical aims and means. Politeness, agreement, and collaboration were the rules and aims of Scudéry’s conversational interaction, rather than winning an argument or

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31 Donawerth 306
competing for attention. "Scudéry's *Conversationes* were used to teach conversation to the girls at Madame de Maintenon's school from 1686 to 1691" and her writings were read by many Englishwomen throughout the eighteenth century.\(^3\)\(^2\)

While Scudéry represents conversation as a female art, in late seventeenth-century England, conversation was the favored mode of inquiry championed by the Royal Society and John Locke. According to the historian Peter Walmsley, the main "rhetoric" of discovery in the Royal Society was conversational, and Locke's *Essay*, itself composed based on a series of informal discussions, promoted Boyle's model of philosophical conversation.\(^3\)\(^3\) Locke's appropriation of the conversational mode seems appropriate when we recall that Neoclassical Enlightenment discourse feminized the realm of Nature.\(^3\)\(^4\) What better mode of discovering the secrets of Nature, than to gently draw her out in conversation?\(^3\)\(^5\) Like Boyle, Locke set himself against the method of scholastic disputation, a system that destroys "the instruments and means of discourse, conversation, instruction, and society."\(^3\)\(^6\) In order to strengthen his argument that unadorned conversation was the true and manly art of scientific communication, Locke built an association between rhetoric, eloquence, deception and "the fair sex."\(^3\)\(^7\)

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\(^3\)\(^2\) Donawerth 315

\(^3\)\(^3\) Walmsley discusses Sorbière's observations of the Society's discourse, Boyle's *The Skeptical Chymist*, and the informal epistolary mode of *Transactions*. (Walmsley 385-7)

\(^3\)\(^4\) Ruth Salvaggio has devoted a book-length work to the examination of the metaphors that objectify the feminine and Nature in Enlightenment scientific discourse

\(^3\)\(^5\) Francis Bacon advised men to "examine nature herself and the arts upon interrogatories," interrogatories being random questions about facts. (Bacon, *Works*, IV.261)

\(^3\)\(^6\) *Essay on Human Understanding*, III.x.10

\(^3\)\(^7\) Ibid., III.x.34 "Eloquence, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving wherein men find pleasure to be deceived."
had a significant influence on the eighteenth-century British view of the relationship between gender and rhetoric. Locke joined woman and rhetoric—in infamy—while the central theater of discourse between the sexes, conversation, was claimed as a properly male discursive territory. Lockean men and women felt it even more necessary to distance their own speech from “rhetoric” insofar as it was associated with deceptive and seductive women, and scholastic men.38 At the same time, the view of conversation as epistemic and as central to scientific discovery opened the door for women to be treated as co-participants in serious conversation—partners in the search for knowledge. Book III of Locke’s Essay we could well consider an argument for the establishment of a specialized rhetoric of sermo (innocent of scholasticism and purified of the deceptiveness of rhetorical figures) to be used among natural philosophers.

After Locke and the fame of the French salons raised the importance of conversational rhetoric, it is no surprise that British women combined the philosophical and the playful kinds of conversation in the Bluestocking circles around Montagu, Thrale Piozzi, Vesey, and Boscawen. But Englishwomen began moving in this direction shortly before Locke’s death in 1704. In the 1690s Mary Astell proposed an academy where ladies would engage in “Ingenious Conversation” for religious, moral, and scientific ends.39 While Judith Drake, in her essay of 1696 had examined the question of “whether

38 Thomas Baker, in his critique of rhetoric in Reflections upon Learning (1700), writes that the French have given their language “too much paint and flourish, [that] much of its masculine strength is lost, and I have sometimes thought, that it boded not well that Society, that their first Prize of Eloquence was given to a Woman [marginal note:] Mad. de Scudéry.”

the time an ingenious Gentleman spends in the Company of Women, may justly be said to be misemployed, or not?,” By the middle of the eighteenth century this was no longer a question: the general opinion was in favor of the value of women’s conversation.40

Isaac Watts’s work *The Improvement of the Mind*, a manual of self-directed education for both sexes in religious, scientific, and common discourse, disseminated Lockean and dissenting principles of education and conversational rhetoric to a wide British audience. Watts favored the co-participation of men and women in intellectual conversation as a mode of education. Several chapters in Watts are devoted to laying out a number of rules for conversation for women and men alike, which put emphasis on the search for truth and the creation of true community, rather than on gender roles. While Judith Drake, in the tradition of the French salons, disallowed mixed-sex conversation about religion or business, Watts, expanding upon Locke with the middle-class views of the Dissenting community, encouraged mixed-sex conversation on all serious topics including the professions.41 But the increased importance of mixed-sex conversation in England did not necessarily mean an unanimous increase in men’s respect for women’s discourse in this sphere.

40 *An Essay in Defense of the Female Sex*, 6. Judith Drake’s essay demanded at least three editions and several responses in print. She argues that conversation was made for the improvement of the mind and relaxation of the body, and that both are more often found in the company of women than in the company of men. In particular, scholarly men with their noses in books need to learn about the common usages of the world from women who are more familiar with it.

41 Judith Drake recommends talk about “Love, Honour, Gallantry, Morality, News, Raillery, and a numberless train of other Things copious and diverting.” (41); Watts accepts any topic as long as it is not offensive to moral delicacy, and not conducted in an uncivil manner.
Mixed-sex conversation also found a new forum in the eighteenth-century rise of public debating assemblies, entertainments at which 400 to 1200 spectators would pay an admission fee to watch several men, and sometimes women, engage in a semi-conversational performance. These societies grew in popularity until they reached a crescendo in the year 1780, in which 295 newspaper advertisements for different public debating events have been found. People of all ranks and both genders gathered in these debating halls, but 1780 was finally characterized by “the wholesale presence of women in almost all the debating societies [. . .] [when] they were explicitly invited, not only to attend, but to take part in debate.”

Common topics throughout the 1770s were education, current events, and the state of the empire, but in 1780 the topics of “love, sex, and marriage, the nature of women and the relation of the sexes” doubled in frequency. Donna T. Andrew attributes these societies to the interest in elocution in the eighteenth century and the publication of Thomas Sheridan’s Course of Lectures on Elocution (1762). The debating societies aimed to entertain and educate, and they sometimes used arguments from classical history to express the hope that “the cultivation of eloquence may contribute to national [moral] reformation.” Such a claim was important, for the most common criticism of these clubs was that they mixed together the wrong sorts of people to debate dangerous ideas, and that women were immodestly exposing themselves to public display in front of “a thousand people.” One critic even suggested that the

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42 By the end of the year there were four clubs where only women could speak (Andrew 410). Societies that focused on religious debate invited women, the advertisements arguing that “Religion is equally important to both sexes” (Ibid 415).

43 Ibid 412. Some questions were quite controversial, as “What reason can be assigned for precluding the Fair from the privileges of Civil Society or from a liberal participation in their discussions?” (Andrew 413)

44 The Carlisle House society. Ibid 417
women speakers could not possibly speak their own minds, but were rather hired
actresses speaking from a script. These debating societies were cut to one-third their
popularity in 1781 after Bishop Porteus introduced a bill against them, and they increased
steadily again until they finally fell off after the French Revolution in 1792, after which
the few societies that remained seldom raised political questions. This conversational
forum, like the modern "talk show," was an example of a permeable area between public
and domestic worlds.

Perhaps the combined influence of bluestocking conversational salons and these
debating societies influenced Catherine Maria Fanshawe’s 1791 painting titled "Politics,"
in which men, standing in the center of the scene by the hearth, converse separately from
the women who flank them on either side in the shade. Harriet Guest uses the painting to
suggest the covert political functions of eighteenth-century women’s conversation.\[Guest\] 1-2

While eighteenth-century British men tended to see themselves as relaxing from
public life in sociable conversation with women, conversation was the site in which
women exerted themselves to perform, persuade, teach, and learn. Rhetorics of
conversation and conduct provided eighteenth-century British women of the middle and
upper classes with great opportunity for general influence, for in the drawing rooms and
parlors of Great Britain, men and women mingled in conversation and had direct
influence on each other’s communication strategies as well as each other’s beliefs and
behavior. Women stressed the high importance of their rhetorical performances in this
sphere, arguing that what was done or said in apparent domestic seclusion was actually

\[Guest\] 1-2
more noble, more difficult, more influential than much of what could be accomplished through public rhetoric. This genre is clearly an immense sphere of rhetorical action whose abundance of handbooks and literature cries out for wider scholarly investigation as a form of rhetoric.

The bulk of eighteenth-century women's rhetorical training was in this genre of conversation and conduct, especially since the majority of women were not given access to the study of rhetoric in other genres or venues, nor the performance of rhetoric in other genres or venues. While privileged boys were sent to school to be disciplined by the study of Latin and Greek language and literature, a competitive and performative system that focused on written and oral discourse, girls were disciplined at home and in boarding schools in the largely oral and physical arts of feminine conversation and conduct—female deportment and dress, religious discourse, needlework, handwriting, basic grammar and arithmetic (for letter-writing and household management) and reading aloud. To these were often added the more elite social-aesthetic skills of dancing, drawing or painting, and musical performance, genres of domestic communication that supplemented and enhanced rhetorical performance through conversation and conduct.

Thus for women, more than for men, advanced rhetorical skill in all genres was based on early training in conversation and conduct. As a result, women had more encouragement than men to excel in this genre, and many did so. On the other hand, such a rhetorical education entailed a burden: women were expected to uphold the female norms of conversation and conduct even as they gained fame for their expertise in written genres of rhetoric.

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The British eighteenth century, therefore, offered increasing opportunities for women of the upper and middle classes to enter public discourse through their everyday speech and action, even while the traditional strictures on female conduct continued to demand that their *ethos*, delivery, and scenes of performance be distinctively feminine according to the century's gender ideologies. In the following rhetorical biographies of the education, speech and writing of Hester Thrale Piozzi, Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, and Mary Shackleton Leadbeater can be seen three different ways in which women took hold of these increasing opportunities. Their varied backgrounds provided them with different theories in their rhetorical education, and resulted in different rhetorical practices.

Each of these three women were educated in a unique combination of the Classical, Christian, and belletristic rhetorical traditions, and each made use of these influences on conversational and behavioral rhetoric in different ways. Nevertheless, the similarities in the methods of instruction are striking, demonstrating how the culture's traditional pedagogy in women's rhetorics of conversation and conduct transcended their differences. Likewise the persistence of similar gender ideologies about women's modesty and domesticity proves the endurance and pervasiveness of the culture's rhetorical norms for women.
Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821)

Hester Thrale Piozzi was a Tory Anglican who spent summers during her childhood in the rich household of her uncle Sir Thomas Salusbury where she received a literary education under his wife, Lady Salusbury. She married a rich brewer and hosted conversational parties among the literati at which Samuel Johnson, the famous Dictionary writer and conversationalist, often shared the spotlight with herself. In Thrale Piozzi’s conversation and conduct, the traditions of classical and early modern conversational rhetoric, in which upper-class women facilitated salons for political men and literati, were most influential. Thrale Piozzi built, then lost, and then regained her social fame through the use of her drawing-room wit and her reputation for virtue. Her anecdotes of Johnson, her diary, and her 1794 publication “British Synonymy” narrated, theorized and critiqued the everyday rhetorical performance of the tongue and body.

Hester Thrale Piozzi has been a controversial figure in literary and rhetorical history. Until very recently, she was known primarily as Samuel Johnson’s friend and hostess, the charmer of a literary salon at which Johnson was the sun and she the moon merely reflecting his glory. She is known as the author of Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson (1786), which made her James Boswell’s arch-rival biographer of Johnson.46 She is also controversial due to her conduct: most of Thrale Piozzi’s early friends disowned her after her second marriage to Mr. Piozzi, an Italian musician. Contemporary observers accused her of unnatural passion and even madness, and hard-heartedness toward Johnson and her three daughters. This crisis in Hester Thrale Piozzi’s life reveals

46 Boswell published The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. in 1791.

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how important proper conduct was to the reputation of a female conversationalist and
author, that conduct and conversation went hand-in-hand for women and created a
foundation for their written ethos as well.

Perhaps one reason why Hester Thrale Piozzi is remembered mainly for her
relationships to Johnson and other writers is because it is easier than putting her in any
other category, such as that of rhetorician. She herself was too complex a person to carry
a single label, too varied in her talents and interests.\(^{47}\) She continually aimed to please
all, yet demanded at the same time to be herself too, and this tension has tarnished her
reputation with scholars who value either feminine charm or self-assertiveness, but not
both. Thrale Piozzi’s poetry and published prose belonged to her own time; her writings
are not considered of high quality according to the reigning standards of taste from the
Romantic era to the twentieth century.\(^{48}\) Most of Thrale Piozzi’s published writings
besides the *Anecdotes* were harshly criticized for their chatty style and were soon
forgotten. Her unpublished writings, however, have become useful to historians as
chronicles of the social life of the eighteenth century, and her correspondence with other
famous figures has been helpful in constructing their biographies.\(^{49}\) But few besides
William McCarthy have felt it worthwhile to discuss the rhetorical artistry of her writing.

\(^{47}\) Patricia Meyer Spacks describes her as a “woman troubled about her place in the world... she seems never to have arrived at a satisfactory sense of her own position. Wife, widow, mother, near-bluestocking, poet, etymologist: her various commitments did not readily relate to one another.” (Spacks “Scrapbook of a Self: Mrs. Piozzi’s Late Journals” 222)

\(^{48}\) Spacks finds Piozzi’s poetry flawed by “coarseness of ear, derivativeness, limitation of sensibility... real poetic impoverishment,” caused by her tendency to use poetry merely as a tool to prove herself to others. (Spacks ibid. 226.). I speak later about the reception of her published prose.

\(^{49}\) see Balderston’s scholarly introduction to Piozzi’s *Thraliana*
On one point Thrale Piozzi's fame has been secured—as a conversationalist. For too long it has been overlooked that her carefully-developed theories and skills in this genre qualify her as a rhetorician. There can be no doubt that Thrale Piozzi has a reputation as an eminent hostess skilled in the art of talking and amusing. Thrale Piozzi has so often been praised for her role as Samuel Johnson's hostess that a recent critic, William McCarthy, complains that her writing has received little critical attention as a result.\(^{50}\) Frances Burney D’Arblay, the novelist and pre-Piozzi friend of Thrale Piozzi, praised her "talents and eccentricity […] wit, genius, generosity, spirit, and power of entertainment" and Sir Pepys' claimed "that he had never met with another human being who possessed the talent of conversation in an equal degree."\(^{51}\)

Yet even that "praise" has been given along with a host of underhanded criticisms of Thrale Piozzi's mind and heart, and a diminution of the value of conversation itself. Thomas Seccombe, the most notorious of her biographers, in a 1910 essay on her life claimed Thrale Piozzi deserved fame as "a letter and conversation maker." But what sort of honor was this from the pen of a critic who considered women's conversation as merely light entertainment, requiring little mind or skill in its practitioner?\(^{52}\) His

\(^{50}\) "the same people who were editing and reprinting her were also asserting that her importance lay in 'her indefinable charm' and her 'singular gifts' as a hostess. They were keeping her writings alive, and asserting that she did not really count as a writer." (McCarthy ix)

\(^{51}\) see also McCarthy 145

\(^{52}\) He writes, "it is as a letter and conversation maker that we think of her at the last, full of that sweet, irrepressible longing after sympathy which Dr. Burney noted, and which renders her such a pleasing contrast to the regiment of blues, a sympathy too quick and glancing to be charged with any intensity of emotion, or any profound depth of feeling, but vivid to the last with the essence of social pleasure, clear reflection, unquenchable memory, apt quotation, and sparkling impromptu. Playing over all subjects, penetrating none, she has attained, by common consent, to the position that she envied as a bookmark in the Biographia Literaria. By many she is deemed to have earned a further title to remembrance, if only on account of her indefinable charm." Seccombe, in Broadley p. 76-77.
condescending praise is intermixed with other degrading comments like “Hester's absorbent, unoriginal, parasitic, reflective intellect,” and his claim that she “preferred the society of her poultry” to that of her children. But the historical records show that Thrale Piozzi aspired to, and deserves, much greater fame than that of being a “bookmark,” and that her success in conversational rhetoric came as a result of careful education and reflection on the elements of the art.

Young Thrale Piozzi, born Hester Lynch Salusbury in 1741, was a prodigy in learning, and early skilled in the arts of pleasing. Her education was conducted in fits and starts due to her father's chronic debt problem. Young Hester spent many summers with her rich uncles and aunts at their estates, and many winters in more humble quarters in London. She was able to observe how her mother, used to the lifestyle of the higher rank but married for love to one who needed her inheritance, made the best of being a long-term guest of her relatives or being a self-sufficient middle-class matron. Mrs. Hester Salusbury largely had to manage her own affairs and her daughter's while her husband was away spending money and placating creditors. Hester was an asset to her mother because it brought the attention of the childless rich uncles who considered her a potential heir. It was easy for young Hester Thrale Piozzi to please those who centered their future hopes on her, petted her, and courted her attention. She learned very early how to read

53 Seccombe, in Broadley. p. 7, 11. Mrs. Piozzi's account differs from Broadley's representation: she recalls that Johnson chid her for “feeding my chickens and starving my understanding” and that Johnson felt young children should be sent to boarding schools and kept out of the way of annoying adults. (Lobban 32)

54 “I used to be my Father's Favourite, my Mother's Comforter and Companion, & my Uncle's Darling. I was next Heir both to the Welch Estate & the Hertfordshire one; & Sir Tho[mas] having No Joy except in his Dogs, his Horses, and myself, I was looked up to—as the principal Person of the Family—my Influence was courted by every one, and never in my Life did ask a Favour of Sir Thomas which he refused.” (Thraliana I. 296)
and write in English, French, Italian, and a little Spanish, and she was encouraged by her aunt, the author Lady Salusbury, to translate texts like the *Spectator* and a Spanish sermon, and compose poems.\textsuperscript{55} Thrale Piozzi later wrote of her, "such a patroness would have made stones students."\textsuperscript{56}

Dr. Arthur Collier, a metaphysician, was young Thrale Piozzi’s tutor in Latin and the Classics, criticism, rhetoric and logic during her late teens, when her uncle was helping to support her and her mother while her father traveled in Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{57} Collier was an important figure in her education in conversation and conduct, especially in exercising her humor and raillery. He demonstrated indirect means of gaining influence in a rich family. He knew and explained the art of getting people to do things through reverse psychology, and this technique is also seen in Collier’s sister’s witty satire on domestic conversation and conduct.\textsuperscript{58} Dr. Collier had an attraction to and respect for intelligent young women, many of whom he nurtured wholeheartedly.\textsuperscript{59} Although he encouraged his other female pupils in their scholarship and publication, the difficulties of their lives convinced him to recommend to Thrale Piozzi marriage instead of the life of a

\textsuperscript{55} Clifford 20-21

\textsuperscript{56} Lady Salusbury was highly educated, and interested in Italian and Spanish literature. By 1757 Hester wrote all her personal accounts in Italian, and letters to her aunt in Italian. First drafts of letters written at age 15 reveal her reading of Rapin and Tasso. Lady Salusbury had her translate Spectator papers into Italian, and Hester translated a Spanish sermon by Isaac Netto and dedicated it to her aunt. (Clifford 20-21).

\textsuperscript{57} McCarthy 8.; *Thraliana* 301n, 304

\textsuperscript{58} Hester told Johnson that Collier used to speak roughly about his dog in front of his servants, saying “why will nobody knock this cur’s brains out?” so that the servants would feel sympathy for the dog and treat him kindly in Collier’s absence. (*Anecdotes* 145). His sister, educated largely by him, was Jane Collier, the author of *An Essay on The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753). Jane remained unmarried and likely died in poverty as a dependent in another family.

\textsuperscript{59} Arthur educated his sisters Jane and Margaret, and the novelist Sarah Fielding, before being assigned to Hester. After Thrale Piozzi, his final pupil, Sophy Streatfield, was a frequent visitor at Thrale Piozzi’s home and a rival for Mr. Thrale’s affection.
female writer. Thrale Piozzi’s tutor had inculcated the common precepts about female conduct and education shared by Lord Chesterfield, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Samuel Johnson; he understood women’s arts of deportment as acquirements to be learned, rather than natural gifts:

Doctor Collier had a notion that any Woman might be handsome if she would; meaning that Grace & Carriage were so near to every thing in the Affair of Beauty that any Woman of Condition might procure it if she would take Pains—Tis plain Lord Chesterfield thought the same of Grace in general.

Young Thrale Piozzi observed Collier’s manner and conversation and acquired his “assimilating Temper”, his ability to “take his Share in any Conversation,” his “Taste of general Knowledge” and enjoyment of all stripes of people. At the same time, she was well aware of his conversational faults. Her keen rhetorical analysis of his performance and its effects pointed out which elements were not worthy of her imitation. She notes in Thraliana that he loved talking more than listening, disputed on controversial points of religion and politics, and used logic to corner people and point out their fallacies for ridicule. Even if he did all this “with an Air of great Civility” to soften the offense, his

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60 Arthur Collier often regretted that his sister Jane was only known to the world by her satirical publication, according to the 1805 editor of An Essay on The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting (Introduction, Art of Tormenting vii.) Henry Fielding broke up his sister Margaret’s engagement when she was 36 years old, in 1754 (Introduction, Art of Tormenting ix-x.), and Collier told Hester that when Henry Fielding saw his sister Sarah read Virgil, it piqued his authorial jealousy and he no longer encouraged her education as he once did. One of his last letters to Hester implored her to give up learning Latin, since it “won’t make one a bit younger Richer, or Handsomer, and the only women that I ever knew made much of the matter all lived to be old maids.” (April 17, 1762. Clifford 40)

61 Thraliana I. 13

62 ibid.
manner could not eliminate the feeling of pain in his interlocutor.\textsuperscript{63} He was admired far more than he was loved. Although Collier disliked no one, his conversational follies made others bitter and vindictive against him.\textsuperscript{64}

As a tutor granted limited power in Thrale Piozzi’s childhood home, Collier was well-suited to instruct her in the arts of \textit{sway}, an acceptably feminized term for the effect of persuasion which she later defined as a type of government and influence:


define\textsuperscript{63}

Collier’s satirical insights into human character often focused on the means of gaining power. Collier used to say that “women should learn rhetorick in order to persuade their husbands, while men studied to render themselves good logicians, for the sake of obtaining arms against female oratory.”\textsuperscript{66} Thrale Piozzi admits that his influence was very strong in her own life—he had power in almost every circumstance, until her mother found his influence encroaching on her own.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{63} Another fault was his playful perversity in insisting on talking about “curing Hams, or making Minced Pyes” when a conversant was willing to engage in a metaphysical discussion with him.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Thraliana} 1. 16-17.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{British Synonymy} Vol. 2. p. 231-232.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{British Synonymy}, vol. 1, preface. v-vi

\textsuperscript{67} She wrote that “A friendship more tender or more unpolluted by interest or by vanity, never existed; love had no place at all in the connection, nor had he any rival but my mother. Their influence was of the same kind, and hers the strongest.” (from Hayward’s \textit{Thraliana}, As quoted in Clifford 32. For this assertion in slightly different terms, see \textit{Thraliana} 297n) Hester confided in Collier her distress on being matched with Henry Thrale. Her mother “knew her power & resolved to exert it; fomented a trifling quarrel between the
Though the sayings of Thrale Piozzi's mother Mrs. Salusbury do not appear in Thrale Piozzi's journals (which were begun after Mrs. Salusbury's death), the daughter's notes on her mother's character highlight her skills in conversation and conduct. In Samuel Johnson's epitaph for Mrs. Salusbury, he strongly suggests the rhetorical nature of female conversation and conduct. Her ability to make her "mirth" or "gravity" socially amiable and pleasing was a "Science" related to her language skills: "In Language skilled, by Science form'd to please, / Her Mirth was Wit, her Gravity was Ease." 

From observing Mrs. Salusbury, Hester Thrale Piozzi also learned that certain everyday topics are usually suppressed around gentlemen. Mrs. Salusbury could vary her style and matter with the audience, chatting with her daughter about trifles, and then conversing with men and being accounted wise. After her mother's death, on a tour of Wales, Thrale Piozzi lamented "'tis so melancholy a thing to have nobody one can speak to about one's clothes, or one's child, or one's health, or what comes uppermost. Nobody but Gentlemen, before whom one must suppress everything except the mere formalities of conversation and by whom every thing is to be commended or censured."

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Dr. & me," and soon she forbid further correspondence and friendship between them. *Thraliana* 1. 302-3, 305

68 "She was for all personal and mental Excellence the most accomplished Female that ever my Eyes beheld. Her Shape so accurate, her Carriage so graceful, her Eyes so brilliant, her Knowledge so extensive, & her Manners so pleasing that it was no wonder She had such Choice of Lovers in her Youth, & Admirers in her advanced Age: She died aged 66, leaving behind her no equal for Powers of delighting her Friends & Companions." (*Thraliana* 1. 6-7.)

69 *Thraliana* 1. 356

70 In Thrale Piozzi's journal of a tour of Wales, she writes of her mother that "her conversation enlivened one's mind and her observations on every thing were thought well of by the wisest" (Broadley 171). Johnson at first ridiculed Mrs. Salusbury's tendency to believe all that was printed in newspapers, but later he grew to respect her highly.

71 Broadley 171-172

75
Unfortunately for Thrale Piozzi, before Mrs. Salusbury’s death almost all of the household guests were men, and being almost continually pregnant or busy with entertaining, she rarely ventured outside the home.

Caught between the contradictions between her mother’s and husband’s expectations of female conversation and conduct, Hester Thrale led a very unhappy existence trying to please both. In the early part of her marriage, Hester Thrale’s mother restrained her from entering London social life and scolded her for not paying more attention to her children’s education. This model of conduct suited the rising middle-class values for women’s household management and motherhood, and Mrs. Salusbury herself had had to educate little Hester and depend on household skills when her husband’s financial trouble forced them to live on slender means. However, Hester Thrale’s husband Henry, while respectfully allowing Mrs. Salusbury her “sway” over Hester Thrale’s conduct, actually had little interest in a domestic wife. He did not permit his wife to meddle in the kitchen. As a brewer rising in social class to be a member of parliament and public figure, he preferred to uphold the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century aristocratic model of a wife, who “was supposed to embody and display the wealth and rank of her father or husband in her ornamental attire, witty and elegant speech, and lavish hospitality. While chaste, and obedient, she was not meant to be silent

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72 When Thrale Piozzi’s first child was born, she was forced to lie in at Southwark “sorely against my Will—if any Will I had.” Thraliana I. 308

73 She obeyed and soon “taught this poor infant twenty pretty Tricks” which “she was no better for Learning.” (Ibid. 308). Due to this experience she readily concurred in Dr. Johnson’s opinion that it was wrong to force-feed youngsters by making them parade, mimic and parrot what they could not yet understand. (Anecdotes 11)

74 Thrale Piozzi recalled in her diary that her early childhood was spent in a cottage where her mother “made the Candles, Salted her own Meat, iron’d her own Linen & her Husband’s & mine” (Clifford 9)
or retiring." 75 For women in Thrale Piozzi’s social rank (poorer relations of rich families with ancient noble roots, whose friends included with Lords and Ladies), rhetorical training in conversation and conduct was part of their training in aristocratic femininity, and such a wife was an asset that could help to smooth the rise of the bourgeois husband into riches and power.76 Happily for Thrale Piozzi, Samuel Johnson interposed in this marital impasse, and his advice helped her to perform this aristocratic kind of femininity which, after all, she was already trained for in her uncle’s home.77

One key element of Thrale Piozzi’s rhetorical training was in helping to manage the business of her husband. Mrs. Salusbury continued to discourage her daughter from involvement in Mr. Thrale’s business until the brewery was in peril. Then the mother’s “Delicacy was blunted about the Trade.” Thrale Piozzi became involved, conciliated the important people, and learned that “Women have a manifest Advantage over Men in the doing Business; every thing smooths down before them, & to be a Female is commonly sufficient to be successful, if She has a little Spirit & a little common Sense.” Thrale Piozzi’s own conclusion to this episode of life relates that this crisis increased Mr.

75Judith Hawley, Introduction to Jane Collier’s Art of Tormenting, xix.

76 Ideally the woman came with an inheritance as well as education and social skills. Such was the case for Thrale Piozzi’s uncle, Thomas Salusbury, who, marrying a well-educated heiress, Miss Penrice, took her retired father’s office of Judge of the Admiralty as well as his knighthood. Lady Salusbury no doubt eased the transition into riches, providing genteel conversation for guests at the table in the estate. (Clifford 16)

77 Early in her friendship with Johnson, Hester complained to him that Mr. Thrale did not treat her with much kindness. Johnson’s insight was very helpful, though painful. He explained that she was spending all her time with her baby and mother, was neither useful nor ornamental to Henry with her wit and beauty, was not knowledgeable about Henry’s business, and shared none of his pleasures.

77
Thrale’s respect for her. In later years Mrs. Thrale was also an important assistant in her husband’s political career, using her writing and conversational skills to successfully gain votes and sustain his good reputation.

The brewery crisis of 1772 and Mrs. Salusbury’s death marked two stages in the rise of Samuel Johnson’s influence as Hester Thrale’s next great mentor in conversation and conduct. Johnson and Hester Thrale had much in common in their personality and interests. Besides deferring to Johnson’s wishes in staying up late to talk, or changing her clothing upon his request, Hester Thrale joined with him in Tory political opinions and in charitable projects. Most importantly, Johnson, like herself, loved conversation and held it to be one of the greatest arts and pleasures of human life, exceeding even the fame of authorship. Johnson was recommended to the Thrales for his conversational powers as well as his moral and literary fame. The critics who belittle Thrale Piozzi’s arts of conversation overlook the fact that the same arts were practiced and recommended by Johnson throughout his speech and writing. Johnson often opined upon the importance of

78 *Thraliana* 311-313

79 Johnson frequently displayed his aesthetic taste by expressing his strictures on certain fashions in female dress. (*Anecdotes* 288). She and Johnson helped to support a charity school for female servants founded early in the century by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge; in a letter Johnson called it “your Charity School.” She continued her interest in this charity after Johnson’s death, as well as her support of the London Lying-in Hospital. (Broadley 121-22)

80 Hester reports that “when [Johnson] saw a person eminent in literature, though wholly unconvertible, it fretted him.” (*Anecdotes* 195). Johnson said “There is in the world no real delight (excepting those of sensuality) but exchange of ideas in conversation” (*Anecdotes* 266-267) and “I should therefore willingly in intellectual cases consider agreeable conversation as the most delightful entertainment to the mind, and a cheerful hour or evening’s chat with intelligent well-bred friends, the most pleasant of all moments” (*British Synonymy* v.1 p.198). A great part of the delight that Johnson had in traveling was in the conversation that took place in the coach with his captive audience. (*Anecdotes* 276)

81 Before she married Mr. Thrale, Thrale-Piozzi had been told by the artist Hogarth (who was a family friend) that his conversation “was to the talk of other men, like Titian’s painting compared to Hudson’s” (Clifford 24). The Thrales were incited to invite Johnson to dinner by their mutual friend Arthur Murphy, who described Johnson as one of exalted “moral and literary character.” They contrived to lure Johnson to their table by inviting a newly famous shoemaker turned poet whom Johnson could meet. (Clifford 55)
everyday rhetoric, asserting that “life is made up of little things; and that character is the best which does little but repeated acts of beneficence; as that conversation is the best which consists in elegant and pleasing thoughts expressed in natural and pleasing terms.”

Thrale Piozzi tells of how Johnson repeatedly kept his friends awake until three or four o’clock in the morning to converse with him, recalling them despite their attempts to retire. Johnson and Hester Thrale both believed conversation was a means of education as well as entertainment. Girls ought to be brought out into company young and frequently, he reasoned, despite objections about bringing girls out before the public gaze. It is the private conversation with the seductive man “buzzing” in her ear, Johnson argued, that she is truly endangered by, rather than the conversation of a group, which actually “stretches” her mind. Johnson recommended to Hester Thrale’s eldest daughter that she, as soon as listening to something being said, ought to go to someone else and explain what it meant, to exercise her memory and understanding.

Each of Thrale Piozzi’s best mentors in conversation and conduct had something to offer, and some severe limitations. One area in which Johnson provided a negative example was his frequently rude and combative speech and his rough manner, of which examples abound in her Anecdotes. In contrast to his own practice, he would continually extol the virtues of a sweet and soft temper. Frances Burney and Johnson both observed how virtuous Hester Thrale Piozzi was in the way that she quietly bore Johnson’s sharp

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82 Anecdotes 90
83 Anecdotes 125
84 Anecdotes 107
85 Anecdotes 144

79
rebukes. Thrale Piozzi explained to Burney that she did so because her vanity was flattered by his attention, and because “I have received more instruction from you [Johnson] than from any man, or any book.”86 Yet in this same conversation Thrale Piozzi frankly charged Johnson with severity and cruelty to her guests. Johnson defended his behavior by saying that she too often asks him to commend people or things against his own judgment. Thrale Piozzi had the last word, however, when she defended why she, on the contrary, is usually lavish in praise: “Why I’ll tell you, sir, [...] when I am with you, and Mr. Thrale, and Queeny [Miss Thrale], I am obliged to be civil for four!”

After her husband’s death, Johnson provoked a violent quarrel at her home, which Thrale Piozzi ended by interrupting with a spirited and dignified rebuke. Johnson acquiesced, though reluctantly in front of company, but before he left her home she “read him a very serious lecture upon giving way to such violence; which he bore with a patience and quietness.”87 In 1780 she wrote “I should not have the same power myself over Johnson’s Spirits or Sir Philip Clerke’s, if I were not a Woman; they would neither of ‘em have trusted their own Sex with such Secrets as they have entrusted to me. They may well compare Notes as sometimes they do;—each little thinking how much t’other is my Slave!”88 In these examples we can see that Thrale Piozzi was quite capable of using the art of “sway” on Johnson himself, despite claims to the contrary.89

86 D’Arblay Diary and Letters vol. 1 p. 129.
87 as reported by Burney (D’Arblay). Diary and Letters vol. 1 p. 501-502.
88 Thraliana 1. 422.
89 Hester herself did not want to be publicly known as a managing woman. In her Anecdotes, Hester pleaded that Mr. Thrale alone could control him, “But as I never had any ascendancy at all over Mr. Johnson, except just in the things that concerned his health, it grew extremely perplexing and difficult to live in the house with him when the master of it was no more” (Anecdotes 138). Yet her private writing
At the height of Thrale-Piozzi’s early conversational salon, she was often compared with her friend, the “bluestocking” hostess Elizabeth Montagu. Montagu defended Thrale Piozzi from the ridicule intellectual women were prey to by praising her “uncommon endowments and love of literature” – her conversational talents – and a life that was “rational, useful [sic], decent” – her conduct. Montagu and Thrale-Piozzi had very different conversational styles, a fact which Frances Burney and others observed and found entertaining. Montagu was more formal and scholarly, and controlling of the conversation, Thrale-Piozzi more informal and careless by design, and Johnson showed his preference to Thrale-Piozzi’s style.

In her later life, after marrying Mr. Piozzi and changing almost all of her friends, Thrale Piozzi continued to exert her conversational arts with success. She built many friendships in Italy with the literati, but came home to England to find her former relationships broken and her reputation, health, and sanity in question. Johnson died, and she lost her friendship with Elizabeth Montagu and Frances Burney, among others. By separating themselves from the plague of Thrale Piozzi’s infamy and contributing to the provides a different representation, as shown above. Her biographers sometimes take her public representation as plain truth: “only the Master could curb Johnson’s dogmatic assertions” (Clifford 68).

90 Montagu, in a letter to James Beattie, April 12, 1776, as quoted in Clifford, p. 151.

91 Frances Burney’s diary frequently compares Elizabeth Montagu’s well-reasoned “harangues” with Thrale Piozzi’s “wit” (Diary 1.352), and conversations at which Montagu and Thrale did most of the talking: “Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale both flashed away admirably” and “Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Thrale, and Lord Mulgrave talked all the talk, and talked it so well, no one else had a wish beyond hearing them.” (Diary 1.331, 344).

92 Thrale-Piozzi’s own comparison is “Mrs. Montagu’s Bouquet is all out of the Hot-house—mine out of the Woods & Fields & many a Weed there is in it.” (as quoted in Clifford 153) Montagu complained that she tried to please Johnson but she was continually but politely denied the pleasure. (Clifford 152)

93 Elizabeth Montagu wrote to her sister about Thrale Piozzi that “she is now become a subject for her enemies to exult over, and for her friends, if she has any left, to forget or pity.” Montagu suggested that Thrale-Piozzi’s marriage shortened Johnson’s life.
public outcry, these and other women demonstrated what Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld later admitted, that it was often in their best interest to preserve their own ethos of feminine conduct by explicitly distancing themselves from other women writers of different political, moral, and religious associations. In the midst of the gossip, Thrale Piozzi built up new friendships in London and Wales, until in 1790 she proved herself successfully reestablished by holding her sixth wedding anniversary at her old home of Streatham Park, and “no less than a Thousand Men Women & Children” attended. Thrale Piozzi developed close friendships with many famous women in her later life, and she continued to move in upper middle-class society. Melesina Trench reports of Thrale Piozzi in 1815 that “She is about sixty or seventy, lively, animated, agreeable in countenance, and, as far as I could judge in a mixed company, in manners also.” In 1813 she went to a masquerade dressed as a constable with two others dressed as watchmen, and they pretended they had a warrant to imprison the whole company as “engaged in an illegal amusement.” Edward Mangin, one of her Bath friends, describes how strong her conversational skill and delivery was even in the last decade of her life:

94 Aikin Barbauld objected to Maria Edgeworth when Edgeworth proposed in 1804 that Aikin Barbauld be the editor of a new women-only periodical magazine. She explained, “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.” Hannah More was a good friend and correspondent of Barbauld’s despite their differences in politics and religious sects, yet Barbauld asserts that “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 [Mary Wollstonecraft].” (LeBreton 86-87)

95 Thraliana, July 28, 1790.

96 She was friends with many prominent women including Sarah Siddons the actress, Anna Seward, Helen Maria Williams (until Williams' political beliefs became prominent), Sophia Lee, and Penelope Pennington.

97 Leadbeater, Correspondence of Mrs. Trench and Mary Leadbeater, in The Leadbeater Papers 274. (Melesina Trench, June 1815)

82
She told a story incomparably well; omitting every thing frivolous or irrelevant, accumulating all the important circumstances, and after a short pause (her aspect announcing that there was yet more to come), finished with something new, pointed, and brilliant. To render all this more fascinating, she would throw into her narrative a gentle imitation—not *mimicry*, of the parties concerned, at which they might themselves have been present without feeling offended.98

Thrale Piozzi was so well-known that she held an famously large and lavish birthday party in Bath a few years before she died; her contemporaries describe her leading the first dance with her adopted son.

Thrale Piozzi’s conversational expertise and resilience was supported by her theoretical understanding of the rhetorics of conversation and conduct. Thrale Piozzi happens to have provided in her diary a “key” to the ideal character of the drawing room rhetor. In Thrale Piozzi’s *Thraliana* entry for May of 1778, numerical ratings in various criteria express her evaluation of the conversation and conduct of her male and female friends and family. This resource, like a reply to a questionnaire she herself designed, offers a rare quantitative expression of Thrale Piozzi’s opinions of people. It also reveals her belief that conversation and conduct are performances that can be evaluated and theorized according to criteria. Thrale Piozzi’s opinions also give us an experienced woman’s perspective that these were common criteria for mixed-sex conversation. Men and women are judged according to different categories.99

98 Mangin, *Piozziana* 19-20

99 Tables 2.1 and 2.2 are excerpted from the tables found in *Thraliana* I. 329-331
Table 2.1 Hester Thrale Piozzi's criteria for men and women

Thrale Piozzi's explanations of these category names reveal how she viewed the relative importance of moral conduct, at least as it was performed in conversation and known by reputation. "Virtue," she explains, is conspicuously absent from the chart for women, because it is assumed. Women "must possess Virtue in the contracted Sense, or one would not keep em Company, so that is not thought about." For women, virtue is the prerequisite for being on the chart, but men have relative ratings on the rough equivalents of virtue, "Religion" and "morality." The category aligned most closely to virtue or religion and morality for women is a vague term connoting sympathy and value: "worth of heart."
All of the above criteria, including virtue, bear upon conversational performance, implying that for Thrale Piozzi, the main theatre for human excellence is conversation. “Good Humor” means “only the good humour necessary to Conversation.” “Person Mien & Manner” in women comprehends “general Appearance” rather than a limited notion of physical beauty. Assuming that the order of these categories roughly correspond to levels of importance, conversation rates higher for women than for men, and conversational qualities are the overall context and theme of the charts.

These ratings give extra significance to the ways Thrale Piozzi and others perceived herself positioned in competition with Mrs. Montagu, and her admiration of Johnson despite his roughness of manner. The following are selected from her chart of thirty-eight men and another chart of forty-six women. A score of 0 meant the quality was lacking, 20 meant perfection, and “—” meant that Thrale Piozzi did not feel confident to judge. (See Figure 2.2) In the full version of the charts one can see that Johnson and Garrick are two of very few men who have talents in wit and humor (these columns abound in zeros), showing how few men there were whom Thrale Piozzi considered her equals or superiors in conversation. In conversation Thrale Piozzi gives herself third place among all 46 women.

100 Hester prefaces her list discussing men’s manners, and in imitation of a book called Crito, or, a Dialogue on Beauty (1752) by Joseph Spence; she follows her list with several brief conversational anecdotes that reveal the wit and humor of some of the friends she admired the most: Mrs. Montagu, Johnson, and Burney.

101 17 is a very high score for Thrale Piozzi’s conversation since the average rating among women is 5.7 and only nine women rate higher than a score of 10.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Morality</th>
<th>Scholarship</th>
<th>General Knowledge</th>
<th>Person &amp; Voice</th>
<th>Manner</th>
<th>Wit</th>
<th>Humor</th>
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<tr>
<td>David Garrick</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>Worth of Heart</th>
<th>Conversation Powers</th>
<th>Person Mien &amp; Manner</th>
<th>Good humour</th>
<th>Useful Knowledge</th>
<th>Ornamental Knowledge</th>
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<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Hester Thrale Piozzi (Queeney)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Montagu</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophia Streatfield</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Carter</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>Hester Chapone</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>Hannah More</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frances Boscawen</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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a David Garrick (1717-1779) most famous male actor of the century; a dramatist, theater manager; and a friend and student of Samuel Johnson since the 1730s.

b Edmund Burke (1729-1797) orator, politician, and aesthetic and political philosopher.

c Charles Burney (1726-1814) musician and theorist of music; father of novelist Frances Burney, D’Arblay, and close friend of Samuel Johnson and Hester Thrale Piozzi.

d Thrale Piozzi’s eldest daughter (1764-1857) was fourteen years old when the chart was made.

e Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800) (see chapter 2): The most famous Bluestocking salon hostess, and a prolific letter writer.

f Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806): poet, translator (from Greek) of All the Works of Epictetus (1758) and (from Italian) Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophy Explain’d for the Use of Ladies (1739), and correspondent and travel companion of Elizabeth Montagu.

g Hester Mulso Chapone (1727-1801): essayist, poet, and bluestocking, a friend of Samuel Richardson the novelist, admired by Samuel Johnson, a companion of Mrs. Montagu’s for several years. She wrote a book on religion, morality, and conduct for women called Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773).

h Hannah More (1745-1833): a prolific and highly influential conversationalist, moralist, and educator, known for her play The Search after Happiness (1762) and later for Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799).

i Another bluestocking hostess, the wife of Admiral Boscawen, and a correspondent of Mrs. Montagu.

Table 2.2 A Selection from Hester Thrale Piozzi’s evaluation tables

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In this chart, women have slightly higher scores than men in conversational skills.\textsuperscript{102} As for performance in conversational delivery (person, voice, mien, manner), women rate slightly higher than men overall.\textsuperscript{103} The substitution of voice for mien in women reflects the cultural belief that women did not need to speak in order to be eloquent. Garrick and her husband share the highest honors in person, voice and manner, suggesting her husband is as good as the actor in performing his role as host, yet Henry relied on his wife and Johnson to carry the day in wit and humor, for Samuel Johnson is almost an exact contrast with her husband Henry. Thrale Piozzi’s diaries reinforce the values of this chart: her consistent criteria for female worth was their ability to converse and their moral reputation.\textsuperscript{104}

One of Thrale Piozzi’s publications also proves that Thrale Piozzi had carefully theorized the rhetoric of conversation and conduct, and that she thought of conversation as her most important school. Thrale Piozzi’s \textit{British Synonymy} (1794) theorizes the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} In Thrale Piozzi’s diary, the columns for wit, humor, and good humor are visually a single column and can be construed as conversational arts, considered together as analogous to the women’s column for conversation. Men average a score of 4.4 for wit, humor, and good humor combined. Among men the scores on wit yield an average of 3.6 with five men over 10, and scores on humor yield an average of 2.8 with four men over 10. For “Good Humor” the score among men is an average of 6.9.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Among women, scores for “person, mien, and manner” average 10, with twenty-one over 10. For Men’s “person & voice,” the average score is 8.4 with ten men over 10, and “Manner” has an average score of 8.2 with ten men over 10.
\item \textsuperscript{104} When touring Wales in 1774, she describes the attributes of Mrs. Hill as an “odd mixture of sublimity and meanness. Her conversation is elegant, her dress uncommonly vulgar, her manner lofty if not ostentatious, and her whole appearance below that of a common house-maid. She is, however, by far the most conversable Female I have seen since I left home, her character, I hear, is respectable, and her address is as polite as can be wished. I shall never see her again probably, and I am sorry for it. One could wish to see her very often.” (Broadley 181-182). In contrast, when she meets Mrs. Shipley, the wife of a minister, she observes that while she tried to be as civil as she could, she is nevertheless “vulgar.” Hester reasons that because such men rise from the middle class and marry young, the woman has no opportunity of polishing her social behavior, while her husband, mixing in higher society as he advances upwards in the church hierarchy, develops more genteel manners. (Broadley 185.)
\end{itemize}
central importance of conversation in scholarship, and asserts that language has its basis in conversation, not formal rules. She praises language above all other human knowledge, and speech above writing, referring to God’s means of creativity described in the Bible: “speech was the engine of creative energy. —He spake the word, and they were created.”

Having proven that the origin of all language and knowledge is conversation, Thrale Piozzi argues that one should go straight to the fountain and be a student of conversation: “These are the niceties of language that books never teach, and conversation alone can establish”; fine linguistic distinction is “learned only by conversation, or by trifling books like this, wholly and solely colloquial: and a foreigner must give up some empty moments to the mere chat of our language.”

Another common idea in Thrale Piozzi’s work is that knowledge gains status and usefulness only by means of its being communicated personally in conversation, and therefore it is not surprising that all her writings, including her linguistic, political, and historical works, frequently engage in conversational diction and style. Her letters have been highly praised by critics for their conversational quality. Thrale Piozzi herself called her letters “Pen & Ink Conversations.” William McCarthy notes that many

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105 All the assertions of moral philosophers, kings wooing foreign princesses, and international negotiations rest on grammar. *British Synonymy* v. 1 p. 344

106 *British Synonymy* v. 2 p. 29, 61.

107 as when Piozzi writes of a historical narrative “This fact the learned Doctor Parr taught me where to find; but it is a greater distinction for me to have gained it from his conversation.” *British Synonymy* v. 1 p. 276

108 R. Brimley Johnson, editor of her letters in 1926, writes of her letters “They produce . . . an atmosphere of repartee; a colloquialism that provokes comment or reply; an abruptness in moving on to the next subject, as if they had been taken from dialogue . . . . The homely phrasing is often vivid and dramatic, destined to long outlive more sober statements.” (Johnson 5-6, as quoted in McCarthy 145). Even Thomas Seccombe felt Piozzi deserved a high place among epistolary artists of the past two centuries (Broadley 43). Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom, authors of the 1989 edition of all her correspondence after her remarriage in 1784, claim that “The distinction of her correspondence stems ironically from her ability to speak, to give an individual all her attention, and so to dominate the talk.” (Bloom vol.1, Introduction, p. 22.)
of Thrale Piozzi's books and pamphlets were written in a conversational style, and he and James Clifford agree that it was her consciously chosen mode, despite the fact that it meant flouting the currently accepted standards for correctness and delicate diction in prose. This style brought her harsh criticism from friends and enemies alike, yet she persisted until her final work, *Retrospection*, sold poorly.

In Hester Thrale Piozzi's linguistic study *British Synonymy*, her colloquial style seems appropriate for a manual on conversational language. Her preface engages in multiple self-deprecatory moves intended to shield her from the criticism it would receive had she put it forward as a work of serious scholarship. Yet at the same time, she manages to argue for the usefulness and status of the kind of work she engages in, and even more importantly, the propriety of a female author such as herself undertaking a task heretofore only taken up by scholarly men. Thrale Piozzi, by 1794 a very observant and cosmopolitan woman 53 years old, could approach her public with a measure of confidence even though she was a woman. She reasons that "while men teach to write

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109 "Mrs. Piozzi, like Addison, Sterne, and possibly a few others over the century, was convinced that non-scholarly books might be written in the same idiomatic language employed by ordinary people in conversation. In spite of a classical education at the hands of Collier and Johnson, she was disgusted by the ornate, florid prose adopted by the majority of the authors of her day. Why, she wondered, should there be one set of words for writing and another for speaking?" (Clifford 344-345.) McCarthy notes that Thrale Piozzi's friend Penelope Pennington praised Hester for her prudence in refusing a "display of scholarship" and Edward Mangin recalled that "she frequently assumed a childish style, to avoid . . . being thought laborious and pedantic." (as quoted in McCarthy 200)

110 Horace Walpole, who criticized all of her publications, complained of "Dame Piozzi's though's and so's, and I trouw's." (from Walpole's *Correspondence*, as quoted in McCarthy 197); Piozzi's friend Anna Seward wrote to her a criticism of her *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789): "while she [the author, Mrs. Piozzi] frequently displays a power of commanding the most beautiful style imaginable," she nevertheless "sullies almost every page with inelegant & unscholarlike dids, & dos, & thoughts, & toos." (Seward to Piozzi, Dec 31, 1789 in McCarthy 197).

111 For example, the book is "intended chiefly for a parlour window, and acknowledg[es] itself unworthy of a place upon a library shelf" and "synonymy has more to do with elegance than truth." (*British Synonymy* vol. 1. Preface. iv, v.)
[sic] with propriety, a woman may at worst be qualified—through long practice—to
direct the choice of phrases in familiar talk.” Thrale Piozzi gives a faint echo here of
Cicero’s view of female conversation as a purifying and polishing agent, and yet she goes
further, setting up camp near the border of male scholarship by using Latin (a bold move
for a woman of her time). She links her book of conversational language with the
ancient art of speaking:

Nor has the *Ars recte loquendi*, as Sanctius calls grammar, escaped her
observation, though this may surely be setting talk somewhat too high; for
grammar [...] might have pretensions to a higher title, terming itself *Ars recte
scribendi* rather—Province of men and scholars . . .

Finally she cites Dr. Collier’s quip about women learning rhetoric, using his authority for
delving into the realm of rhetoric, an act which logically parallels her granting *Ars
recte loquendi* to women and *Ars recte scribendi* to men. She performs her rhetorical
knowledge at the end of her preface by demonstrating knowledge of the rhetorical figure
*pleonasm*.

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112 Ibid. ii.
113 In the eighteenth century, many women feared the backlash expected when treading on the masculine
territory of Latin. Frances Burney, on being given lessons in Latin by Dr. Johnson in the Thrale home,
writes in her journal “I heartily wish I rejoiced more sincerely in this classical plan. But the truth is. I have
more fear of the malignity which will follow its being known, than delight in what advantages it may
114 *British Synonymy*. vol. 1. Preface ii-iii.
115 Ibid. v-vi.
116 Hester mentions that the scholar Vaugelas favored the figure of speech, despite the fact that others
believe it to be mere tautology. By implication, she claims her work will demonstrate that synonyms used
in poetry are not mere redundancy of thought, but elegant copiousness of expression, because closely allied
terms still vary in their usage and connotation.
Thrale Piozzi's *British Synonymy* includes a valuable essay discussing the relationship between the words "Oratory, Eloquence, and Rhetorick" as they are used in conversation. (See Appendix A for the full text.) The essay extends the efforts in her preface to place women's rhetorical arts directly beside those of men. She defines these rhetorical terms by the scenes in which they are used, the character of the users, and the modes, topics, and aims associated with each term. These definitions eschew formalistic criteria and tend to be themselves rhetorical and functional, much like rhetorical definitions of genre. Thrale Piozzi observes that the common sites of *oratory* are courts of chancery, the theatre, and before a royal throne. The common site of *eloquence* is elegant and descriptive conversation, and the common sites of *rhetoric* are the House of Commons and the pulpit. As for the character of the user, she determines that either men or women may use oratory, women are admitted to excel in eloquence, but in common usage, only men commonly learn and use what is called rhetoric.

Not only does Thrale Piozzi acutely observe the way in which these terms interact with gender, but she enters into current controversies about the definitions of these areas of knowledge and action as she discusses the modes, topics and aims of *oratory*, *eloquence*, and *rhetoric*. Oratory is commonly used to refer to "the arts of persuasion"; near the beginning of her examination *oratory* seems to be the most general term of the three. Thrale Piozzi then begins to argue against the idea that eloquence and rhetoric are mere adjuncts or subordinate skills of the "*orator* or *oratrix*." However, since the original meaning of *orator/oratrix* "lies still concealed under our colloquial language," one must look at how the terms are used in conversation, not just to theories of rhetoric.
which consider eloquence and rhetoric as subordinate skills of oratory. Thrale Piozzi demonstrates the contrary, that neither eloquence nor rhetoric are necessary for powerful oratory. Oratory, the "powers of entreaty," need not even use words, as in the case of Mrs. Siddons on the stage. The assertion that an orator must feel sincerely connects it with nature and sentiment. By contrast, rhetoric is not innate but rather learned by "rules and terms," which, she explains, most women of her era would fervently deny knowing (even if it were true).

*Eloquence* is clearly feminized in her essay. The word is used to refer to verbal description which charms and dazzles, and it "implies more properly a plenitude of words, and adroitness in arranging them, with a sweet voice and pleasing volubility of utterance." Thrale Piozzi praised her friend Mrs. Pennington for her "eloquent" conversation; but subjoined to this praise the following disclaimer: "When she reads this, however, Mrs. P—will acknowledge that the very rules and terms of RHETORICK are unknown to her." This very definition of eloquence includes phrases equivalent in meaning to the rhetorical arts of invention, arrangement, delivery and style, and so Thrale Piozzi allows that "without all these [arts] 'tis difficult to shine as a perfect rhetorician." Perhaps this chain of connection explains why, in her preface, she claimed for women the province of rhetoric, by authority of Dr. Collier, while in the passage above, it is apparently a province willingly given over to men. Thrale Piozzi's term rhetoric, defined here as inseparable from its masculine sites and speakers, is an acquisition unnecessary for men and women who are quite satisfied with attaining the virtuous, pleasing, and

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117 *British Synonymy* vol II p. 84

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effective skills of oratory and eloquence. Thus Thrale Piozzi demonstrates how the persuasive and aesthetic elements of traditional rhetoric have been taken captive by the terms oratory and eloquence, leaving the male province of rhetoric with the unwanted elements of scholasticism, antagonism, and obscurity in general disfavor especially after Locke. Compared with even wordless oratory, rhetoric, even with its tropes and figures, is less effective at touching the heart. The aims of rhetoric are held, by Johnson and others (not necessarily by Thrale Piozzi), to be to obscure meaning and to maintain an opinion against opponents.

By the end of her essay, Thrale Piozzi has rearranged the relationship of the words from her commonplace starting point (the example in which oratory made use of the subordinate arts of eloquence and rhetoric) and has cast doubt on Johnson’s expressions of skepticism about the effectiveness of rhetoric.118 The eloquent Mrs. P—in the essay may quickly disclaim any knowledge of rhetoric in order to save her reputation for feminine modesty, but this does not mean that women should aspire merely to be “charming” or “fine,” and must neglect the “great[ness]” of rhetoric. By the logic of her essay, one may grasp the latter without relinquishing the former two qualities. Dr. Collier’s recommendation of female rhetorical education is thus re(in)stated by Hester

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118 Elsewhere Piozzi defends the effectiveness of rhetoric against Johnson’s opinion: “And surely, if books had no more power over opinions, than Doctor Johnson believed eloquence to possess over a vote in our house of commons; if no writings had force to dislodge tenets obstinately held; ‘twere vain to try the arts either of conviction or persuasion, whilst rhetoric would be rendered useless, and logic ridiculous. Principle itself... must a little yield to the times.” In this explication of the synonyms “principle, tenet, motive” she ties together the fate of logic and rhetoric, and asserts that arguments, manners, and principles should, and often do, alter to suit their geographical, ideological, and temporal contexts.
Thrale Piozzi. This brief essay, hidden in a book seldom read today but modestly influential in her own day, is a bold attempt to map, and then to suggest remappings of, the landscape of male and female language use in her society.

In Hester Thrale Piozzi’s diary can be found an interesting confession about the ways in which she, like Mrs. Pennington her friend, hid her own rhetorical skill and judgment beneath the appearance of appropriately feminine frivolity and haste.

I have a great deal more Prudence than People suspect me for; they think I act by Chance, while I am doing nothing in the World unintentionally: and have never I dare say in these last 15 Years uttered a Word to Husband, or Child; or Servant or Friend without being very careful & attentive what it should be. Often have I spoken what I have repented after, but that was want of Judgment—not of Meaning; what I said, I meant to say at the Time; & thought it best to say—I do not err from Haste, or a Spirit of Rattling as People think I do: when I err, tis because I make a false Conclusion, not because I make no Conclusion at all. When I rattle, I rattle on purpose.

Such a confession of conscious design authorizes this reading of Thrale Piozzi’s conversational words and actions as the practice of rhetorical skill rather than naïve or natural eloquence. The most successful rhetoric hides its own art; detective-work in letters and diaries can reveal what some rhetorical performances do not.

In Hester Thrale Piozzi, we see an example of a woman whose education and experience alongside Arthur Collier, Samuel Johnson, and others convinced her to consider conversation a rhetorical realm for men and women, and conduct (in both senses

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119 In addition to the 1794 London edition there was a Dublin edition in the same year, and in 1804 in Paris large sections were reprinted in five volumes of Parsons and Gaignani’s British Library. Extracts were also reprinted in the Gentleman’s Magazine of 1849 and 1850 (Clifford 374).

120 This passage occurs in the context of comparing the performances of two famous actresses, Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Siddons. The former was better actress because she portrayed a wider variety of female roles, while Siddons only portrays virtue in distress. Directly preceding this passage she cites a 1788 poem of Della Crusca which praises her own performance: “Thrale Piozzi’s brilliant wit, and learned ease.” (Dec. 26, 1788. Thraliana 2. 726.)
of virtue and manner) as a key component of a woman’s reputation as conversationalist or writer. She learned these rhetorical arts by the maxims of her mentors as well as by habituation and guided practice. The contrasting rhetorics of her aunt and uncle, her mother’s domesticity, and Samuel Johnson’s taste for aristocratic femininity assisted Thrale Piozzi to strategically blend a noblewoman’s conversational style with a more modern bourgeois woman’s ethics of conduct. This combination meant sacrificing one rhetoric to the other at times. By choosing to marry Mr. Piozzi, she chose the path of an independent noblewoman with a fortune, abandoning the norms of female conduct that most of her friends and family held her to. Thrale-Piozzi discovered that her reputation as a conversationalist and friend of Johnson was strong enough to outlive the gossip and ostracism—a result that points to the power of the British eighteenth century’s rhetoric of conversation. Thrale Piozzi’s performance of virtuous female conduct is seen most strongly in the insistent religious and political conservatism expressed in her later writings, in which she upheld the Anglican tradition and criticized revolution and dissent.

Although scholars have for centuries often treated Thrale Piozzi as a secondary character in Samuel Johnson’s world, her friendship with him from 1765 to 1783, with his increasing belletrism and value for conversation could easily be used to build an argument for the mutual influence and correspondence between their rhetorical theories and practices. In some ways, her presence in the Thrale’s conversational salon was parallel with Cicero’s view of women’s presence in conversation with men, as her civility and humor often softened Johnson’s and others’ incivility. Thrale-Piozzi’s frequent citation of Johnson may be seen less as one-sided intellectual dependence on him (as
Seccombe and others have assumed) than as a name-dropping rhetorical strategy directed at her audience more than herself, especially when we see how she is willing to disagree with him in person and in print.¹²¹

Combined with Thrale Piozzi’s rhetorical skills in conversation and conduct, her published works, her associations with public figures (such as her husband, Johnson and other literati, and later, Sarah Siddons the actress) and her ebullient presence at public assemblies of entertainment made her a public figure of considerable stature even though she had no access to male public offices. Indeed, it was her conversational skill and delivery which maintained her prominence in all of these relationships and sites. Her participation in her husband’s business alongside Samuel Johnson, and her political campaigns on Mr. Thrale’s behalf, provide a context for the association between mixed-sex conversational gatherings and public politics shown in Fanshawe’s painting titled “Politics.” As a mature thinker in her diary and British Synonymy, Thrale Piozzi was able to define the constituent qualities of the art of conversation and examine its close relationship to the domain of masculine contentio at the same time as she argued for the superiority and ancient origin of the more feminine and mixed-sex domain of sermo.

¹²¹ McCarthy argues that as a writer she became more independent of Johnson after marrying Piozzi.
CHAPTER 3

CONVERSATION AND CONDUCT: ANNA LETITIA AIKIN BARBAULD AND MARY SHACKLETON LEADBEATER

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, eighteenth-century rhetorics of women’s conversation and conduct were essential to the rhetorical life of Hester Thrale Piozzi. The rhetorical rules and theories for women’s conduct taught by writers like Halifax and Allestree were synthesized and orally presented by her mentors and family members, enabling Thrale Piozzi to engage profitably in the trade of language and sociability among the upper ranks of England, Italy, and Wales.

In this chapter I turn to two women writers from more middling ranks of society with families who had less to do with politics; women from two different dissenting religious communities. In the rhetorical lives of Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld and Mary Shackleton Leadbeater can be seen a similar degree of emphasis on women’s conversation and conduct as both a realm of rhetorical performance and as a school for learning rhetoric in these and other genres. Because of these two women’s more deeply religious and educational communities without access to public office, they were less directed toward aristocratic display and playfulness than Thrale Piozzi and were more
interested in the serious moral and intellectual influence of women’s speech and action. However, they still learned these rhetorics of conversation and conduct in similar ways: from conversation with male and female mentors, and from directly or indirectly learning and critiquing the maxims of female conversation and conduct expressed in conduct literature, elocutionary handbooks, periodicals, and religious texts.

Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld (1743-1825)

Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, born into the Aikin family, was only two years younger than Hester Thrale Piozzi, and lived only four years beyond her. Although they shared the same time period and country and knew of each other’s reputations and published writings, they never met. They were both involved in British society, literature, and politics, and shared friendships with other eminent writers.¹ Aikin Barbauld was not personally acquainted with Thrale Piozzi’s friend Samuel Johnson, yet Johnson praised her skill in imitating his prose style, and regretted that her mental powers were apparently wasted as a parson’s wife and teacher of young boys.² Thrale Piozzi and Aikin Barbauld were of radically different opinions about the French Revolution, due to the fact that Thrale Piozzi was a Tory Anglican and Aikin Barbauld a Whig Dissenter. Thrale Piozzi

¹ Hannah More, Hester Chapone, Elizabeth Montagu, Frances Burney

² As recorded by Boswell, Johnson said to him once, “the imitators of my style have not hit it. Miss Aikin has done it the best; for she has imitated the sentiment as well as the diction.” (as quoted in Rodgers 62). Johnson told Dr. Burney, “Too much is expected from precocity, and too little performed. Miss — 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.’ She tells the children, ‘This is a cat, and that is a dog, with four legs and a tail; see there! You are much better than a cat or a dog, for you can speak.’ If I had bestowed such an education on a daughter and had discovered that she thought of marrying such a fellow, I would have sent her to the Congress.” (as quoted in Rodgers 71).
quotes from Aikin Barbauld's *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790) in her *British Synonymy*, but does so in order to point out Aikin Barbauld as a writer who supports “the present race of political madmen in their frenzy” and “the genius of anarchy, obscurity, and barbarism.”³ Both women were precocious learners of language as youngsters, quickly excelling in writing and conversation, yet their social class, setting, and the religious tenor of their young lives was radically different. Therefore, while they both valued religion, virtuous conduct, conversation, and literature, they differed somewhat in their reasons and in their expressions of these values.

Aikin Barbauld entered the public stage at the age of thirty-two, when her friends urged her to publish her poems in 1773. This volume was followed the same year by a collection of essays by Aikin Barbauld and her brother John. Her greatest fame came from these two early publications together with her *Hymns in Prose for Children*, a work written during eleven years as a tutor of young boys in the boarding school she ran together with Mr. Barbauld. During the crisis of the French Revolution in the early 1790s she published six short argumentative pieces on political and religious subjects. The next decade from 1794 to 1804, she penned critical prefaces for the poets Akenside and Collins, published an edition of the letters of the novelist Samuel Richardson, and a selection from the *Spectator* and other eighteenth-century periodicals for use in schools.

³ *British Synonymy* vol. 2 p. 413-415. Thrale Piozzi quotes nineteen lines of text from Aikin Barbauld's tract in her passage on “Zone, Girdle, Circuit, Boundary, Limit.” Although Aikin Barbauld’s tract was published anonymously (“by a dissenter”), by this time the authorship was known and Thrale Piozzi refers to the author as “she.” Thrale Piozzi also negatively criticizes Aikin Barbauld’s children’s works in her marginal comments on Isaac Watts. (See Lyell).
She also wrote prefaces for a fifty-volume edition of the works of eminent British novelists (1810). This work was quickly followed by a collection of rhetorical readings for young women called *The Female Speaker* (1811) and a poem prophesying the impending doom of Britain, titled *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812). At the age of sixty-eight, after the harsh reviews of this last poem satirized her for abandoning her femininity and modesty, she finished her publishing career. The intimate friends of her later life included several important female authors such as Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth, and several authors to shine in the next generation, such as her niece Lucy Aikin, the Scottish dramatist Joanna Baillie, and the novelist Amelia Opie.

Aikin Barbauld grew up in the small village of Kibworth, where she grew up among the community of her father’s small academy for boys. She was a precocious child, and her father fed her early language skills with instruction in Latin, Greek, French, and Italian. Later, her father was invited to teach at Warrington Academy, an

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4 Robert Southey, in an anonymous piece in *The Quarterly Review* of 1812 portrays Barbauld as a children’s writer (“our fair pedagogue”) who has overstepped her role, “exchanging the birchen for the satiric rod, and abandoning the superintendence of the ‘Olivia’ of the nursery, to wage war on [...] statesmen and warriors [...] We had hoped, indeed, that the empire might have been saved without the intervention of a lady-author [...] an irresistible impulse of public duty – a confident sense of commanding talents – have induced her to dash down her shagreen spectacles and her knitting needles and to sally forth [...]” (Rodgers 142-3)

5 with the exception of a biographical preface to Dr. Estlin’s *Familiar Lectures on Moral Philosophy* in 1818

6 Aikin Barbauld writes, “[I] have not even the advantage of younger sisters; indeed, for the early part of my life I conversed little with my own sex. In the village where I was [Kibworth], there were none to converse with; and this, I am sensible, has given me an awkwardness in many common things [...]” Letter to E. Montagu, 1774. (LeBreton 46)

7 Her mother wrote of little Aikin Barbauld as a child “as eager to learn as her instructors could be to teach her, and who, at two years old, could read sentences and little stories in her wise book roundly, without spelling, and in half a year more could read as well as most women.” (from a letter to Dr. John Aikin in Oliver 12-13)
advanced school for dissenting young men, and Aikin Barbauld became part of the extracurricular community of students, instructors, and their families. Nineteenth-century biographies of Aikin Barbauld are careful to assert that her mother, fearful that with so much male influence around her she would grow up masculine, ensured Aikin Barbauld grew up with the proper female reserve and modesty, practicing needlework and housework.

Aikin Barbauld's education within this dissenting scholarly community was highly conversational in method because they were in the anti-scholastic tradition of Locke. Dissenting academies were boarding schools conducted in the headmaster's own home, which meant that the master's wife and daughters would take part in the social aspects of their education, and to some degree learned what was taught in the school. One anecdote illustrates how academic life was mixed with family life and conversation in the Aikin home. When Aikin Barbauld Letitia was a young girl at Kibworth, her father and a pupil were engaging in a religious conversation during their walk home, and continued it when they came to dinner. Aikin Barbauld spoke up and said "I think you are mistaken, papa," and he asked, "why do you think so, Laetitia?" and she replied by delivering a memorized Bible verse from a chapter she had read aloud to her father that morning. With this background of conversational education behind her, she later observed that Samuel Richardson had an exaggerated ideal of a father's authority over his

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8 Rodgers 30

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daughters, and that his writings "rather tend to inspire a certain bashful consciousness, and shrinking reserve, than the noble simplicity of truth and nature, in the intercourse between the sexes."  

The emphasis on conversation and conduct as both a process and product of education was evident in the pedagogical tradition passed down from Aikin Barbauld’s grandfather and grandmother Jennings, and her father’s headmaster Mr. Doddridge. This tradition in which faith, education, and community were intertwined was instrumental in forming Aikin Barbauld’s father to become the excellent teacher he was, and opening his mind to appreciate the rhetorical abilities of women. Jennings and his students would participate together in communal readings, exposition of texts, singing, praying, eating, and conversation, with some periods of the day devoted to private study. They produced amateur theatricals and cultivated the arts of elocution in reading aloud, acting, reciting, and declaiming. Like a pre-Socratic rhetorician, Jennings would state arguments on both sides of an issue, proceed to give evidence for each side, and then encourage the students to come up with their own conclusions. He published a discourse on the methods of preaching and the education of preachers in which he stressed the importance of knowing and talking with one’s audience.  

After Jennings died, his student Mr. Doddridge followed in his footsteps and began a new dissenting academy as a boarder in the home headed by the widow of Jennings. Doddridge’s teaching methods carried forward the

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9 Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, Preface, page cl.

10 "‘Tis the best to suit ourselves to all the Variety and Tempers and Experience of the Hearers... it will be needful then to look out of ourselves, and take a larger View... by conversing freely with serious People of our Flock." (Rodgers 22)
conversational tradition that Jennings emphasized, with the additional innovation of
teaching his students in English rather than Latin. Aikin Barbauld's father John Aikin
was one of the first pupils in Doddridge's academy. In a letter to a friend, Doddridge
explains that he and his pupils "are settled in a family where they have great opportunity
of improvement by conversation," especially conversation with Mrs. Anna Letitia
Jennings, the grandmother of Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld.11 John Aikin married Jane
Jennings and began a third boy's academy at Kibworth, held in the Jennings-Aikin
household. Based on his excellent teaching at Kibworth, Aikin Barbauld's father was
soon invited to teach the newly established dissenting school, Warrington.

It was not necessary for Aikin Barbauld to enter a classroom or hear a lecture in
order to pursue an education at Warrington. The records tell us that Aikin frequently
drank tea with his pupils and participated in familiar conversation with them,
recommending books, answering the students' questions about course materials, and even
telling anecdotes about his own experience as a student.12 There is little doubt that these
conversations over "tea" took place in Aikin's home, and that Aikin Barbauld sat among
the pupils; as Lynnette Hunter explains in her study of tea-drinking in England, during
this era tea was positively associated with the domestic setting and the presence of
women.13 Aikin Barbauld's niece, Lucy Aikin, testifies that at Warrington the tutors and

11 "Her daily conversation is one of the most delightful entertainments of my life. In her I see a most
amiable and instructive example of all the branches of the Christian temper which can be visible to the eyes
of our fellow creatures, and combined with these are uncommon sprightliness and wit, solidity of judgement
[sic] and delicacy of taste." (Rodgers 25)
12 According to William Turner in The Monthly Repository, as quoted in Rodgers 47
13 Hunter 123
their families "lived together like one large family, and in the facility of their intercourse they found large compensation for its deficiency in luxury and splendour."\(^{14}\) In her poetry, Aikin Barbauld speaks of sharing her brother's studies at Warrington.\(^{15}\) Although Aikin Barbauld could have proceeded much further and faster in her studies if she had engaged in all the classroom activities with the young boys, she was resident in the school community much longer than any pupil, even her younger brother, who spent time away from Warrington while engaged in a medical apprenticeship.

Over fifteen years the extraordinary domestic education her father gave Aikin Barbauld in the languages, belles lettres and philosophy was deepened by conversation with the next two successive tutors in that subject area, Joseph Priestley and William Enfield. Her father Dr. Aikin,\(^{16}\) Priestley, and Enfield all taught and discussed rhetorical theory at Warrington, and Aikin Barbauld likely learned their main principles first-hand by conversation with them, as well as by reading their publications and hearing them preach. Joseph Priestley, tutor of belles lettres and languages at Warrington for seven years, is the author of *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, published in 1777.\(^{17}\) Priestley instituted a practice at Warrington in which every Saturday "the tutors, all the students, and often strangers, were assembled to hear English and Latin compositions, and sometimes to hear the delivery of speeches, and the exhibitions of

\(^{14}\) Rodgers 48. Warrington was one of the few early dissenting academies that had several buildings and tutors, giving the boys as well as Aikin Barbauld a larger society and a broader education.

\(^{15}\) Poems 18 "To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she neglected him, October 20th 1768", line 49.

\(^{16}\) Her father, Dr. Aikin, made his third-year students perform weekly exercises in pulpit composition and public speaking, and was known as an excellent conversationalist, reader, reciter and classroom orator.

\(^{17}\) The final section of the text was to be on elocution, based on his notes from teaching elocution at Warrington Academy.

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scenes in plays." If strangers were invited on these occasions, there is little doubt Aikin Barbauld was sometimes in the audience with her father and brother, observing the young men exercise their oral rhetorical skills. Also on Saturdays, Priestley traditionally drank tea with the other tutors, where it is likely their wives and older children were present due to the common association of tea with mixed-sex conversation. When one of Aikin Barbauld’s close friends married Dr. Priestley, Aikin Barbauld became a frequent visitor at their home, where the tutor and his wife conversed with her and encouraged her to write poetry. Aikin Barbauld’s experiences of education at Warrington influenced her method of instruction when she was co-administrator and teacher in her husband’s school. She spent eleven years instructing young boys in Roman history, classical literature, geography, theatre, dramatic recitation, and English composition by using a conversational method. Just as Priestley published books based on his educational roles, Aikin Barbauld published popular children’s books written for use in her school. After the school closed down due to her husband’s illness, from the late 1780s to the end of her life in 1825, Aikin Barbauld practiced the kind of education she received at Warrington around the dinner table and tea table with Priestley, Enfield, and others: she continued to take in male and female students for weeks or months to teach them using conversational methods.

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18 Editor’s introduction, Priestley Lectures xvi.
19 Rodgers 48
20 Lessons for Children (1778-9), Hymns in Prose (1781)
It is highly probable that Aikin Barbauld read Priestley’s works, including his writing on language, education, oratory and criticism, as they were published from the 1770s through the 1790s. His writings in general, though directed primarily towards men, were favorable to women’s participation in education and public discourse, and respectful of the genres of conversation and conduct. In his lectures on oratory, Priestley writes that oratory and writing are skills based on the universal human capability of speech practiced in everyday conversation, that oratory is powerful when it includes the emotional expressions of “unpremeditated discourse,” and that the rhetorical topics are not necessary to teach invention of discourse on “original” ideas. These ideas harmonize with the principles of education and conversation expressed in Aikin Barbauld’s writings, as discussed below, and they open the door of public discourse to women by minimizing the role of formal education as a prerequisite.

Aikin Barbauld walked through that door to public discourse, performing in writing what gender ideologies did not permit her to perform through her body in extended public speeches. Aikin Barbauld anonymously published two “Civic sermons for the people” in 1792. These sermons were written “for the people” en masse in order to stem political unrest, and they use a conversational tone and vocabulary in order to reach the less educated. In these and other public writings she benefited from Priestley’s rhetorical instructions in terms of logic and argumentation, as well as his advice about style and the “pleasures of the imagination.” Composition for the pulpit was an important topic at Warrington, instructed by Aikin, Priestley, and Enfield.

21 Priestley Lectures, Lecture I (1-2), Lecture XV (110-111), Lecture IV (24-25).
William Enfield was another well-known tutor of languages and *belles lettres* at Warrington Academy whose work in elocution influenced Aikin Barbauld’s rhetorics of conversation. Two years older than Aikin Barbauld, Enfield arrived at Warrington when she was twenty-seven years old and remained at the academy as tutor, rector, and preacher for the local community, until the academy closed in 1783. Enfield became close friends with Aikin Barbauld, her father, and her brother John, so much so that he spoke the funeral sermon for John Aikin, Sr., whose son then reciprocated with a memoir of Enfield prefacing his posthumous sermons. There is evidence of collaboration and mutual encouragement among all three rhetors. William Enfield and Aikin Barbauld cited each other and wrote works on similar topics, and an edition of English hymns was collected by Enfield and edited by J. Aikin.22 Enfield contributed to the dissenting periodical *The Monthly Magazine* under the pseudonym “The Enquirer,” and it is likely that Aikin Barbauld also contributed anonymously and as “A. B.”23

The fruit of these collaborative friendships can easily be seen in the textual record, but it is important to remember how it was grounded in the rhetorics and pedagogies of conversation and conduct that were active at Warrington. Part of their discourse centered

22 The favorite poem Enfield used in his teaching of *belles lettres*, Mark Akenside’s *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, was the poem for which Aikin Barbauld later wrote a critical preface in 1794. Enfield included three of Aikin Barbauld’s poems in his popular anthology of rhetorical exercises, *The Speaker*, first published in 1774 as a textbook for Warrington students. Enfield may have been the author of *A new sequel to Mrs. Barbauld’s Lessons... 3rd ed.*, 1796. Both of them wrote or edited sermons, hymns, and essays.

23 In the November 1797 issue “The Enquirer” was attributed to Enfield by John Aikin, who was editor of the Monthly Magazine at the time. The attribution of A.B. to Aikin-Barbauld has not been established with certainty. Many of the entries signed A. B. can be attributed to her by their style and subject matter (education, women); also, the Monthly Magazine printed anonymously her “Dialogue between Madame Cosmogunia and a philosophical Inquirer of the Eighteenth Century” collected in her posthumous works by Lucy Aikin.
on debates about which kinds of rhetorical pedagogy were most effective. In Enfield’s printed review of Priestley’s book on oratory, he lamented the omission of the section on elocution and was skeptical of the speculative and philosophical turn of Priestley’s theory. He felt that orators were better trained by example and principle. Enfield’s own views about rhetorical education conformed with Aikin Barbauld’s experience of education. She reflected his pedagogical method back to him in a poem in these terms:

> From native springs thy easy virtues flow,
> What more can sages teach, or books bestow?
> Cease, cease the task by precept to inform
> The glowing breast with youthful ardor warm,
> Thy candid manners and thy active mind
> With more prevailing force the will shall bind,
> Goodness by happy sympathy impart,
> And with thy own sweet morals charm the heart.25

In a similar vein, Aikin Barbauld’s early essay on education published in her miscellany in 1773 theorizes learning by example rather than precept, through everyday experience and observation rather than artificial situations. Enfield’s influence on Aikin Barbauld can be more directly discerned than Priestley’s influence, and it had more relevance to Aikin Barbauld’s rhetorics of conversation and conduct, especially in her publication of a rhetorical reader for women.

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24 Editor’s introduction, Priestley Lectures xix
25 Barbauld, Poems 68.
In 1810 Aikin Barbauld compiled a companion volume to Enfield’s rhetorical anthology *The Speaker* (1774), called *The Female Speaker*, which is likely one of the first elocutionary anthologies compiled by a woman specifically for a female audience. This text illustrates the similarities and differences Aikin Barbauld saw between male and female elocution, both in theory and practice. Her *Female Speaker* uses a similar categorization of exercises as Enfield’s text, beginning with “Select Sentences” and including the headings “narrative pieces” and “dialogues.” However, it is clear that *The Female Speaker* is not intended to form female orators, while it does teach elocution and inculcate morality. Aikin Barbauld’s *Speaker* lacks two sections found in Enfield’s text: “argumentative pieces” and the chapter called “orations and harangues.” Enfield’s third chapter was “didactic pieces,” while Aikin Barbauld calls this chapter “moral and didactic pieces” and brings it nearer the beginning of her text. In her preface, Aikin Barbauld recommends to women the practice of reading and reciting among family and friends. Reading properly, she explains, requires practice in reciting, the elements of which are “a full, distinct utterance, and those tones and cadences, which bring out the sense of the author and the harmony of his periods.” Poetry requires “the music of a well modulated voice, regulated by a well informed taste.” These are the terms and elements of elocution discussed in further detail in Enfield’s introduction to his *Speaker*.

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26 Mary Weightman’s *The Juvenile Speaker* (1787) was probably, as the title suggests, directed toward the youth of both sexes.  
Though feminist readers may well lament Aikin Barbauld’s apparent retreat to the domestic sphere in her *Female Speaker*, such regret ought to be tempered by our increasing understanding of the public importance and impact of female domestic conversation and the oral reading of literature in Britain at this time. Aikin Barbauld, her family, and the tutors at Warrington placed a high value on conversation as a mode of rhetorical influence and adult education, not considering it merely the ornamental display of domestic femininity. Her *Female Speaker* includes a passage from Isaac Watts on conversation that highlights how domestic discussion and recitation can become a means of discovery and religious enlightenment: “Often has it happened, in free discourse, that new thoughts are strangely struck out, and the seeds of truth sparkle and blaze through the company, which in calm and silent reading would never have been excited.”\(^{28}\) Partly due to the careful instruction of her father and Enfield, Aikin Barbauld became famous for her elocutionary skill in drawing-room oral reading. Her reading of a poem at Dugald Stewart’s home in Edinburgh was so striking to Sir Walter Scott that Scott afterward credited Aikin Barbauld for inspiring him to write poetry.

While Aikin Barbauld participated in a liberal educational and religious community which facilitated her own education, she was unable to imagine how an institutionalized form of advanced education would be appropriate for women in her era. When the famous bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu asked Aikin Barbauld to be the president of the first British college for women in 1773, Aikin Barbauld declined partly because she felt herself unqualified to teach conversation and deportment, and partly

\(^{28}\) *Female Speaker* 74
because she disagreed with the idea of patterning women's education on a masculine model of classrooms, textbooks, and lectures. Aikin Barbauld's reasons reveal that she looked back at her own educational experience as an ideal model. She explained to Elizabeth Montagu that in the teenage years a woman ought to be closely tutored by her mother in social ease and grace, domestic economy, and proper behavior toward men. and "surely," she writes, "these are not to be learned in a school." Instead, she spoke from her experience, convinced that "The best way for a woman to acquire knowledge is from conversation with a father or brother, and by such a course of reading as they may recommend" between the ages of nine and thirteen. Unfortunately, most young women were unlikely to have a father or brother who would educate them through conversation and prescribe a course of reading. Aikin Barbauld understood the constraints her culture placed upon most women's education and communication—in general, she complained, women are "subject to a regulation like that of the ancient Spartans, the theiefs of knowledge in our sex are only connived at while carefully concealed, and, if displayed, punished with disgrace." Given this cultural attitude towards women's education, and her own place within the culture and dissenting community, Aikin Barbauld judged that it was not appropriate for herself or her students to begin a college for women at the time. However, she did what she could to ameliorate the situation of women's lack of advanced

29 LeBreton 48

30 LeBreton 46-48 This sentiment on mixed-sex conversation and recommended reading as women's education had also been expressed in Jonathan Swift's "Letter to a Young Lady," excerpted in Joseph Priestley's English grammar text. ("Examples of English Composition," Rudiments of English Grammar 78-79)

31 Oliver 57
education by mentoring women writers such as Lucy Aikin and Amelia Opie, and individual students, through conversation and letter-writing. With one of her students, Lydia Rickards, she had an extensive educational correspondence in which she recommended reading *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and *The Life of Cicero*; she also asked Mrs. Rickards to let Lydia live with her for a few weeks in order to form an "intimacy" with her young pupil as the basis of instruction.32

Aikin Barbauld's later writings reflect the conversational pedagogy that she experienced from childhood and which she continued to practice as an instructor in her husband's school and mentor of select young men and women. *A Legacy for Ladies*, a posthumous collection of Aikin Barbauld's instructive and entertaining pieces written over the years, includes several pieces in dialogue form, including dialogues between daughter and mother, and daughter and father, which we can easily imagine are idealizations based on her own educational conversations with her parents—conversations which she felt would be good models for other parents and children to follow. I offer one brief sample from a dialogue on the use of words:

[Daughter: ] My dear mamma, who worked you this scarf? it is excessively pretty.
[Mother: ] I am sorry for it, my dear.
[Daughter: ] Sorry, mamma! are you sorry it is pretty?
[Mother: ] No, but I am sorry if it is *excessively* pretty.
[Daughter: ] Why so?--a thing cannot be too pretty, can it?
[Mother: ] If so, it cannot be excessively pretty. Pray what do you mean by excessively pretty?33

32 Rodgers 102
33 Barbauld, *A Legacy for Young Ladies* 17

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Even such a small sample exemplifies the active role that the daughter takes in the conversation, in contrast with many dialogues for children in which the elder person or tutor is the catechizer. As the conversation continues, the mother offers a rational explanation of the various principles of speaking well. She goes on to discuss with her daughter why the word *excessively* is inappropriate grammatically, logically, and ethically (it leads to lying), and finally asserts that the term is currently used so loosely that it fails to communicate effectively or to inspire precision in the minds of the conversants. This dialogue does not teach the daughter and reader merely to perform femininity in language, to be pleasing and morally proper in order to uphold their own reputation. It assumes throughout that women’s speech is not merely expressive or trivial chit-chat. Their speech instructs and persuades their conversants to think and act in certain ways, and therefore women ought to think critically about their diction. In this dialogue in particular, the mother focuses on how women’s language influences how people think and act concerning female dress and beauty.

We have seen already how Hester Thrale Piozzi gave a “key” to the gendered criteria of a good conversationalist in her charts of ratings. Aikin Barbauld, in her posthumous writings collected by Lucy Aikin, described the masculine and feminine virtues of conversation through the metaphor of a “Pic-nic” (in current North American terms, a potluck dinner). The passage is also appropriately in the form of a mother-daughter dialogue. The mother explains that conversation, like a pic-nic, illustrates a general rule of social life: “every one must bring something, for society will not tolerate
any one long who lives wholly at the expense of his neighbours.” The mother asks the
daughter to remember a recent picnic at Lady Isabella’s where the guests of both sexes
had various backgrounds and talents. In the dialogue, the hostess Lady Isabella is
contrasted with two of her guests— a loquacious woman, Lady B., and a great poet who
says nothing. Like a teacher in a classroom in which the pedagogical theory is to generate
discussion by de-centering the authority of the instructor, Lady Isabella exerted her
socializing influence by being the unobtrusive conductor of the event. She “blended and
harmonized the talents of each; brought those together who were likely to be agreeable to
each other, and gave us no more of herself than was necessary to set off others.” Such
were said to be the talents of Hester Thrale Piozzi, as well as Elizabeth Vesey, two of the
great bluestocking conversation leaders in the eighteenth century. Aikin Barbauld uses a
scientific metaphor to describe the hostess’s important role in society: “You know that in
chemical preparations two substances often require a third, to enable them to mix and
unite together. Lady Isabella possesses this amalgamating power:—this is what she brings
to the pic-nic.”

The conversation about the Pic-nic also provides insight into how Aikin Barbauld
saw the tenuous relationship between rhetoric and women’s discourse, and how she used
rhetorical language to critique women’s discourse. In the dialogue, mother and daughter
contrast Lady Isabella’s facilitative rhetoric with her guest Lady B., who represents the
fine rhetorical talents of a woman as they are bent merely upon self-display. In the
following passage describing Lady B., note the use of terms and ideas associated with

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34 Barbauld Legacy 196
eighteenth-century rhetorics: the neo-Classical term “declaiming / declamation”; the aesthetic rhetorical idea, “the beau ideal” (which relates to contemporary discussion of the beautiful and the sublime); the bellettristic rhetorical terms “eloquence” and “taste”; and the elocutionary rhetorical ideas about the gestures of hands and arms.

[mother:] I dare say you did not fail to notice Sir Henry B—'s lady, who was declaiming with so much enthusiasm, in the midst of a circle of gentlemen which she had drawn round her, upon the beau ideal.

[daughter:] No: indeed, mamma; I never heard so much fire and feeling:—and what a flow of elegant language! I do not wonder her eloquence was so much admired.

[mother:] She has a great deal of eloquence and taste; she has travelled, and is acquainted with the best works of art. I am not sure, however, whether the gentlemen were admiring most her declamation or the fine turn of her hands and arms. She has a different attitude for every sentiment. Some observations which she made upon the beauty of statues seemed to me to go to the verge of what a modest female will allow herself to say upon such subjects,-- but she has travelled. She was sensible that she could not fail to gain by the conversation while beauty of form was the subject of it.35

The daughter offers enthusiastic praise for Lady B.'s eloquence, but the mother offers guarded criticism, describing both how Lady B.'s knowledge and experience give her authority to speak on the subject of artistic beauty. The mother also points out how Lady B. must have been well aware of her rhetorical aims when using such vivid gestures alongside the topic of beauty.

Johnson's definitions of these same rhetorical terms (See Appendix B) and Hester Thrale Piozzi's essay on the common use of synonyms for rhetoric, set alongside Aikin Barbauld's usage in the dialogue tend to demonstrate that in their culture, declamation is

35 Ibid.

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a word that appears awkward and unseemly in the description of a woman’s speech. However, that it is used to critique women’s conversation at all points out that a similarity between men’s and women’s rhetoric was possible in the realm of conversation. Aikin Barbauld’s repetition of words like *eloquence* and *declaiming/declamation* help the young female reader to understand the positive and negative connotations of the words as applied to women, in much the same way that *British Synonymy* instructs its foreign readers in the nuances of words. Aikin Barbauld’s usage reinforces Hester Thrale Piozzi’s gendering of *eloquence*, as it is clearly used as a term of praise. Likewise, some of Johnson’s dictionary’s examples of *eloquence* portray women’s discourse and conduct, while his examples of *declamation* are not associated with women at all. *Declamation* in this century often connotes the neoclassical and scholastic male rhetoric that Locke, Isaac Watts, and others critiqued as being too emotional, combative, and deceptive, and thus inappropriate for intellectual and civil conversation. To point out the emotional and seductive elements of declamation, Aikin Barbauld grammatically links *declaiming* with *enthusiasm*, a term that implied whose religious and moral connotations were as controversial as the term *sensibility* in the early Romantic era.

In this same passage Aikin Barbauld also critiques the Lady B.’s conduct—her conversational delivery, as well as her ethical stance. She throws doubt on the moral intention and effect of the eloquent woman’s speech, which seems only to attract notice to her sensuality: “I am not sure, however, whether the gentlemen were admiring most her declamation or the fine turn of her hands and arms.” By making her body thus an object
of a male gaze, Lady B. is implicitly parallel to the statues whose sexual features she almost immodestly describes. At the same time, Aikin Barbauld’s references to Lady B.’s knowledge and experience authorize her declamation and thus palliate the criticism of her sensuality. Her criticism of Lady B. is not damning, but educational: it offers insight into the particular difficulties of women’s rhetoric in conversation, while acknowledging the power it holds.

In Aikin Barbauld’s dialogue on the pic-nic, the overall view of women’s participation in mixed-sex conversation is positive. The loquacious woman shares space with the hostess, the silent male poet, a male traveler giving an “interesting account of the state of Germany,” two college students in a “lively debate” on galvanism, a “reserved man of science” and “poor Mr.--” who sits neglected in a corner. The theme of this dialogue is that each of them contribute to the occasion: “Let every one, I repeat, bring to the entertainment something of the best he possesses, and the pic-nic table will seldom fail to afford a plentiful banquet.”36 Whatever their intentions of being silent or loquacious, both the poet and Lady B contribute to the excitement of the evening by their bodily motion and mere presence. The hostess Lady Isabella also earns the credit of including them as show-pieces to “gratify” her company’s desire to be entertained, and Aikin Barbauld the author demonstrates her own candour by including them in the potluck and allowing them to shine in their own limited ways.

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36 Legacy 196-197

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In this and other pieces about conversation, Aikin Barbauld firmly asserted that a woman's conversational rhetoric was only valuable if coupled with moral conduct. In her dialogue between Mercury and Clio, Mercury questions whether Aspasia shall retain her honored place in the rolls of history as an eloquent conversationalist. Clio answers. "Tell the mistress of Pericles we can spare her without inconvenience: many ladies are to be found in modern times who possess her eloquence and her talents, with the modesty of a vestal; and should a more perfect likeness be required, modern times may furnish that also"37 Aikin Barbauld, through Clio, desires to cleanse the reputation of women's conversational rhetoric as well as exalt it by this comparison and contrast with Aspasia. Women of her own generation need not look as far back as Aspasia to find examples of influential, eloquent female conversationalists. However, only by their exemplary moral conduct can Aikin Barbauld's peers surpass the reputation of Aspasia's conversational rhetoric.

In her essays "On Education" and "On Prejudice," Aikin Barbauld makes it even more clear that she highly values conversation and conduct as both processes and products of education for men as well as women. The fact that she recommends conversation and conduct in the education of boys demonstrates that she did not imagine it was an inferior mode of education. In "On Education" she reasons thus:

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Do you ask, then, what will educate your son? Your example will educate him; your conversation with your friends; the business he sees you transact; the likings and dislikings you express; these will educate him; 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.\(^3\)

These influences she regards more powerful than the sentiments inculcated directly through parents’ moralistic exhortations. Instead, both father and mother are instructors through their conduct and their facilitation of intelligent domestic conversation. The father plays as important a role as the mother, by being “domestic in his habits.” and bringing home “well-informed, intelligent people,” as Aikin Barbauld’s father did. The mother exemplifies useful, dutiful labour and “amiable manners.” From such parents’ and guests’ conversation, the children form good taste and “urbanity,”\(^3\) important elements of the rhetor’s character according to Cicero and Hugh Blair.

Aikin Barbauld’s emphasis on experiential and conversational learning is not merely about forming good morals, manners and tastes indirectly in childhood. It has rhetorical relevance that goes beyond being a preparatory or elementary education for rhetors. The educational conversation that Aikin Barbauld portrays in these essays is a rhetorical theory and practice regarding the influence of parents and societies on their children. In her essay “On Prejudice,” Aikin Barbauld extends the importance of value-laden familial conversation by showing how it inculcates knowledge and religious belief. These are the rhetorical functions of the teacher and pastor translated to the domestic scene. Her main argument is that instead of trying to avoid prejudicing children, the

\(^{18}\) Barbauld, Works vol. 2, “On Education”, p. 204
\(^{39}\) Ibid, p. 213
transmission of prejudices to children is inevitable, and in many cases, helpful. Parents inform and move their young audiences; it is their rhetorical calling, and they should not shrink back from it by trying to hide their personal opinions. Aikin Barbauld points out that it is impossible to divest either teacher or child of religious prejudices such as those formed by their country and religious background, for he will be not only influenced by history books, but by "the occasional conversation he has been witness to, the appellations he has heard used, the tone of voice with which he has heard the words monk or priest pronounced." Even if a parent tries his or her best to engage in "free conversation" and explain "the arguments on both sides," the parent will inevitably inculcate his own prejudices through tone and warmth of expression. 40 Once again Aikin Barbauld demonstrates her awareness of elocutionary rhetoric and its application to conversation.

In the same essay, Aikin Barbauld also addresses the issue of how to teach rhetorics of female conduct. Aikin Barbauld writes, "Are not ideas of female honour and decorum imprest first as prejudices; and would any parent wish they should be so much as canvassed till the most settled habits of propriety have rendered it safe to do it?" 41 This essay points out the two-stage education of women in this rhetorical realm. There is a difference between the inculcation of rules of female conduct in early childhood and the conversation about those rules in later years. The time for a more "free conversation" of opinions is when a child's reasoning capacity begins to grow, and she or he tests her

40 Barbauld, Works vol. 2, p. 220-221
41 Ibid, p. 222.
prejudices by means of raising objections supported by arguments and evidence. At this point of growing maturity, as Aikin Barbauld recommends, the parent should gradually retreat and not try to constrain the student’s freedom of thought with a counterattack of fervent persuasion. Instead, the parent should rather rest confident that the heart and affections of her child have already been won to her side of the argument, and trust the young woman to make wise choices regarding conduct. These ideas on early education have a great affinity to the educational rhetorics of Catharine Macaulay Graham and Elizabeth Hamilton discussed in a later chapter, and all three of these women had dissenting religious backgrounds.

In light of all Aikin Barbauld wrote regarding women’s rhetorics of conversation and conduct, the question remains -- was Aikin Barbauld herself an accomplished conversationalist and admired for her conduct? The preponderance of evidence suggests that she was. The few claims to the contrary were likely prejudiced by extreme familiarity or by a sense of personal competition with her accomplishments. She was critical of her own conversational delivery. Aikin Barbauld herself felt unfit to lead the proposed ladies’ college partly because she did not know music or dancing, and felt she would not be a good model for young women’s air and manner. Her father “had a notion that her deportment alarmed young men, and rather struck them ‘with amazement and blank awe’ than won their hearts,” but her niece, Lucy Aikin, disagreed with this estimate. On the contrary, the niece saw in her aunt “a charm inexpressible; wit, playful wit, tempered with true feminine softness, and the gentle dignity of a high mind, unwont
to pour forth its hidden treasures on all demands.”  

Frances Burney and Hester Chapone were critical of her in their letters, saying she was “not unaffected,” had a “set smile,” and “never risked being off guard.” However, these comments may be expressive of a desire to diminish Aikin Barbauld’s reputation. As Elizabeth Montagu once wrote to young Aikin Barbauld regarding her reputation, “you are certainly obliged to every man who is not jealous, and every woman who is not envious of your talents.” All other reports about her social graces are full of high praise: her former students at her school in Palgrave, Hannah More, and numerous instances of praise on her graces in old age appear in Henry Crabb Robinson’s letters and diaries. Although epitaphs are notoriously untrustworthy as proofs of character, it is worth noting that her monument, composed by her nephew Arthur Aikin, concludes that her conversation was the best proof of her knowledge and virtue.

Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld was not limited to rhetorics of conversation and conduct; this was only one of many rhetorical genres she excelled in. As a poet and published prose essayist, she boldly stepped into public view in print, arguing and persuading on issues of public importance, yet she did not consider conversation and conduct any less important a genre. In Aikin Barbauld’s life and writings, the rhetorics of

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[42] LeBreton 26.

[43] Oliver 216


[45] Henry Crabb Robinson, in a diary entry for February 11, 1816, wrote “Mrs. Barbauld can keep up a lively argumentative conversation as well as any one I know, and at an advanced age (she is turned seventy) she is certainly the best specimen of female Presbyterian society in the country.” (Oliver 301).

[46] “let the surviving few who shared her delightful and instructive conversation, bear witness that this monument records no exaggerated praise.” (LeBreton 197)
female conduct involved the avoidance of compromising language, relationships or situations that would sully one’s reputation for chastity of body and mind, a close attention to the rhetoric of children’s education and watchfulness over one’s own influential example and the manner of delivery in which one conversed or read aloud in the drawing room. Her “school” of conversation was one in which men and women were active co-participants. Conversation was a site in which she learned to adapt principles of public, male, dissenting rhetorical theories to the rhetorical realms of early education and parlor conversation, thereby refusing to utterly feminize, trivialize, or privatize the domestic sphere. In her writings, Aikin Barbauld chose to re-invest in the education of young men and women in conversation and conduct through her writings crafted in conversational styles and genres—her rhetorical speaker, conversational civic sermons, dialogues for young ladies, and her juvenile educational texts.

Mary Shackleton Leadbeater (1758-1816)

Like Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater grew up in a religious non-Anglican educational community in a small town. But Shackleton Leadbeater was even farther from the British centers of literature, education, and culture, for she lived her whole life in the small Quaker village of Ballitore, Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Her rhetorical life is remarkable because of the ways she was enabled to overcome not only obstacles of gender ideology, but the apparent isolation of her Irish village, to participate in the discourse of much larger
communities. Although Shackleton Leadbeater had traveled in England with her father as a young woman to visit her father's friend, the orator Edmund Burke; to attend the Quaker Yearly Meeting; and to see relatives in Wales, most of her rhetorical education was conducted through the members of her local community, the texts and papers that came into her home and the Ballitore school library, and correspondence.

Quaker and belletristic rhetorics opened the door for Shackleton Leadbeater to participate in public discourse as a writer and philanthropist, and to establish a network of writers with whom she could communicate about her writing and community efforts. Shackleton Leadbeater's published biographies, anecdotes, poems, memoirs, and dialogues were popular among philanthropists and Quakers, her Cottage Dialogues circulating fairly widely in England and Ireland among philanthropists, who made them available to the poor whose literacy they nurtured. Shackleton Leadbeater's papers in archival collections are massive: voluminous journals that span almost her whole life, along with letters and manuscripts of poetry and prose. In her adulthood, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater became a regular correspondent of the Irish authors Melesina Trench and Maria Edgeworth, the Quaker poet Thomas Wilkinson, and she corresponded with the Anglican poet George Crabbe during the last ten years of her life. She was a significant literary figure and a community leader. Yet because she did not write fiction, published only one collection of poetry, and her style has been considered plain and her politics largely conservative, she has not been of great interest to contemporary literary
historians. Nevertheless, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater is a rewarding object of study for historians. Nevertheless, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater is a rewarding object of study for the historian of women’s rhetoric, for her writings demonstrate that she was highly conscious of the strategies and effects of written language, and most of all, of everyday conversation and conduct, the focus of this rhetorical biography.

A small Quaker village in Ireland at this time in history would seem an unlikely place to look for the rhetorical education of a woman, yet here were ample resources and opportunities for Shackleton Leadbeater to learn and use rhetoric. Growing up and contributing to this community provided Mary Shackleton Leadbeater with a rhetorical education of a religious, philanthropic, and belles-lettres variety. At home and in the local community Shackleton Leadbeater had the social, economic, and educational foundations necessary for a rhetorical education.

The rich and advanced curriculum of Ballitore school and the diversity of the students who attended the school provided a broad context for her belles-lettres education. Ballitore was a small Quaker settlement where Abraham Shackleton, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater’s grandfather, began a boarding school in 1726. A Yorkshire man self-educated in the classics, Abraham first came to Ireland as tutor for two rich families. The school, independent of Quaker church administration, was headed by three succeeding

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47 She is absent from most biographical dictionaries of literary figures of her time, and I could find no journal articles or book chapters on her life or writing. However, her influence did not cease at her death. In 1862, The Leadbeater Papers, a two-volume collection of extracts from her diaries and letters was published in Ireland. Reproductions of a few of her historical works have appeared in the twentieth century, with introductory biographies that emphasize her importance to Ireland’s history, especially her vivid retelling of the political violence in her area in the last few years of the eighteenth century.
generations of men in the Shackleton family. With a rigorously Classical curriculum, Ballitore school was also one of the earliest secondary schools in the British Isles to provide in addition a modern education in English literature and writing, mathematics, modern science, modern history, modern languages and geography, since its goal was to form middle-class businessmen and professionals. The Ballitore school was the most advanced Quaker school in Ireland, which was strong enough in the classical languages to prepare students such as Edmund Burke and Richard Shackleton to enter Trinity College in Dublin. Shackleton Leadbeater had access to the academic library, with the encouragement to use it under supervision.

Under Richard Shackleton, her father, the school developed a large majority of non-Quaker students—Shackleton Leadbeater claims that at one point out of sixty boarders, only ten were of the religious society of Friends. In addition to the fifty or sixty students usually enrolled in the school, there were day-scholars and parlour-boarders, the latter being young men with richer parents who lived at the Shackleton home. Ballitore school brought her into contact with boys from various regions of Ireland, Scotland, England, and the continent. In this context, the Shackleton daughters were given a rather advanced education in languages, literature, history, and religion alongside their core education in writing, conversation, and conduct, within a diverse educational community. Her parents closely guided her writing, speech and conduct; her family and the schoolboys conversed with her on literary and other intellectual topics. Like Aikin

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48 Abraham's son Richard continued as schoolmaster when he retired, and after him, his son Abraham Shackleton, Jr. (Mary Shackleton Leadbeater's half-brother) became head, followed by Abraham, Jr.'s son-in-law.
Barbauld, Shackleton Leadbeater began to read very young, at four years of age, which was no surprise with an attentive father who loved children, and whose life was focused on teaching languages. Later in life, Shackleton Leadbeater watched her father play with her brother’s children “repeating Greek verses, whose sonorous musical sound seemed very grateful to the infant ear,” an anecdote which illustrates her father’s interest in childhood education and language. She and her younger sister Sally were sent to a neighbor woman’s home as day-scholars “before we went to my father’s school,” writes Shackleton Leadbeater, yet this is the only clue that the girls may have been taught in the classroom with the boys. The girls of the family took part in extracurricular lessons conducted for the mature “parlour boarders” at the Shackleton home, and they formed close friendships with some of the regular boarders. When her parents went away to travel to religious meetings, her aunt would take Mary Shackleton Leadbeater and her sister Sally to live for a week at the schoolhouse while she oversaw housekeeping there.

It was common for the Shackleton family to have regular meals at the school, a practice which they continued even after her family moved down the road in 1779, when her father gave the family home and the school to his son Abraham upon his marriage.

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49 *Annals of Ballitore* 111
50 *Annals of Ballitore* 31
51 Shackleton Leadbeater recalls the excitement she felt during these visits: “The large family—the boys—the bustle—so different from our usual retirement! —it was the world, and the world has its charms!” (*Annals of Ballitore* 81)
As a result of this scholarly community in the home, Shackleton Leadbeater had a wider experience of conversation with young men than many young girls her age, especially Quaker girls. She later wrote about the social boundaries that this experience enabled her to cross, and the surprise an audience might have felt when observing her conduct with young men:

Often have I looked back on my conduct when a girl, and ceased to wonder at the remarks which were than made upon it; for how extremely odd must it have appeared to see me, a remarkably simple looking Quaker girl, in deep chat with an officer or a collegian, dressed in their respective uniforms, whilst, walking along the streets of Dublin or standing at a door or a window, we eagerly interchanged questions and replies, and delivered ourselves to the pleasure of recalling past scenes and hearing of old acquaintances.\textsuperscript{52}

This anecdote introduces the potential for tension between the values of her home and Ballitore school, and the values of other communities that Shackleton-Leadbeater was a member of, communities which set different standards for her conversation and conduct as a woman.

Shackleton Leadbeater was also educated in the religious rhetoric and Irish culture of the non-school community that surrounded her—the Quaker settlers as well as inhabitants of various social classes and religious backgrounds. The Ballitore community consisted of about twenty middle-class families, the majority being Quaker farmers, and twenty other families which “descend[ed] from artisan to ale seller to cottager.”\textsuperscript{53} The Quakers’ household servants and the lower classes were largely Catholic; the gentry of

\textsuperscript{52} Shackleton Leadbeater to Melesina Trench, February 18, 1812 (Correspondence of Mrs. Trench and Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, \textit{Leadbeater Papers} 2: 232.)

\textsuperscript{53} Letter to George Crabbe [f. 17] Sept. 21, 1818 (Correspondence of Rev. George Crabbe and Mrs. Leadbeater, \textit{The Leadbeater Papers} 2: 359)
the region were Anglican. The original Quaker settlers established the moral tone of Ballitore village, which continued in Shackleton Leadbeater’s era. According to her, “Regularity of conduct, & love of literature were (& are) the passports to society here: the latter might be dispensed with, but not the former.”54 “From my dawning of mind,” she explained, “virtue, genius and learning appeared to me to be the highest distinctions of our nature.”55 These descriptions of the values of the community reflect the way in which the school community and the local community influenced one another to form an amalgamation of religious and scholarly values and rhetorics, in which the Quaker culture of virtue reigned supreme.

The Quakers (who called themselves the Society of Friends) were a community that centered itself in the performance of Biblical virtue and simplicity, and within that program, it often welcomed international and scholarly influences, but not without some controversy. Quakers, especially the women among them, interested themselves in social services: they established Sunday schools and night schools for the lower classes, supported a ministry of providing clean linen for childbearing, and assisted the health and industry of their neighbors in many ways. Through her extended religious community, Shackleton Leadbeater mixed with traveling ministers from England, Scotland, and America, and was part of a larger community of anti-slavery activists, prison-reformers, and charitable societies. The Society of Friends promoted their distinctive rhetorics of preaching for men and women ministers (which Shackleton Leadbeater promoted in her

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
writing, although she herself was not a minister), and rhetorics of conversation and
conduct which included a distinctive manner of dress, speech, lifestyle, and charitable
endeavours. The Society of Friends also had their own publishing houses and booksellers
in Ireland and England, which Shackleton Leadbeater made use of in later life.

Shackleton Leadbeater’s rhetorical education was more narrowly focused on a
religious sect and local community than Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld’s, and was far more
religious and lower-class than Hester Thrale Piozzi’s, but it would be incorrect to say it
was less rhetorical, or promoted a less effective rhetorical practice. Shackleton
Leadbeater’s rhetorics were just as consciously theorized and carefully practiced, and
were appropriate for her community, her audiences, and her goals.

It was primarily her Quaker heritage and belletristic criticism which offered an
overall theory and vocabulary with which to critique the rhetorical performances of men
and women in literature, conversation and conduct. I have found no evidence that
Shackleton Leadbeater read or studied any rhetorical handbooks or rhetorical theory
besides the belletristic rhetorics embedded in literary criticism, such as that found in
periodicals like The Edinburgh Review. Her village library regularly received The
Edinburgh Review and other periodicals as gifts from the Bishop of Meath. The theories
of “taste” developed in the Scottish and Dissenting communities easily circulated in and
blended with the Quaker culture of her community, where it was held that “The
cultivation of taste and science is favourable to the preservation of purity in conduct and
sentiment. Other Quaker communities in Ireland were far more suspicious of the moral and spiritual innocence, much less the benefit, of secular poetry, novels, and history. Shackleton Leadbeater’s mother was influenced by this conservative side of Quakerism and disapproved of the reading of all novels and most poetry, yet her aunt Deborah let her secretly read novels and her father loved and read poetry, encouraging Shackleton Leadbeater in her own poetic talents. While reading, writing, and discussing literature and correspondence were everyday practices in the home and neighborhood, the bellestristic elements of Shackleton Leadbeater’s rhetorical formation and practice were always closely linked to religious and moral aims, besides being considered innocent forms of entertainment.

Another similarity to Thrale Piozzi’s and Aikin Barbauld’s rhetorical education is that the oral reading of literature and letters in the home was a central rhetorical practice into which Shackleton Leadbeater was socialized early in life. Conversations about the literature would occur during and after the readings, conversations which would critique the linguistic strategies as well as themes and characters, and apply the text’s principles to everyday communication practices and moral conduct. It was a common practice for Shackleton Leadbeater’s mother to assign some Quaker schoolboys to read aloud to her from the histories and journals of members of the Society of Friends while the women did needlework. These narratives provided models of conduct and speech, and forwarded arguments that upheld the distinct practices and values of the Quaker community.

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56 Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, 4
57 see Cyril Brannigan’s Quaker Education in Ireland 1680-1840
Perhaps their characters and trials were discussed in the parlor in the same manner as Shackleton Leadbeater’s mother discussed the oral reading of secular history:

[Elizabeth Shackleton] entered into the characters of those held up to view, often supplied the thread of the narration, when it had escaped the young reader, and took a lively interest in the public or private events which were narrated. She persuaded herself that Caligula’s reason was impaired by the fever . . . lamented and blamed the timidity of Seneca, which deterred him from curbing the headstrong passions of Nero.58

Shackleton Leadbeater’s first published work, Extracts and Original Anecdotes: For the Improvement of Youth (1794), was intended to promote this educational and social practice of reading and conversing in the home. It is a Quaker “reader” which, like Barbauld’s Female Speaker, inculcates values at the same time as it provides material to practice the art of reading aloud.

The central influence on Shackleton Leadbeater’s speech and writing was her father, Richard Shackleton, a selection of whose extensive correspondence forms the bulk of her 1822 edition of her parents’ memoirs and letters. The mode of his influence was in oral reading and discussion of correspondence and literature, and his explicit encouragement and guidance in Shackleton Leadbeater’s conversation and conduct. Richard’s oral reading of literature at home was usually accompanied by his judicious criticism of literature. Shackleton Leadbeater writes that when she was a young girl, her father “often read to us while we sate at our work, especially when a new poem was presented to the public, and his remarks heightened the interest of what he read, and

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58 Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, 28

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formed our tastes and judgment”59 It was common practice for the Shackletons to read aloud Edmund Burke’s printed speeches at the dining table when a new one appeared in the papers.60 Around the dining table were seated not just family but also parlour boarders, school ushers and the housekeeper, “all equally at liberty to express their sentiments.”61 During one of Richard’s regular visits to his friend Edmund Burke’s estate in 1785, Shackleton Leadbeater accompanied him. Richard read aloud one of Burke’s speeches in his presence, along with commentary. There the poet George Crabbe read aloud some of his verses, and Burke also read Mary Shackleton Leadbeater’s verses and offered critiques before the company. These occasions were encouraging to Shackleton Leadbeater’s literary vocation, for Shackleton Leadbeater reports that her father seemed actually “vain” of his daughter’s ability to write such good poetry.62 They also taught Shackleton Leadbeater a way of conversing about literature, of arranging a household and knitting together relationships around the oral discourse surrounding print.

In the Shackleton household, Richard cemented an intimate friendship with his youngest daughters Mary and Sally as he invited them to observe his own rhetorical processes in writing and speech, an openness which gave him access and authority to observe and guide his daughters’ processes.

59 Annals of Ballitore 111
60 Selections from Mary Leadbeater’s Diary 161
61 Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton 24
62 Annals of Ballitore 116
He loved to take us to ride or walk with him, he made his children his companions and his confidants; he generally showed us the letters he wrote and received, and he expected the like confidence from us. This gave him an opportunity to correct our style and handwriting, to judge of the characters of our correspondents, and to encourage or discourage the friendships we were about to form.63

Young Mary Shackleton Leadbeater continued this practice of integrating letter-writing and oral reading with conversation in the home. Her niece Betsy Shackleton writes, “reading to my aunt was a pleasant task. Her susceptible heart, and judicious taste caught at every beauty. I have often thought she discerned touches of wit or pathos which the Author himself had never conceived.” 64 Shackleton Leadbeater’s niece describes her aunt’s integration of writing and conversation as a domestic virtue in order to contradict the common impression that female writers neglect their families and household work:

her extended friendships, or extended usefulness did not deprive her family of her society, or prevent the fulfillment of her domestic duties. Being generally at home, she gave her family more of her company than many women do, who have no engagements which require seclusion. […] She wrote a great deal while her friends were conversing around her; and sometimes mingled her discourse with their’s. One of her daughters generally read to her when she was transcribing, which employment never prevented her from engaging in conversation.65

Shackleton Leadbeater herself describes this integration in a slightly different way: she highlights the difficulty of achieving it, and how she longed for seclusion from conversation at times. To her daughter Elizabeth she confesses hiding herself by the kitchen fire in order to write in a little more peace, for “the parlour is too sprightly, too conversable [sic] at present for any stupid head to encounter.” One page later she complains “I must dash at a subject as it arises, for even my chimney corner retreat is

63 Annals of Ballitore 113
64 Elizabeth Shackleton, Memoirs of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater’s Character 37
65 Elizabeth Shackleton, Memoirs of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater’s Character, 14-15
disturbed,” and concludes her letter having given in to the social pressure: “I am now in the parlour... it is vain to strive against the stream. Oh for a little closet such as Uncle Fullers [sic] by the Kitchen fire!” These yearnings suggest that parlor conversation was a realm of rhetorical performance which was in many ways more taxing, and more valued by her community, than letter-writing.

To understand the rhetorical standards in the Quaker community of Ballitore which made parlor conversation and “extended usefulness” outside the home the center of Shackleton Leadbeater’s rhetorical calling, we need to see how it fit within the larger context of Quaker speech and conduct. The Society of Friends had distinctive modes of dress, speech, worship, and lifestyle. Quaker rhetoric was a conscious expression of revolt against the dominant culture’s interest in material luxury, self-expression, ornament, and entertainment, which made silence, “inwardness,” and plainness a rhetorical statement. The Quaker belief in the “inward light,” and the gentle “visitation” of God to the soul which “convinced” the individual of spiritual truth, brought them to worship in silence to pay careful attention to the inward moving of the Holy Spirit. In a typical worship meeting, there would be long periods of silence broken periodically by testimonies and by spontaneous exhortations from those seated in the ministers’ gallery. As Shackleton Leadbeater explains to her correspondent Melesina Trench,

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66 Leadbeater, *Letters*, January 25, 1819

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when our friends exhort us, it is unpremeditated, and none are allowed to speak but those of good life and conversation. They must make proof of their conduct and doctrine before they become acknowledged ministers; they then take their seat in the preacher’s gallery, and may visit distant meetings or countries, with a written certificate that they have the consent of their friends to do so.67

The outward expression of the Quaker faith included a distinctively plain dress, strict honesty in speech, avoiding the names of pagan gods for days of the week and months,68 and the use of the old singular pronoun thee and thou to address individuals (instead of “you”).69 In lifestyle, Friends were to avoid playhouses and dancing, uncouth jesting, and expensive living. They were expected to be industrious in their professions and to use time economically, to engage in active charity work among the poor, and promote political and social movements against war, violence, child labor, slavery, and cruelty to animals. Quakers were very successful at creating a distinct group identity whose conduct and lifestyle was recognized by outsiders as a religious and political statement; it brought on them ridicule as well as respect. Mary Shackleton Leadbeater’s rhetorical efforts were so guided by her Quaker identity that every written or spoken word and every deed was consciously tested by its standards and aims.

In order to protect the purity of this communal rhetorical statement and pass on its traditions, supervision and evaluation were built in to Quaker cultural practice. Quakers held “meetings for discipline” in addition to meetings for worship, in which indiscretions

67 Leadbeater Papers 2: 229 (January 6, 1812)

68 Quaker letters are dated in this manner: “e^th day of 12^th month, 1810”; Sunday was called “first-day.”

69 It was felt that “you,” originally a plural, accorded too much respect to fellow humans; “thee” and “thou” denoted equality with the addressee.
in members' conduct were inquired into by the elders. Ministers and elders conducted “family visits” in order to encourage members to rise to these standards of speech and conduct in daily life. In such a highly disciplined context, a mother and father would be encouraged to imitate the discipline and oversight of the church in the education of their children and direction of household servants. Therefore, a distinctively Quaker term for virtuous conduct for women was “watchfulness.” Shackleton Leadbeater’s mother Elizabeth was exemplary in this “constant watchfulness which so remarkably characterized her words and actions,” writing of her desire “to keep inward and watchful over my words and behaviour, begging to be preserved from bringing dishonour on that Holy One whom I was now above all desirous to serve.” This attention to the rhetoric of everyday life was part of the performance of earnestness, and was not supposed to be concealed beneath an appearance of carelessness or easy habit, in contrast with the way in which Hester Thrale Piozzi conducted herself.

Within this culture of strict supervision, there was abundant rhetorical freedom for Mary Shackleton Leadbeater to develop as fully as she did, because the gender ideology of the surrounding culture was largely overruled by the gender ideology of the Quaker culture. While their women were urged to live a life that was exemplary among non-Quakers (which often meant displaying feminine domestic virtues), within their

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70 In one case a clothier was called to account for clothing a military person. (Richard Shackleton to Margaret Grubb, August 1, 1786; Shackleton Letters & Memoirs mss.)

71 *Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton*, 20, 18

community, women's roles were more egalitarian than in the surrounding culture. From the beginning of their spiritual community during the interregnum, the society encouraged the religious speech of women and the spiritual equality of men and women. The movement's co-founder Margaret Fell penned the well-known *Womens Speaking Justified* in 1666 to refute those who criticized their sect for allowing women to speak in teaching, prophecy, exhortation, and rebuke in churches. Quakerism's co-founder, Fell's husband George Fox, explained that men and women were each other's "helpsmeet," and it was only after the fall of Adam and Eve, that the curse was given, part of which was that the man was to rule over his wife. Fell's daughter Sarah wrote an epistle to the churches in the 1670s describing the equality of men and women, and the important administrative and social service functions of separate women's meetings.

Mary Shackleton Leadbeater belonged to a community and family within the Quaker church that was more sexually egalitarian than most. Some historians of Quakerism have claimed that in the eighteenth century the Quakers in England became more restrictive toward women's participation in leadership and that women were discouraged from speaking, yet in America, and possibly in Ireland as well (at least in

73 1 Timothy 2:9-15
74 "But in the restoration," Fox explains, "they are helpsmeet, man and woman, as they were before the Fall." (Fox, as quoted in Dunn 73)
Ballitore), women did not experience this increasing limitation. Although Shackleton Leadbeater herself was not a minister or elder in the Society of Friends, several female family members and friends held this role.

Not only was Ireland, and in particular, the region of Ballitore very supportive of women’s religious leadership and speech, but Shackleton Leadbeater’s own father was a major promoter of gender equality within the Quaker church. When the female minister Sarah Newland visited Ireland, Shackleton Leadbeater’s parents contributed their own horses and carriage and accompanied her on her visit to all the major Quaker meetings on the island. Her father, an elder but not a minister, encouraged women to enter the ministry, to become elders, and to become officers in charitable work organized among the women. The bulk of the letters published by his daughter Mary are addressed to women. Through letters he encouraged his married daughter Margaret Grubb, and his cousin, the elder and minister Sarah Robert Grubb, to continue their good speech and conduct in the church. In 1789, Shackleton Leadbeater’s sister Sally was to receive official approval as a minister among the Friends, and part of this process involved her speaking at a Meeting in testimony of her calling. Richard writes to his daughter Margaret, “I know it must have been very hard for [Sarah Shackleton] to appear in a

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75 Bonnelyn Young Kunze, as cited in Dunn 73. the London Quakers had discontinued their yearly women’s meetings by the middle of the Eighteenth century. (Dunn 75)

76 Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, 92

77 In 1788 he wrote to Sarah Grubb giving her advice in her new ministry, gently reminding both her and her husband “often to go deep down for instruction and fresh qualification, to behave aright in the Church of Christ” [ . . . ] “it requires a constant, close sitting and dwelling at the Fountain-head of pure intelligence, in order to be ready and furnished to speak and act with propriety and acceptance, in cases of a solemn, weighty, and spiritual nature.” (Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, 152)
public testimony; but whatever she finds it her duty to put her hand to, I wish she may not be discouraged from doing with all her might, and, like Gideon, go forth in a sense of her own weakness." The encouragement given to male ministers was of the same sort—they were to have the same attitude of humility, meekness, and continual dependence on God. It is easy to imagine that Shackleton Leadbeater's father Richard was just as encouraging and humble in his conversation with women as he was in his letters to them and about them. Shackleton Leadbeater observed her father's attitude and benefited from Quaker egalitarianism, seeing her own talents and duties as slightly different from that of a minister, yet arising from the same source and fitted toward the same end of obedience and service to God.

Since the Women's Meetings of Friends were the main body which encouraged charitable work by women, it is not surprising that Shackleton Leadbeater, who interested herself in the poor, strongly promoted these meetings. She learned first-hand how English Quaker women struggled to regain the respect accorded to their meetings in George Fox's day. Her diary contains a narrative of the first yearly women's meeting in London that she attended in 1784, where Esther Tuke complained that since there were no "answers to queries" in their disciplinary function, and no representatives to and from the general men's meetings, "it is but the shadow of a Women's meeting." She records receiving her father's encouragement to attend the historic meeting, the careful steps taken in order to persuade the men to allow the women's meeting to return its original

78 Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, 154

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function and power, and the joy she and the women felt on their victory.\textsuperscript{79} Her father supported the strengthening of the women’s meeting, writing to his daughter Margaret Grubb that he hoped it would gradually “prove of service in our religious society. The men seem to have slept a long time over this matter; but now, like the rib which was taken out of Adam’s side while he slept, I hope it will, in process of time, become a true help-meet to the man in the discipline of the church.”\textsuperscript{80} This experience must have been a powerful influence on Shackleton Leadbeater’s identity as a writer, conversationalist, and community leader, enabling her to deal with those within her own religious society who may have been critical of her rhetorical endeavours.

The prominence of female ministers and elders in the Irish branch of the Society of Friends is reflected in Shackleton Leadbeater’s biographies of fifty-four men and twenty-six women who were eminent Irish Quakers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{81} These biographies, written for a Quaker audience from primarily Quaker sources,\textsuperscript{82} are infused with the vocabulary and doctrine through which the society praised the rhetorical activities of their own members. Since the Society of Friends held highly the doctrine of the “inward light,” the main source of rhetorical invention was found in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{79} “Shackleton Leadbeater Shackleton’s Account of London Women’s Yearly Meeting, 1784”
\item \textsuperscript{80} \textit{Letters and Memoirs of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton,} 129-130
\item \textsuperscript{81} \textit{Biographical Notices of Members of the Society of Friends Who Were Resident in Ireland} (1823).
\item \textsuperscript{82} Shackleton Leadbeater interviewed witnesses, quoted and paraphrased printed and manuscript journals and letters, public obituaries, other histories of Quakers, and reports of various Meetings of Friends
\end{itemize}
careful listening to the Holy Spirit, and the main source of rhetorical authority was found in daily obedience to the ethical commands of scripture and the inward light of the spirit, which manifested itself in holy, loving conversation and conduct.

A few examples from Shackleton Leadbeater’s *Biographical Notices* illustrate the close tie between conversation and conduct, and women’s call to speak publicly and/or lead in the religious society. Hannah Philips “was a woman of an exemplary life and innocent conversation, of few words and a retired mind: being prepared, she became enabled to exhort others to choose the good and refuse the evil.”83 The ministry of Elizabeth Jacob in Ireland, England, Scotland, and Holland “was powerful, reaching the hearts of the hearers, and she was an instrument of good to many. She was preserved in circumspect conduct, and exemplary conversation, yet of a cheerful spirit.”84 Jane Gee “received a divine commission, publicly to declare those truths which her conduct had long exemplified. ‘Her mild and innocent conversation and deportment’ (thus her friends testified of her) ‘corresponded with the doctrine which she preached, and engaged Friends’ love greatly, self being of no reputation with her.’”85

In many cases, women are portrayed in *Biographical Notices* as feeling reluctant to speak publicly in meetings, preferring rather to preach through their conduct alone. Placed in this context, speaking appears as a completely unselfish act which only very meek women can perform under a deep sense of obedience to God. Of Elizabeth

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83 *Biographical Notices* 157
84 Ibid. 198
85 Ibid.
Whiddon, a seventeenth-century Quaker, Shackleton Leadbeater writes “Though by nature diffident, she submitted to the requirings of duty, and became a minister; finding that her peace of mind consisted in her obedience to the command” of God. Likewise, Elizabeth Balfour, at the age of twenty-two believed it required of her to declare, in public testimony, those truths which she would rather have chosen to continue to inculcate by her quiet walking in private: yet, hard as it was to her nature thus to expose herself, she found that in submitting to the command, she could alone find peace, and therefore gave up to it. These terms were not merely used to describe the heroic spirituality of deceased Friends, but were used in Shackleton Leadbeater’s own family circle. Shackleton Leadbeater wrote in her diary for 1789, “This year my sister Sally appeared in the ministry, with humility and fear, and I believe she was universally approved, for her conduct was consistent with her office: the vessel was clean, and its contents were pure.” Although Shackleton Leadbeater herself was not called to religious ministry, it was still part of her calling as a Quaker woman to “inculcate by her quiet walking in private” the truths of her religion.

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86 Ibid. 110
87 Ibid. 244
88 Annals of Ballitore 172. Sally later traveled for several years on religious visits to Friends in Scotland and England with a female preacher from America, Aikin Barbauld Taverner.

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We can see Shackleton Leadbeater's rhetorical theories of conversation and conduct articulated clearly in her manuscript essays, just as Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld's theories were articulated in her dialogues and essays.\(^9\) One of Shackleton Barbauld's essays, "On Domestic Virtue," argues a commonplace of domestic ideology that became more prominent at the end of the eighteenth century and supported women's rhetorics of conversation and conduct. This was the argument that public acts of charity are easy and may receive public applause, but everyday domestic virtue is a very difficult achievement and much greater in its lasting effects than "sublime flights" of speech and action.

Shackleton Leadbeater articulates this in her distinctively religious and bellettristic vocabulary:

Gentleness is a more difficult as well as a more useful virtue than generosity. The mind has too much of a divine origin not to be occasionally capable of sublime flights—momentary flights; and has too much of an earthly nature not to flag and fall to the earth, which it had spurned for a moment.

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\(^9\) The manuscript essays at the National Library of Ireland are most likely all composed by Mary Shackleton Leadbeater. They are all in Shackleton Leadbeater's handwriting, and appear to be in various stages of writing and revision. Corrections are in another hand, but revisions are in Mary Shackleton Leadbeater's hand. Several are fragments, and there are multiple drafts of some essays. These essays, written between 1809 and 1823, were composed as contributions to a periodical comprised of pieces written by Shackleton Leadbeater, her friends Melesina Trench and William LeFanu, and her niece Betsy Shackleton. In 1823 Shackleton Leadbeater claims she and her friends began composing the essays fourteen years earlier, but she mentions having recently persuaded herself and her niece Betsy to write more essays, and sent samples to George Crabbe, seeking his approval. (Correspondence with George Crabbe, Nov 17, 1823. f. 56)

The public periodical was to be like Samuel Johnson's *Rambler*, and was called "The Hinter;" it was never published. The design for the publication of "The Hinter" was delayed when William LeFanu, the one who suggested the plan, took on the editorship of another magazine. The idea was buried with LeFanu's death in 1817. Shackleton Leadbeater valued these essays so highly that when Crabbe does not mention them in later letters, she repeatedly asks Crabbe if he has received and read them.
The type of rhetoric Shackleton Leadbeater is promoting is one which distrusts the rhetorical situation of a large audience and occasional speeches because of the temptation in such situations to conceal or atone for a bad character with a superficial, temporary performance. The rhetoric of domestic conversation and conduct, on the contrary, is a continual performance of "unboasting self-denial" which requires attention "through the passing hours of the domestic day, in the constant intercourse with different characters and various tempers, and when new connexions are formed." The aims of this rhetorical art are to elicit love and peace in the family audience: this alone "can keep the steady flame of family love alive, and preserve that equanimity which smooths down asperities, soothes disquietudes, chases dejection, and makes to-morrow cheerful as to-day."90 Shackleton Leadbeater likely considered her own "private walk" as just as important, and possibly even more influential, than the public preaching that Quaker women ministers occasionally engaged in.

Shackleton Leadbeater's rhetorical approach was a consciously-honed blend of Quaker honesty and devotion with the surrounding culture's norms of female discretion and gentleness. One of the habits of discourse that Shackleton Leadbeater imbibed from the Quaker rhetoric of preaching was the choice to avoid the discourse of preaching without divine inspiration and community approval, and especially outside of the proper times and settings for such discourse. Shackleton Leadbeater's writing and speech as an adult rarely touched directly on issues of religious doctrine, and this was in large part due to the influence of her father.

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90 "Domestic Virtue. Sketches, by Mary Shackleton Leadbeater" Amulet 202

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Richard disliked the canting manner of some young persons in dealing with religious subjects, of which he suspected they knew little; and though he was a nursing father to what was good, he desired not to hear the awful theme of religion introduced without a deep sense of its importance.  

Shackleton Leadbeater chose not to follow the example of her mother, Elizabeth Shackleton, who was very expressive in religious and moral exhortation, and who apparently had some degree of success. Elizabeth Shackleton often felt burdened in her conscience to rebuke people in private, and she delivered this duty with gentle earnestness. However, Shackleton Leadbeater had more of a distant admiration for her mother’s brand of religious discourse than she had an interest in imitating it. She felt that her family’s sectarian beliefs and domestic seclusion tended to encourage in her siblings a dangerous practice of boldly speaking truths which would be painful to hearers.

in the cautious observance of truth we forbore to disguise our sentiments of any kind, and I think were too little skilled in the rules of good-breeding, that charming accomplishment, which, whilst compatible with sincerity, teaches young people, I will not say to disguise, but to suppress their sentiments, and is in fact a virtuous self-denial; for if the expression of one’s opinions will do no good, but, on the contrary, inflict pain, they should be suppressed, be they ever so blameless.  

Shackleton Leadbeater, unlike her mother and sister, “preached” through her conversation and conduct without being explicit about doctrine, without speaking and using Scripture in the manner of a minister. Exceptions were made for her mother and sister who had a special calling.

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91 Annals of Ballitore 113
92 Annals of Ballitore 113
However, Shackleton Leadbeater’s rhetorical calling toward gentleness and discretion was not less difficult than that of her more forthright mother and sister. One of the most difficult rhetorical arts of this “good breeding” and “self-denial” in the home is the art of correcting or reproving another person who has done wrong, which must be done occasionally in any family. Like the art of writing negative business letters, successful reproof requires that anger be modulated with gentleness to conciliate the audience, yet too much gentleness may be taken as flattery or even approval, and weaken the negative message. While Shackleton Leadbeater eulogizes her mother’s confrontational rhetorical exploits with the respect of a daughter and thoroughness of a rhetorical critic, she belittles them as they stand in contrast with the more positive rhetorical strategies of her aunt, Deborah Carleton. Shackleton Leadbeater and her aunt Deborah also felt that Elizabeth was unreasonable in her disapproval of all novels; Deborah permitted Shackleton Leadbeater and Sally to read some novels, but the girls wisely hid them under their chair when their mother appeared. Deborah, however, was so liberal and gentle that her manner did not stimulate the comic relief of ridicule at her expense, nor were subterfuges like novel-hiding inspired by fear of punishment. She also tells us that her mother was morally offended by all images of animals or people on her china, and when friends gave her the gift of plain china, the children would entertain each

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93 Shackleton Leadbeater describes not only the rhetorical situations which brought forth her mother’s call to write or speak, but the messages and their purposes, the manner of delivery, and the effects upon her hearers or readers. Elizabeth Shackleton delivered graduation lectures to each student regarding his future conduct in life. She also sent a letter to David Hume reproving him for calling Quakers “deists” and “enthusiasts,” and received a respectful reply. She admonished two local men, on separate occasions, to repent from their dissolute living. (Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton 27; Annals of Ballitore 117)
other by ridiculing this stricture, pretending that they saw images in it. Due to the ridicule and discomfort caused by her mother’s imposition of her standards, Shackleton Leadbeater’s aunt Deborah became her rhetorical model of choice in conversation and conduct.

Shackleton Leadbeater devotes a long manuscript essay to describing the effective rhetorical techniques of her aunt Deborah in sensitive cases. They place Deborah’s conduct within a larger rhetorical theory of women’s conversation and conduct that sets the standards of praise and blame in her eulogy. The piece is titled “On Manners” and opens with the following thesis:

The cultivation of our manners, as well as of our minds, demands our constant attention. If, conscious of our own just feelings towards our fellow pilgrims, we deem it an unnecessary trouble to endeavour to render the path of life more pleasant by the appearance, as well as the reality of kindness, we have formed an erroneous opinion of our duty towards them.94 Deborah’s manners illustrate the strength of an ethos of “generous benignity” in contrast with a “reserve and austerity.” Reserve, we are told, creates a distance and a barrier between the virtuous and those who are overawed by their virtue, which makes it difficult for others to learn from their example. The anecdotes of Deborah that Shackleton Leadbeater collects demonstrate how many were attracted to Deborah’s virtue and good manners. Schoolboys loved to converse with her when they could have spent time with each other.

94 Essays Manuscripts, Dublin

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There was a fascination in her society, which attracted her youthful friends, as well as those of her own age, not that she descended to levity herself, or encouraged it in others, but, while preserving the dignity of virtue, experience and years, her mind was so clothed with affectionate affability, her manners were so engaging, frank and cheerful, and she was so intelligent and well-informed, that in her company "the hours danced away with down upon their feet."  

She was entrusted with the education of her three nieces, and this trust she performed with sensitivity to their tempers and talents, refusing to manipulate by privations, threats and punishments.

She made every proper allowance, granted every proper indulgence, forbore to add reproach to self-condemnation, yet, possessing much penetration, she quickly discerned danger, and vigilantly guarded against it.  

The powerful influence Deborah gained by her gentle manner of conversation and conduct enabled her to save lives in peril, for in times of crisis her "quickness of perception and presence of mind" enabled her to rely on her well-practiced strategies of conciliation. In Dublin when she and a female friend were threatened by an angry mob of men, she did not lose her presence of mind as her friend did, "but exerting herself, in a loud and animated tone, she encouraged her companion to advance. 'For,' Said she, 'they are our own Liberty Boys, and they will do us no harm.'" (at that time Deborah lived in a sector of Dublin called The Liberty). By allowing herself to be overheard speaking confidently of the men's goodness and identifying with them, she won them over. They immediately cheered the women and made a path for them through the crowd. At another time, Deborah was awakened at night by the shrieks of a woman who was being attacked by her husband, "in a fit of drunkenness and rage, one hand twisted in her hair, the other

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95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
holding an open razor, was on the point of cutting her throat.” Deborah opened her window and once again “employed those powers of persuasion, which she possessed in an eminent degree,” and possibly saved both of their lives. Although this essay uses no terminology that is explicitly rhetorical other than general terms like “persuasion” and “manner,” it paints the picture of a rhetorical skill that parallels in kind, if not in scope, the noble arts of the ideal classical orator, winning the attentions and trust of a mixed audience in order to direct the state away from danger and toward virtue and prosperity.

Shackleton Leadbeater is aware of the criticism of hypocrisy that is often cast on women’s self-conscious rhetorical efforts in conversation and conduct due to the cultural preference to believe in a virtuous conduct that springs naturally from a woman’s nature. She acknowledges in her essay on “Self-complacency” that this virtue that culture calls “good breeding,” which consists in self-denial and attention to others’ feelings, sometimes really is a merely superficial manner. Superficial self-denial is better than no effort at all, but superficiality throws a bad reputation on good breeding when its appearance is used as a cover for selfish sentiments. If the audience can detect “peevishness, moroseness, or ridicule” behind the mask, in their disillusionment they can be tempted to fall into the error of considering all good breeding to be merely hypocrisy. This error persuades some individuals to avoid any effort to develop the charms of good breeding. By invoking “the housewife [who] condemns the woman of literary taste” early in this essay, she may well be thinking of people like her mother. But the essay applies the principle to men and women alike, people who, by throwing off good breeding as a

97 Ibid.

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sham, make their own conduct worse than the hypocrite's. Their "worth cannot attract, while their manners repel." Some who disdain good breeding as a mask may take on unusual lifestyle habits and scruples, "singularities," which "diminish their influence & circumscribe their power of doing good," since their odd customs are misunderstood and ridiculed, especially outside the family circle. Shackleton Leadbeater understood well the ridicule of Quakers' singularities, which made it difficult for outsiders to observe their virtues.

The essay on self-complacency offers positive advice after critiquing the rhetoric of these awkward people. In contrast with those who disdain the rhetoric of good-breeding, those who practice it, such as the famous Quaker, William Penn (whose example supports the thesis of this essay fragment), are often completely earnest in their selflessness. But earnestness is not the only qualification for success. Shackleton Leadbeater claims here, as elsewhere, that a high degree of intelligence is required to direct one's words and actions in accord with good breeding. These domestic rhetoricians are possessed of "true genius," cultivated minds, and taste, and are able to use their wisdom to give swift aid to those who need it. In conversation their sense of humor delights but never harms listeners, and they have the skill to shed light on the best part of people's characters, leaving their vices in the shade. The example of self-effacing rhetoric is displayed in the arts of the conversational hostess in Aikin Barbauld's essay on the Pic-Nic, and we can see it in Thrale Piozzi's claim that she was being "civil for four" in the company of ill-mannered friends. This approach to the ethics and rhetorics of
conduct is also similar to that expressed throughout Jane Austen's novels. The similarity speaks to a common exposure of these women to the public discussion of manners as expressed in conduct books and periodical literature, and increasingly, in women's writing of a variety of popular genres.

Another essay that presents aspects of Shackleton Leadbeater's rhetorical theory of conversation and conduct provides a helpful counterpoint to the criticisms she has leveled elsewhere against Quaker singularity and her mother's singular moral strictures. This essay is a defense of the judicious use of "singularity" in conversation and conduct. "The Hinter" writes in response to a young lady, "Fanny Flutter," who complains that a young man who has entered her social circle is very strange in his conduct: he seems to be more interested in conversing with the local minister and his wife than with young ladies such as herself, even preferring the society of young children to the chit-chat of people his own age. Innocent diversions like hunting, dancing and card-playing he refuses to participate in. He takes opportunity in conversation to declaim against slavery, to persuade people to give up the use of sugar (a product of slavery); and to read and speak to prisoners.

The Hinter's response is titled "On the Value of Individual Exertion and Example." Its central thesis is that God uses these people as means of getting the attention of complacent people, and to uphold a high standard of conduct that people have

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96 The Hinter manuscripts, Dublin.
given up as impossible or undesirable. In every era of history, people have been unwilling to reform, and entangled with many distractions from virtue. To such an audience, pulpit oratory is ineffectual:

The minister preaches his weekly sermon to call us away from folly, & to allure us with all the earnestness & fascination of eloquence, into the paths of virtue; but the ear is become heavy, & dull to every sound but the sound of pleasure, & to every interest but the interests of this world.

Shackleton Leadbeater reasons thus: God has at hand all available means of persuasion: "the Bible—the preacher—the power of eloquence, or of example." When ears are dulled and bad habits are strong, He uses "something new or striking," namely singular human beings, who proclaim His message "in such strong colours that the most stupid or indifferent may be excited to enquire" as Fanny Flutter has enquired. Thus engaging consciously in singularity of conversation and conduct, as Quakers did, can be a means of laboring together with God. However, interpreters like the Hinter are also needed to lay open the aims and strategies of this rhetoric, which alone will enable inquirers to perceive God as the speaker and to hear His lesson instead of falling into ridicule of the individual.

The rhetorical theories Shackleton Leadbeater learned, which are illustrated in the essays mentioned above, enabled her to walk a fine line of Quaker femininity, upholding the reputation and tenets of her religious sect while avoiding the pitfalls of cultural singularity and austerity. She declined to imitate the Quaker models of the female preacher (her sister) and the confrontational neighbor (her mother), and instead consciously chose to follow her aunt Deborah's example of the cheerful, sociable,
charitable neighbor. Shackleton Leadbeater was therefore less striking, awe-inspiring, or puzzling a character, but more attractive to her local audience in her conversation and conduct.

This brings us to a discussion of her rhetorical performance in conversation and conduct, which was a blend of domestic literary conversation and community philanthropy and leadership. There were likely very few days when there was no conversation or reading going on in Shackleton Leadbeater’s parlor, or when her conduct was not being observed by others. The Shackleton home, and later, the Leadbeater home, were central hubs in the social life of Ballitore, not only due to the family’s large size and central role in the school, but also due to charitable and neighborly practices. Half of the Leadbeater house was rented by Mary and Anne Doyle who kept a shop there, and their lives were integrated with the Leadbeater’s. Her younger sister Sally became blind at some point during the 1800s and moved into her home. Between 1805 and 1820 the Leadbeater home was busy as her four children and five nephews and nieces grew through their teens, and Shackleton Leadbeater was active in serving the local poor and her servants.99 Schoolboys visited the family, and Shackleton Leadbeater read literature with them and her young family members, encouraging them to write and circulate in manuscript a local magazine filled with literature and local news, which was later published in two volumes in 1820 as The Ballitore Magazine. Compared with Hester

99 “Her benevolent mind was ever inventing plans to help the poor, & to make her own servants comfortable. When very young, I admired her consideration of her servants—her allowing them certain evenings in the week to make or mend their own clothes; and, before Lancastrian schools were in fashion, her teaching them to read.” (Elizabeth Shackleton, Memoirs of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater’s Character 20)
Thrale Piozzi’s literary salons, Shackleton Leadbeater’s conversational parlor did not include as many illustrious characters, but it was more egalitarian in including people of various classes, sexes, and ages. Thrale Piozzi was hindered from integrating her roles as mother, author, and hostess, and as a result her family life was far less harmonious than Shackleton Leadbeater’s. Both hostesses engaged in literary reading and discussion, and encouraged authorship, but Shackleton Leadbeater went further in encouraging and engaging in charitable projects.

Shackleton Leadbeater’s social position and religious beliefs brought her closer to her poor neighbors, while her economic status and charitable networks enabled her financially to be able assist them. She built up a high level of rhetorical authority with them through her conversation and conduct. She kept medicines and visited the sick poor, and her children also involved themselves in charitable activities from a young age, raising subscriptions for orphans or selling crafts to raise funds for poor children.

Sometime between 1810 and 1817, Shackleton Leadbeater became the local postmistress, which must have increased both her contact with neighbors and her knowledge of business. Beginning in 1808, Shackleton Leadbeater was entrusted with the duty of caring for the poor tenants on Melesina Trench’s land in the nearby village of Ballybarney. Receiving funds and general direction from Trench, she purchased and planted trees, organized a school, oversaw leases, provided medicines, and distributed...
annuities on her behalf to the impoverished invalids and elderly. She was the sole judge and distributor of Trench's yearly "premiums" for tenants with the cleanest houses, best gardens, best spinning skills, etc., which were awarded on a day of celebration.

Shackleton Leadbeater and her family members would often go out of the home on social and charitable visits to neighbors both rich and poor. As a result of all this experience, it is not likely that her niece exaggerates the degree of her rhetorical influence in the local community:

Her judgment was sought by her family and friends and neighbours on matters of business, as well as where the feelings were concerned. [ . . . ] learned consultations [to revise her own publications] were sometimes interrupted by her poor neighbours who came to her for advice, or to settle their disputes; my aunt seemed as well acquainted with their rough manner of thinking, as with the finer feelings of more polished society, and had an equal facility in leading them back to peace."¹⁰⁰

To her local community leadership in advising, judging, persuading, peace-making, and organizing educational and charitable works, add her important role as author, and it becomes abundantly clear why Mary Shackleton Leadbeater is included in this study of women rhetoricians.

With such an intimate knowledge of the local families and their histories, Shackleton Leadbeater was well furnished with sources of literary invention. Like Thrale Piozzi and Aikin Barbauld, much of this author's writing was directed toward promoting expertise in the rhetoric of conversation and conduct. The bulk of Shackleton Leadbeater's literary output aimed at memorializing and improving the everyday lives of those around her. Like Hester Thrale Piozzi, who valued conversational discourse so

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Shackleton, Memoirs of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater's Character 54, 61-62
highly that she wrote in the genres of anecdote, dialogue, diary, and the conversational handbook, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater's choice of written genres also centered on the conversational and the portrayal of everyday conduct. Her Cottage Dialogues, the most commercially successful series she wrote, eventually grew to two volumes of dialogues among the Irish peasantry, and a third volume of dialogues among Irish gentry called The Landlord's Friend.

When Shackleton Leadbeater sent an early manuscript of Cottage Dialogues to Melesina Trench for feedback, it centered on women's conversation and conduct. It mainly consisted of dialogues between the female cottagers Rose and Nancy, and the ladies Seraphina and Charlotte. "Now and then the husbands get leave to speak, and the children." In the advertisement to the edition that Maria Edgeworth and her father arranged for publication in England, Maria Edgeworth assures the audience that these dialogues are truly conversational and realistic. The speakers are not mouthpieces of the author, nor will one of the participants

101 There were three editions of the first part of Cottage Dialogues (first edition 1811, published by subscription) before the second part was published in 1818 (Advertisement, Cottage Dialogues Part Two).

102 Mary Leadbeater, September 15, 1809. (Correspondence of Mrs. Trench and Mrs. Leadbeater, Leadbeater Papers 2:172.) Rose and Nancy's dialogues became part I of Cottage Dialogues (1811) and Seraphina and Charlotte's comprise part of The Landlord's Friend (1813). The second volume of Cottage Dialogues (1818) focuses on the lives of young men.

103 The dialogues' success in England was aided by Maria Edgeworth and her father, who arranged for an English edition to be published by their own publisher, Joseph Johnson, to which was added an advertisement and explanatory notes by Maria Edgeworth.
harangue and domineer, and the other to ask questions and be refuted; one is not made a miracle of wisdom, and the other a man of straw. But the following are conversations which seem actually to have passed in real life; the thoughts and feelings are natural, the reflections and reasoning such as appear to be suggested by passing circumstances or personal experience.104

Shackleton Leadbeater’s niece also observes in her memoir:

In her Cottage Dialogues, we may observe that those, who is [sic] her model of excellence, always imparts advice or information to her idle neighbour with a mildness and diffidence; far removed from the loquacious, self-important manner, in which some of the perfect characters we meet with are made to dictate to their misguided companions, and almost disgust the reader with perfection.105

The conversational mode of argumentation in the dialogues between social equals was Shackleton Leadbeater’s gentle way of reasoning with her readers regarding good conduct, her way of coming alongside them for a mutual exchange of ideas, rather than speaking down to them in extended monologue.

Shackleton Leadbeater chose the genre of dialogue with the audience of the Irish poor in mind, for she knew her audience well. Although she was a poet and also wrote essays, for this audience she consciously avoided those genres, for she reasoned that “examples in narrative are generally more likely to impress young and uncultivated minds than what is merely didactic,” and “The poor have not time to seek instruction in the winding walks of fancy, the direct road of plain prose is better suited to their attainment of that end.”106 Shackleton Leadbeater translated her conversational experiences into written dialogues that not only were entertaining to read, but provided good models of

104 from a copy of a letter from the Edgeworths to Joseph Johnson, as quoted by Mary Shackleton Leadbeater on July 19, 1810 (Correspondence of Mrs. Trench and Mrs. Leadbeater, Leadbeater Papers 2:193).

105 Memoirs of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater’s Character 64

106 The Landlord’s Friend 102, 107

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conversational practices to imitate. She avoids using Quaker idioms, and integrates local vocabulary, usage and proverbs. The *Christian Observer*’s review of the dialogues criticized Shackleton Leadbeater’s avoidance of religious themes, but as mentioned earlier, this was one of Shackleton Leadbeater’s rhetorical rules: “It is a holy theme, and I am afraid to touch it.”

Melesina Trench articulated another reason that Shackleton Leadbeater acknowledged to be a motivating factor: “the [Catholic] priests might discourage its general circulation if it bore in any shape the character of a religious work.”

Such a work as *Cottage Dialogues* is a textual representation and extension of the oral persuasion that Shackleton Leadbeater engaged in with her neighbors in the Quaker community. One of the rhetorical practices of conversation taught through *Cottage Dialogues* is the resolution or avoidance of disputes and quarrels between men and women (see Appendix for the full text of these dialogues). The characters engage in a practice similar to the traditional Quaker form of individual discipline divided between the Women’s Meeting and Monthly Meeting, in which women’s matters of discipline are treated first among members of their own sex, and only if necessary, before the Monthly Meeting of both sexes. When the characters Nancy and Tim have a dispute that ends

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107 Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, April 10, 1810 (Correspondence of Mrs. Trench and Mrs. Leadbeater, Leadbeater Papers 188)

108 Melesina Trench, Feb 25, 1810. (Correspondence of Mrs. Trench and Mrs. Leadbeater, Leadbeater Papers 184)

109 A 1796 amendment of the Quaker rules of discipline states that the third function of women’s meetings is the following: “They are to appoint a suitable number of overseers, who are to treat with offenders of their own sex; that their cases be laid before the women’s preparative, and if needful their monthly meeting, which should proceed to deal further with such delinquents and report the result of their labours to the men’s meeting...” (*Rules of Discipline*, 1806)
in physical abuse, they get advice separately and privately from a member of their own sex. Nancy is instructed by her neighbor, Rose, and Tim is corrected by Rose’s husband, Jem. As the dialogue partners deliver self-justifying remarks, gentle reproofs, objections and concessions, and brief narratives of good and bad examples, the leading characters ensure that both parties take responsibility for causing the fight, and that each receives suggestions about how to revise their conversation and conduct. Such a model of conflict-resolution sets forth a rhetoric of everyday conversational argument and proposal rarely touched on in rhetorical treatises of the time.

Shackleton Leadbeater also wrote dialogues addressed to a different audience: the local landowners or gentry. The Landlord’s Friend takes the gentry’s perspective on the work of improving the poor, both persuading them to take on this work, and illustrating how the two classes converse with each other. One section of this dialogue is particularly revealing of the bellettristic principles behind the program. As a gentlewoman, Seraphina, takes her female friend on a tour of the village poor, they stop at the library of the Lancastrian school. The clearly stated purpose of the school library is to foster literary taste among the peasantry. It is expected that through their reading they will improve their mode of conversing, their conduct, and their lifestyle. Books are chosen which reconcile them to their economic and social position and do not increase the discontentment and “false refinement” that result from envying and trying to imitate the upper class. It is proposed that while the men read aloud, the women can be industrious

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110 Rose’s advice culminates with the prescription “try to keep down that high spirit, and to keep in what should not come out,” and Jem’s ends with the advice “make a resolution never to be both angry at the same time.” (Cottage Dialogues 60, 63.)
at their needlework; men, women and children can thus learn together and grow more intimate. The effects of domestic oral reading first on the mind, then on the conduct, are manifold:

Their attention is caught, their tastes are cultivated, their hearts are touched and amended, their work proceeds with more animation, and imperceptibly they acquire a new degree of independence, by having a treasure stored in their own minds which they can impart to others, and they are no longer entertained by vulgar or indecent merriment: the book supersedes the pipe and tobacco, yawning and drowsiness are dissipated, and the attractions of the Ale-house diminish in proportion as those of the cottage fire-side increase. I attribute much of the sobriety and intelligence of the Scotch peasantry, to the love of reading which they have imbibed from their early education.111

This connection between literacy, taste, and virtue was a religious and philanthropic application of belletristic rhetorical theory to the social problems perceived by middle- and upper-class charitable workers and educators. The Landlord's Friend promotes what Shackleton Leadbeater saw as a very useful and virtuous mode of inter-class conversation and conduct.

A work by Shackleton Leadbeater which builds on this association of literacy, taste, and virtue is Cottage Biography (1822). This collection of brief biographies, originally suggested by Melesina Trench,112 roughly parallels the Quaker Biographical Notices in its genre, but is quite different in style and content due to the non-Quaker audience of various ranks. It paints the heroism of industrious and/or religiously faithful

111 The Landlord's Friend 109-110

112 Melesina asks Shackleton Leadbeater to write a description of the industry of Irish cottagers, in the style of Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor. "Some of your young folks I think might accomplish it." Specific names, details, and places give value to the work. Nonfiction has a strong attraction: "James Austin the Bricklayer" and others are read over because it is known they are real people. (Correspondence of Mrs. Trench and Mrs. Leadbeater, Leadbeater Papers 251. May 1813)
men, women, and children who battled poverty, illness, and other distresses. In many cases the peasants are shown to be heroically striving after literacy, which is an encouragement to members of the newly-literate peasant classes reading the book, and motivates middle- and upper-class philanthropists by showing their efforts will be rewarded. For instance, one of the biographies is of Winifred Doyle, the model for the character of Rose in the *Cottage Dialogues*. She was the servant of Abraham Shackleton and married David, the servant of Richard Shackleton. One of the first details narrated of her is that she had learned to read a little, but wished she had more learning. Her husband David built bookshelves and had “Enfield’s *Speaker*, and other instructive publications, for David had some literary taste.” His son Thomas also liked books and listened while David read “the Servant’s Friend” to his wife and learned to lisp the name of Tommy Simpkin. This family exemplifies “the utility, not to say the duty of instructing the poor.” Thomas grew up to be the master of a Sunday school and then headed the local Lancastrian school, where his sister worked as monitress. Winifred also embodies the ideal of female conversation and conduct that operated in the Ballitore community. She was hospitable: her home sheltered seven persons besides her own family of eleven members. She was active outside the home as well: “That time which she denies to gossiping is employed in visiting the sick, in comforting the afflicted, or in other acts of benevolence;—and her well-regulated domestic affairs to not suffer from those short and necessary absences.” And finally, she leads not only by her conduct but by her words: she gives her poor neighbors “prudent counsel, which is oftener sought for than offered to

113 *Cottage Biography* 63-64
Winifred's example helps to promote the theory that good reading and good breeding are just as necessary and beneficial among the middle- and upper-classes as they are among the poor; Shackleton Leadbeater's publications are themselves a contribution to the bookshelves and parlor or cottage conversations that, she hopes, will improve the conduct and happiness of her readers in a wider circle of influence than her direct conversation and example can reach.

Through her lifelong religious and belletristic rhetorical education, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater was encouraged to direct her conversational talents and her habits of conduct to the promotion of virtue, religion, and knowledge among a wide audience of all classes, ages, and religious denominations. Her religious community assumed the equal importance of men's and women's speech and action, and promoted an attitude of critical watchfulness over one's every choice of word or gesture. This environment provided a strong basis for Shackleton Leadbeater's growing rhetorical confidence and rhetorical self-awareness in the minutiae of her female experience. With her belletristic upbringing, she was able to weave together the belletristic and the Quaker rhetorics of conversation, philanthropy, and authorship into a single fabric that was appealing to audiences of a variety of social classes and religious backgrounds.

114 Cottage Biography 71-72
Conclusions about these three women’s rhetorical education

This chapter and the previous have focused on the rhetorical education and practice of three women writers in the genre of conversation and conduct. The rhetorical biographies demonstrate the interconnection between conversation and conduct which made them a unified genre encompassing a virtuous ethos, a largely belletristic content, a feminine style appropriate to the gender ideologies of their communities, and successful delivery or elocution in the sites of the home, local community, literary salon, and public assembly. The autobiographical and biographical records also reveal how these rhetorics were learned through inclusion in intellectual conversations with mentors, peers, and parents where women’s verbal participation was encouraged and moulded with advice and criticism. These women’s unique cultural environments had significant effects on their conversational styles and behavioral habits in this genre of rhetoric. Hester Thrale Piozzi’s background as a member of the higher ranks below the nobility favored belletristic and conversational rhetorics of aristocratic display and entertainment, through which she was able to associate with lords and ladies, literati and artistic performers. Aikin Barbauld and Shackleton Leadbeater could dispense with much of Thrale Piozzi’s fire and raillery because their communities demanded a less ostentatious rhetoric of conversation and conduct. Aikin Barbauld’s and Shackleton Leadbeater’s backgrounds equipped them with rhetorical theories and mentors that enabled them to rise to prominence among their own religious and educational communities, and their education in the popularized rhetorics of the culture at large, such as belletristic and elocutionary
rhetoric, made them successful rhetors to audiences outside their religious sect and local community. All three of these women had both male and female mentors that helped them learn how to participate in the discourse of their community: Thrale Piozzi’s uncle and aunt, tutor and mother, and Samuel Johnson; Aikin Barbauld’s father, mother, and brother, Priestley, Enfield, and Elizabeth Montagu; Shackleton Leadbeater’s parents, siblings, aunt, Melesina Trench, and literary correspondents.

The sources of these women’s rhetorical theories varied according to their access to them. Thrale Piozzi’s eclectic education in modern languages under her aunt and uncle, and in classical languages and rhetoric under Collier, intermixed with a thorough education in the rhetorics of aristocratic and middle-class female conversation and conduct, enabled her to participate intelligently in literary conversation with her era’s greatest master of language and literature—Samuel Johnson. The successes she enjoyed as a conversational hostess encouraged her to take risks in her conduct (her marriage) and in the conversational style of her publications. Aikin Barbauld’s rhetorical education was the broadest of the three in terms of the depth and breadth of her reading and conversation on political, literary, religious and historical matters; this background equipped her to be an educator and enriched her writing and conversation with classical and modern allusions. All three women were taught rhetorics of conversation and conduct that integrated written genres such as correspondence, literary criticism, and oral reading, an appropriate background for women who became both conversationalists and writers. Although none of them mention the influence of any
particular conduct book or other book of religious tradition of women's conversation and conduct, the principles of these rhetorics were passed on to them by their parents and mentors. Mary Shackleton Leadbeater's education, while conducted in a community where classical scholarship was carried on, probably lacked direct instruction in the precepts of neoclassical and epistemological rhetorics which Aikin Barbauld and Thrale Piozzi enjoyed. However, because the egalitarian rhetorics of her own community overpowered the gender biases of other rhetorics, they were already well adapted to the realm of women's conversation and conduct. Shackleton Leadbeater faced the limits of geographic seclusion and her sect's singularity, but encountered less resistance to the idea that women's everyday conduct and talk just as influential men's public discourse, and that success in both were equally dependent on careful theorizing and practice.

It is also interesting to observe how the rhetorics of conversation and conduct carried over into these women's writing. The school of everyday talk and action was the main scene in which even these women's written rhetoric was learned, tested and authorized. To complete the circle of instruction, much of their written work was bent toward pedagogy in conversation and conduct, promoting and reforming communication practices among women and men. All three of these women completed the full cycle of rhetorical education in this genre through becoming proficient in their rhetorical practice in speech and action, and eventually using their writing to represent models and teach their theories of conversation and conduct.
In each of these women's lives, there is ample textual evidence to demonstrate that their communities and families made a considerable investment in their rhetorical formation, and that the women responded to these efforts with intelligent rhetorical choices rather than blind imitation, mere natural aptitude, or luck.
CHAPTER 4

LETTER-WRITING:
ELIZABETH MONTAGU AND ANNE GRANT

It is widely known that numbers of British women authors entered the nascent genre of the novel during the second half of the eighteenth century largely through the epistolary mode, which was popularized in Samuel Richardson's epistolary novels Pamela and Clarissa.¹ But the related accompanying increase in non-fictional letter-writing among women and the increasing political and social influence of women's letter-writing have not been treated with the same scholarly attention. The reading of epistolary correspondence collections was an educational practice as well as a pastime, and the writing of letters was theorized by periodical writers and belles-lettres rhetoricians over the course of the eighteenth century in Britain. Women's letters in particular have been shown to have had a significant influence on politics in the eighteenth century.²

However, familiar letters, both published and unpublished, have slipped into the cracks between the traditional generic categories favored by literary historians and rhetorical historians. The rhetorical and literary status of the genre fell during the

¹ Women had also wrote non-epistolary novels since the late seventeenth century (Aphra Behn's Oroonoko has been considered the first novel)
² See Elaine Chalus, "My Minerva at My Elbow"

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Romantic era as it was increasingly feminized and de-rhetoricized. Even Cicero’s epistles have fallen into a state of neglect, according to a recent book by G.O. Hutchinson that aims to revive their study.\(^3\) Ever since the height of the Romantic era of literary criticism, familiar letters have been seen as neither as imaginative or artful as suited new literary tastes, nor very public in subject-matter as other genres deemed worthy of the attention of rhetoricians. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, men’s and women’s published and unpublished letters were used primarily as materials for constructing social history and literary biography, and were far less often read or studied as products and processes of rhetorical art or literary entertainment. As a result, one of the most important genres of women’s discourse in the eighteenth century has been rather neglected by historians of rhetoric and literature until the 1990s.

This chapter provides a brief history of the genre of the epistle as it relates to the history of rhetoric and to women, and then discusses the epistolary education of Elizabeth Montagu and Anne Grant within this context. In addition to learning theories related to epistolary communication, these women engaged in correspondence with mentors who facilitated their own rhetorical education in this and other genres. As effective letter-writers, Montagu and Grant extended their rhetorical influence and fame far into their communities and culture.

\(^3\) Cicero’s Correspondence: A Literary Study (1998).
A history of the familiar letter in relation to women's rhetorical practice

Women's letter-writing education and practice in eighteenth-century Britain has roots that extend far back into men's and women's rhetorical practices and theories regarding the genre. Reflected in women's letter writing over the centuries are the rhetorical principles articulated and exemplified in the writings of male and female rhetoricians and in numerous epistolary handbooks and anthologies. In men's and women's letters were often embedded rhetorical instruction—letters were not merely models for imitation, but were venues for the rhetorical criticism of one's own and other letters. Letters, therefore, constituted a major forum of rhetorical practice for women at the same time as they were a major informal school of rhetoric.

In ancient rhetoric, familiar letters belonged, like conversation, to the discourse of sermo, rather than the contentio of political and legal speech. As Philip Kern explains, because classical rhetoric grew from the latter form of discourse, "letter-writing and oratory were distinct enterprises which did not merge in the classical mind." Nevertheless, rhetoricians felt it relevant to discuss the epistle. The two most important classical theorists of the epistle were Demetrius in On Style and C. Iulius Victor in his Ars Rhetorica. They both emphasize a simple style and friendly sentiments as the genre's most prominent feature, but distinguish differences between the genre of conversation and the more formal genre of the epistle. Demetrius writes, "The letter should be a little more studied than the dialogue, since the latter reproduces an extemporary utterance,

4 Kern 32
5 On Style 223-235, Ars Rhetorica 26-27.
while the former is committed to writing and is (in a way) sent as a gift.” 6 The familiar letter was since the earliest times a very versatile genre in content, arrangement, style, and intended audience, including a large public audience. Demetrius testifies to this fact by complaining that some letters have been serious treatises in disguise. 7

Despite the attention Demetrius pays to the epistles of men, women were already known to excel in this genre of rhetoric. Maria Luisa Doglio reminds us that the Greek word epistolé has a feminine gender, and that Cicero praises the letters of Cornelia as well as her speech. 8

Cicero implied that the letter, written in absentia, was especially important for a woman. It granted her emotional detachment, thus enabling her to write freely what dared not be uttered face to face. At the same time, he denies to letter writing the emotionalism, involvement in feelings and the ‘right to blush’ traditionally associated with ‘the weaker sex.’ 9

Thus Cicero granted to a woman rhetorical expertise in this genre without feminizing it or, what was often synonymous with feminizing it, debasing it as a form of writing unworthy of being theorized by men. The letter, a flexible and commodious genre in form and content, has been accessible to many without formal advanced education, such as eighteenth-century women. The potential privacy of epistles permitted many women

6 On Style 224. See Carol Poster and Richard J. Utz on Iulius Victor’s ideas.

7 “The length of a letter, no less than its style, must be carefully regulated. Those that are too long, and further are rather stilted in expression, are not in sober truth letters but treatises with the heading ‘My dear So-and-So.’ This is true of many of Plato’s, and of that of Thucydides.” On Style 228

8 Doglio 13, Brutus section LVIII.

9 Doglio 13
to pursue a rhetorical education “undercover”: with several trusted correspondents, they
could take risks in furthering their education and writing skills beyond the norm for
women’s learning and expression.

The familiar letters of Cicero also engage in some theorizing of the epistolary
genre through criticism of his correspondents’ epistles. For example, in a letter to
Pompesus Magnus, he complains,

your private letter to me contained a somewhat slight expression of your affection
[...]. To let you know, however, what I missed in your letter I will write with the
candour which my own disposition and our common friendship demand. I did
expect some congratulation in your letter on my achievements, for the sake at
once of the ties between us and of the Republic. This I presume to have been
omitted by you from a fear of hurting anyone’s feelings.10

Such critical passages prescribe the content of a familiar letter (it must have some
affectionate expressions, it usually includes kind responses to news in a previous letter),
provide a pedagogically useful model of desired features (how to write with candour), and
theorize the reasons for certain rhetorical choices (such as the omission of content for fear
of offending a wider audience). As seen below in the rhetorical biography of Anne Grant,
eighteenth-century women also engaged in this practice of teaching epistolary rhetoric
through their epistolary correspondence.

In the Middle Ages, men’s letter-writing saw the development of the Ars
Dictaminis, rhetorics of letter-writing that were specifically adapted to the needs of clerks
serving the government and church. Women’s letters in this era did not follow the
directives of these letter-writing handbooks, but remained within the Classical and

10 “Letter III To CN. POMPESUS MAGNUS.” Letters of Cicero.

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Christian traditions of the familiar and apostolic letter. As Doglio explains, medieval women's letters seem to be written "by well-educated women enclosed within monastery walls" such as Héloïse and Hildegard of Bingen. Their epistles tended to focus on matters of love and spirituality rather than literature and politics. The appropriation of the rhetorics of Christian authority empower the female ethos, as seen in the letters of Catherine of Siena, which all begin "I, Catherine, servant and slave to the servants of Jesus Christ, write in His precious blood." In the Biblical epistles themselves, authors borrowed from classical rhetorical theory, as has been observed by Biblical scholars. These epistles were available to readers of the Bible as models of rhetorical practice in the genre, and it appears that women such as Catherine of Siena made use of them, as her opening roughly parallels Peter's greeting in his first epistle. These Medieval epistolary rhetorics employed by women began a tradition that continued into the Enlightenment. Seventeenth-century Quaker women letter-writers also used their own variation on Biblical language and style as they addressed their religious community at large with apostolic and prophetic epistles that circulated to official Friends' Meetings across Britain.

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11 Doglio 14
12 as quoted in Doglio 15
13 For example, Margaret M. Mitchell's rhetorical exegesis of Paul's letters to the Corinthians. The application of classical rhetoric to Biblical epistles was sharply criticized by R. Dean Anderson, Jr. in 1996, but Anderson's argument simply brings to light the generic differences between sermo and contentio that do not permit the same modes of argumentation, and does not dismiss the general relevance of classical rhetoric to Paul's epistles, or Paul's ability to adapt the rhetorics of one genre to another.
14 "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" 1 Peter 1:1-2
and America. Mary Astell’s correspondence with John Norris on the topic of the love of God were in the tradition of the correspondences of Hildegard of Bingen and Héloïse; in this mode Astell participated in public theological and devotional discourse. Astell’s *Letters Concerning the Love of God* (1695) was popular enough to be reprinted in 1705 and 1730, yet few critical studies of it exist. Her epistolary style may have well been an influence on her friend, another great Enlightenment letter-writer, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose collected letters in 1763 were printed with a preface by Mary Astell.

In the renaissance, the rediscovery of Cicero’s epistles made them the pattern of imitation by cultural leaders such as Petrarch. Since their popularization, Cicero’s letters have been continued to be used in formal education in Latin style until the twentieth century, and Hugh Blair praises them in his *Lectures*. As a testimony to the influence on women of contemporary epistolary rhetoric based on Cicero’s letters, the Italian laywoman Alessandra Mancinghi Strozzi employed rhetorical patterns of arrangement in even her familiar letters to her son, which were not intended for a wider audience. Better known are the letters of Laura Cereta, anthologized in the first edition of *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Cereta was given an upper-class humanist classical

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15 Theophila Townsend, Mary Elson and Anne Whitehead wrote letters regarding a schism and attack on Women’s Meetings in 1680-81.

16 Mary Astell had died in 1731

17 Petrarch even wrote epistles addressed to Cicero expressing the joy of finding his letters and his view of them as evidence of Cicero’s own rhetorical choices. “Your letters I sought for long and diligently; and finally, where I least expected it, I found them. At once I read them, over and over, with the utmost eagerness. And as I read I seemed to hear your bodily voice, O Marcus Tullius, saying many things, uttering many lamentations, ranging through many phases of thought and feeling.” (Petrarch “To Marcus Tullius Cicero,” n.p.)

18 The seventy-two didactic letters were written between 1447 and 1470, and published at the end of the nineteenth century. (Doglio 16)
education in a monastery school for girls where she studied original Latin texts. Cereta's intellectual correspondence with scholars, according to the translator and editor of her texts, reveals the influence of Petrarch's Ciceronianism. The religious didacticism of Mancinghi Strozzi's letters is indicative of another of the primary modes of women's letter-writing that was seen in the renaissance, a mode which continued into the nineteenth century. Seventeenth-century British women's letters to their children were published not only as examples of motherly epistolary style, but as conduct books. In the eighteenth century, Sarah Pennington's *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice*, in the form of a letter to her daughters, had eight editions between 1761 and 1800. Many of the conduct books written by women introduced in the previous chapter were in the form of letters.

The seventeenth-century French women letter writers Madame de Sevigné and Madame de Maintenon seem to have had a significant impact on women's letter writing in eighteenth-century Britain, during which time a number of editions of their correspondence were published. Another French woman's contribution to epistolary rhetorical theory was Madeleine de Scudéry's rhetorical discussion of letter-writing in the form of printed conversations, published in English in 1683. The conversation covers the composition processes of various sub-genres of letters: letters of friendship, love, consolation, recommendation, business, and news. It is far more detailed than

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19 Robin 16-18.
20 Gwen D. Smith
21 Maintenon's letters were first published in English in 1700, then again in 1727, 1753, 1754, 1758, 1772 under various titles. Madame de Sevigné's letters were published in English in 1727, 1745, 1751, 1759, 1776, 1801, 1802, 1806, 1811 (OCLC first search catalogue and COPAC Union Catalogue)
22 the first French edition was in 1680.
discussions of the genre found in most other rhetorical texts from classical times to the
seventeenth century, and applies its instruction specifically to the female letter-writer.

One passage from this text relates to letters of "gallantry", the type for which Sevigne and
Maintenon were famed.

It is proper in these [letters] that wit has all one's attention, that there is
imagination and the freedom to play, and that judgment does not appear so severe
that one may not mingle some agreeable foolishness among things more serious.
One is able to rail ingeniously [in these letters]; praise and flattery agreeably find
their place in them [. . .] 23

Such passages illustrate that even apparently playful and careless letters could be
composed by women who gave a great deal of attention to rhetorical matters such as
content and style, and that rhetorical theory could be constructed by a woman from the
rich tradition of men's and women's epistolary discourse.

In the seventeenth century, men's epistolary discourse also had a British theorist
of the genre. In 1645 James Howell published his own letters as examples of the genre,
and theorized their purposes, styles, and influence in an introductory poem to his letter
collection. In the letters he represented the genre as a relaxed and natural one, even a
symbolically feminine genre,24 but like the learned and noble conversation of the age, it
was nonetheless a type of rhetorical discourse involving a careful performance of wit and
learning for both private and public ends. His title, Familiar Letters Domestic and

23 Scudéry, "Conversation on the Manner of Writing Letters" 96

24 "It was a quaint difference the ancients did put betwixt a letter and an oration, that the one should be
attired like a woman, the other like a man." James Howell 3; Letter I to Sir J. S., at Leeds Castle, 25 July
1625.

As we turn to eighteenth-century traditions of epistolary correspondence, we can observe a general trend that affected the two generations of women included in this study. Over the eighteenth century there was a gradual transition in epistolary rhetoric that affected how women learned and practiced it. The earlier generation of eighteenth-century women, influenced by Ciceronian and Seventeenth-century French and English courtly models of letter-writing, could aspire to a patriotic and/or "urbane" ethos by writing witty and ornamental openings, well-argued political discussions, or colorful narratives in a letter. Bruce Redford cogently observes that since the Augustan age was one of "Nature methodiz'd," in letters this manifested itself as a carefully managed balance between natural freedom and artful ceremony.26 Early in the eighteenth century, familiar letters were still heavily influenced by Ciceronian and Renaissance rhetorics of civic virtue—the transmission of news, advice, recommendations, and business among the nobility, whose family and personal interests were tied to national interests. Accordingly, the letters of Pope, Swift, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Elizabeth Rowe in the early century are far more witty, learned and ornamental performances than

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25 This title precedes the first letter and differs from the title page, which reveals the intent to inculcate standards of conduct: "... Directing not only the Style and Forms to be Observed in Writing Familiar Letters; but How to Think and Act Justly and Prudently, in the Common Concerns of Human Life."

26 Redford 3

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suited the late century's tastes. The moral and entertaining letters of Elizabeth Rowe, found in her collected works, were extremely popular even to the end of the century, and Wortley Montagu's letters found avid readers when they appeared in 1763.27

As the eighteenth century progressed, cultural preoccupations shifted significantly away from art and toward nature, away from classical models, and toward modern and middle-class models of discourse. From a document of civic sociability and polite entertainment, the genre of the letter gradually began to focus more on the representation of the middle-class self and the establishment of family and friendships: it became more and more privatized and naturalized. These generic trends are represented in the prefaces and contents of letter-writing handbooks. The 1741 Polite Epistolary Correspondence represents a variety of intellectual and civic topics and purposes,28; but in the 1755 Compleat [sic] Letter-Writer (after all three of Samuel Richardson's domestic epistolary novels had been published), the letters are on the more quotidian and domestic topics of "business, duty, amusement, affection, courtship" and "friendship."

Katherine Gee Hornbeak, who analyzed hundreds of letter-writing handbooks in Britain and America from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century, writes of the "feminist movement in the complete letter-writer." It is important to observe that a general trend in "feminization" of the discourse, audience, and authorship of letter was not necessarily "feminist" in the sense of granting equal freedom and status to women

27 Friendship in Death (1720), Letters on various occasions (1729), Letters Moral and Entertaining (1731); The English Short Title Catalogue lists more than forty editions of the letters or works of Rowe spanning the rest of the century. The frequency of printing only began to abate in the 1780s and 90s.

28 in six sections: an epistolary "novel," travel letters with observations on manners, moral and economical letters, literary letters written in country retirement, letters about history, and philosophical letters

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letter writers. Hornbeak believes the trend began with The Young Secretary’s Guide of 1687, which contained 33 percent of the letters to, from, or about women (none being courtship letters), and that the trend peaked in Samuel Richardson’s Familiar Letters of 1741, in which over 57 percent of the letters are in this category. To continue her merely numerical, topical analysis, I observe that The Compleat Letter Writer (1755) raises the percentage of woman-related letters to 62 percent in the 1768 Edinburgh edition. In 1763, a completely feminized version of the Compleat Letter Writer was published, entitled the Ladies Compleat Letter Writer. In the next three decades, letter collections that often served as conduct books were increasingly compiled or authored by women, and other letter-writing handbooks for women took up the moral project. In 1791 John Bennet wrote in Letters to a Young Lady, on Useful and Interesting Subjects, “Your sex much excels our own, in the ease and graces of epistolary correspondence.” While comments such as these were flattering and encouraging, women’s letters became more clearly "gendered" in style and content during the latter half of the century. The ideal women’s letters were supposed to demonstrate female modesty, morality, piety, domestic obedience and affection, rather than knowledge, linguistic wit, and persuasive power. This is why later-century women such as Anne Grant could only engage in transgressive epistolary practices by means of apology and excuse.

29 Hornbeak 81
30 For instance, Mary Guilhermin (1766), Hester Chapone (1773) Lady Dorothea Du Bois (1771), Mary Weightman’s Polite Reasoner (1787), and Mary Fletcher (1793). The Royal Letter-writer, 1793, also took up the moral project.
31 Dierks 33
Besides a few general comments in a thin preface, no rhetorical instruction was offered in any these handbooks—they helped to spread ideology by avoiding altogether a critical vocabulary by which features of language and culture could be analyzed for their strategies and effects. The letter-writing handbook or collection became a site for the social control and construction of gendered and class-based character, conduct, and language use. Therefore, though manuals are significant in forming aspects of the rhetorical landscape to be navigated by women, their direct assistance in women's conscious rhetorical education is highly questionable. Women's actual letters engaged in the rhetorical analysis and instruction that these manuals omitted, and ranged more widely in purpose, style, audience, and content than these stock collections of letters suggested or permitted.

The issue of access to such educational opportunities is of primary importance to women letter-writers in the eighteenth century, who in increasing numbers published works, but still had limited access to advanced education. Advanced rhetorical education in letter-writing builds upon a three-part foundation of social, economic, and educational resources or privileges. First of all, letter writing depends on a social or domestic arrangement that permits time to compose letters and the family encouragement to do so. It also requires a social network of correspondents who also share interest in the writer's rhetorical development, a network distant enough to necessitate written correspondence. Economically the woman writer must have access to the materials to compose letters and be able to afford postage or have some other means of delivery, and economic situation
has bearing on the domestic situation and the type of social circles in which correspondences can develop. Thirdly, educational basics are required, such as handwriting skill, grammar, rudimentary logic and narration skill, and basic generic understanding of salutations, closings, and addressing. If one or more of these basic requirements are insufficient, further rhetorical development in letter writing would be impeded.

Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800), born Elizabeth Robinson, is best known as one of the hosts of conversation parties among eminent and talented men and women in England from the 1740s to the end of her life. Famed as one of the earliest defenders of Shakespeare from his critics and the author of three dialogues in George Lyttleton’s Dialogues from the Dead (1760), there are more than 6,000 letters to or from her in archives. Elizabeth Montagu’s letters engage in literary, educational, religious, and political discourse which had a powerful influence on the great and gifted men and women in her circle. Elizabeth Eger views Elizabeth Montagu as a shaping influence on the three discursive spheres in which women forged social and intellectual relationships

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32 Climenon and Blunt use 1720 as her birth date, but Rizzo cites the International Genealogical Index that she was born October 2, 1818. (Rizzo 118n)
33 Elizabeth Eger reports that there are 6,923 letters in Montagu’s correspondence (Eger Ivii). The Huntington Library’s Montagu collection contains 3,300 letters by Elizabeth Montagu and several thousand letters addressed to her. There are additional smaller collections and fragments of Montagu’s correspondence in British archives.
34 These included the Duchess of Portland, Gilbert West, Thomas Pitt, the Lord of Bath, Elizabeth Carter, Edmund Burke, and Lord Kames.

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with each other: correspondence, patronage, and conversation. In her letters we can see her “manipulating the market forces of the literary profession, for herself and on behalf of others” and “creating a literary community of both sexes.”  

Anne Grant (1755-1838), born Anne MacVicar, was the only child of middle class Scottish parents. Grant spent her childhood years in New York where her father’s regiment served, and became the student and confidante of Madame Schuyler, a Dutch immigrant of high standing. After a brief two years in Glasgow where Grant read literature with her female friends, from 1773 until 1802 Anne MacVicar traveled and lived in the Highlands, writing letters and poems. The poems were collected by her friends and published by subscription in 1803 to support Grant and her eight orphan children after the death of Mr. Grant. In 1806 a selection of her letters was published as *Letters from the Mountains*. In 1807 Grant’s third publication *Memoirs of an American Lady* was based on the life of her tutor Madame Schuyler. Grant became a historian and defender of the Highlanders when she published in 1811 *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders*, and in 1820 Grant entered and won an essay contest held by the Highland Society for another essay on the social history of the Highlanders. As a widow, Grant associated with Edinburgh literati and Scottish nobility, and guided the moral and literary education of noble children two or three at a time. She was also supported by the

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35 Eger, preface lvi

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proceeds of her publications and a few annuities, and in 1826 she was awarded a one-
hundred pound yearly pension by the King upon a petition written and signed by several
classmen.36

I have chosen these women for this chapter because they and their contemporaries
saw them as excellent letter-writers, and their letters were circulated, cherished, and
eventually printed. Their difference in historical context, class, and geographical region
also provide important variables for the analysis of their educational processes and their
epistolary accomplishments. In the following case studies we can see the influence of
mentors and letter-writing rhetorics, the ways in which the women used the letter to
instruct themselves and others in rhetoric, and how they pictured the roles of women and
men as letter-writers. In the case of Elizabeth Montagu, the genres and styles of Cicero’s
letters, as presented by Middleton, are general guides to her epistolary practices.
Montagu and her contemporaries adapt the Ciceronian epistolary rhetoric of the male
political sphere to the female letter-writer and female rhetorical educator. Anne Grant’s
epistolary principles bear a great resemblance to those expressed briefly by Hugh Blair in
his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. In Grant’s rhetorical advice, compared to
Montagu’s, there is a greater emphasis on ideologies of femininity and domesticity to be
expressed in style, content, and rhetorical purpose.

36 Sir Walter Scott, Lord Francis Jeffrey (literary critic for the Edinburgh Review), Sir W. Arbuthont, Henry
Mackenzie (author of The Man of Feeling), Sir Robert Liston, and Principal Baird

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Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800)

Elizabeth Montagu was well endowed with the foundational requirements on which a rhetorical education could be built. There was no question that her family could afford the materials and means of correspondence, and that she was early taught handwriting, grammar, and spelling skills. Her social base was a wealthy and well-educated family stemming from knights and barons, with many of its male members holding positions in legal, clerical, political, and educational institutions. The status of her family, and her husband’s family, the Montagus, provided her with the ability to form wide correspondence network including many of noble birth and high political station.

Growing up in Kent near the estate of Wimpole, Montagu became acquainted with one of its residents, Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, who soon married and became the Duchess of Portland. Lady Margaret’s father was the Earl of Oxford whose immense collection of books and manuscripts was furthered by his son and is now the famous Harleian collection at the British Library, and at the Duchess’s estate of Bullstrode Montagu also had access to a large library. Montagu’s first letter to Lady

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37 Five generations previous to Montagu, her family became owners of the Rokeby estate in Yorkshire. Her direct male ancestors included Thomas Robinson, a lawyer who raised a troop of horse at his own expense for the Parliamentary army; and Sir Leonard Robinson, a Chamberlain of the City of London. Her father Matthew was a Commoner of Trinity College. Other branches of her family included Sir Thomas, a Governor of Barbados 1742-47, and Sir Richard, D.D, who rose to become Primate of Ireland in 1765. She was also related, by her youngest aunts’ marriages, to the correspondent of her youth, Rev. William Freind (who became Dean of Canterbury in 1760) and to the author Rev. Laurence Sterne. (Climenson, Robinson Pedigree)

38 She married Edward Montagu (b. 1691) in 1742; his grandfather was the 1st Earl of Sandwich. His cousin, Edward Wortley Montagu, married Lady Mary Wortley Montagu the author.

39 An early letter states that during an illness at Bullstrode she “read dialogues, studied well penned narrations, read whole books of question and answer, and in short meddled with no work that was not entitled a discourse upon something or other.” (Letters II. 32 to Anne Donnellan, Bullstrode, n.d.) Among
Margaret was written when Montagu was eleven years old and her addressee eighteen.

The opening of this first letter declares that Lady Margaret ordered her to write, and so it appears that Lady Margaret was Montagu’s first female mentor in the art of letter-writing.

Montagu’s early letters often tell us how physical arrangements over space and time facilitated her correspondence. When staying with the Duchess, she and the Duchess write at the same hour of day, every day, together in her dressing room, right before the letters are called for by the daily post between 10 and 11 A.M.\(^{40}\) When Lady Margaret’s mother, the Countess of Oxford, was in residence, Lady Margaret would spend alternate days writing with Montagu and with her mother. The Countess of Oxford became an obstacle to their freedom of correspondence in other ways. As a married woman, Lady Margaret would be annoyed with her mother wishing to see all her letters. for her mother was a formalist in etiquette of style and required all Lady Margaret’s letters to be addressed as if “to a ducal person.”\(^{41}\) In response to this interference, Lady Margaret would often enclose her letters in covers addressed to her female dressing maids in order to indulge in a less formal address. Elizabeth Montagu often sent letters to the Duchess addressed to her daughter’s governess Elizabeth Elstob, in order to avoid the scrutiny of the Duchess’s mother, Lady Oxford.\(^{42}\)

\(^{40}\) (Climenson I: 50).

\(^{41}\) (Climenson I: 56).

\(^{42}\) Elizabeth Elstob, a learned woman, became the governess to the children of the Duchess of Portland in the 1740s. (Climenson I: 133)
The male correspondents in Elizabeth Montagu’s youthful circle included her older brother Matthew, her father Matthew Robinson, and Rev. William Freind, the husband of her aunt Grace Robinson who was two years older than Montagu. This epistolary friendship circle widened during Montagu’s teenage years to include the duchess’s friends Anne Donnellan (daughter of the deceased Lord Chief Exchequer of Ireland, and with her clerical brother a close friend and correspondent of Jonathan Swift), and a young widow Mrs. Mary Pendarves (who later became Mrs. Delany, wife of the Dean of Down). There were one or two other women in this circle of friends, but Montagu’s epistolary friendships with the duchess, Donnellan, and Pendarves/Delany continued into later life.

An important element in epistolary rhetorical education is the frequent encouragement to identify oneself as a writer of letters. Montagu received this encouragement from both friends and family throughout her life. This praise began to flow early. Her brother Matthew Robinson writes in 1741 that “though it would be impertinent now to mention my general opinion of your letters, I don’t remember that I ever saw your thoughts stamped upon a piece of paper with greater force of discernment than in the letter I received from you to-day.” The Duke of Portland also praises her for her skill with language:

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43 Seven years older, her brother Matthew was a Fellow of Trinity College who in 1747 became M.P. for Canterbury, and later inherited two estates, became a baron of Rokey, and authored several political pamphlets (Climenson 1:3). Her father was known as a conversationalist and landscape painter, he was fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge (Ibid 1:3) Friend was the Head Master of Westminster School, later to become Rector of Whitney and then Dean of Canterbury. (Ibid, 1:30)

44 Climenson 1: 78; April 27, 1741

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You may say everything yt [sic] is kind to yourself from my wife, and tho’ I am sure you have a very good genius in turning things as you like, you will hardly outdo her sentiments concerning you. . . . if one was to go on with everything when one receives a letter from you, one’s fingers would become numbed, and unable to answer, was it not for the desire of receiving more letters [. . .]. [sic]  

Mrs. Montagu’s husband, three months after their marriage in 1742, says of his wife’s letters that they “not only please by their wit and vivacity, but are full of sincerity and friendship, of virtue and goodness, which you set in so true and amiable a light, that if those that read them grow not wiser and better, it is none of your fault.” 46 Mr. Montagu granted his wife wide freedom to correspond and visit with her friends, and his early activity in political life encouraged his wife to include political discourse in her letters to him.  

Elizabeth Montagu, by means of her grandmother’s second husband Conyers Middleton (1683-1750), was favored with access to rhetorical instruction specifically regarding letter-writing. Middleton himself, in a letter to Montagu on her marriage, praises Montagu for her skill in descriptive letter-writing, and claimed that his university had a large part of the credit for her education. 47 In her teens when Montagu became an avid letter writer, she was a close reader, admirer and imitator of the political and rhetorical principles outlined in Middleton’s Life of Cicero. 48 In 1741 Montagu devoted at least six months to careful reading, analysis and discussion of this text in conversation.

45 Climenson I: 77  
46 (129 Climenson I:).  
47 Letters II:202, Oct 4, 1742  
48 The History of the Life of Marcus Tullius Cicero. (1741)
and letters. She began to read the life and epistles of Cicero during a formative period of enforced retirement (due to her sister’s smallpox) when she strengthened and deepened her epistolary relationships.

Middleton’s work is instructional in rhetoric not only because he offers rhetorical criticism of the letters, but because he places the letters and political speeches within their rhetorical situation. He argues that the circumstances of their composition, their writer’s ethos, and the contents and stylistic features make Cicero’s letters “the memoirs of his times” that reveal “the grounds and motives” of great events. Montagu learned from this text to view the letter not merely as a literary object but as an important instrument in civil life. After beginning to discuss Cicero with friends and family, Montagu’s letters are less frivolous, humorous and chatty, and more politically-minded, and more sensitive to the forms of rhetoric around her. She reflects on the dangerous effects of satiric wit and flattery upon society, and criticizes a local parson for the weakness of his rhetoric on such an important topic. We begin to encounter more comments on the style and effectiveness of her own epistolary techniques such as “encomiums upon friendship” and a “panegyric of vanity.” We see her growing desirous for a larger sphere of freedom and influence, and even fame. She was fortunate enough to gain an entry into civic life

49 In 1741 Montagu writes to Anne Donnellan, “I intend to read, with great attention, all his [Cicero’s] epistles, for I find by those Dr. Middleton has inserted in his work, that he writes very freely to his friends.” (Letters 1:156, April 20, 1741)

50 Life of Cicero III: 312-313

51 Letters II:2; 1741 to Rev. Freind; Letters II:21 Nov 24, 1741 to Sarah Robinson.

52 “The wise disinterested patriot, who guards the safety of his country by his vigilance, is the man made in the image of his Maker, and a far better citizen than the ambitious man, who enlarges its dominion... If ever ambition is to be excused, it is in a little woman, who must stand upon an eminence to become
at her marriage the following year to an older man with landholdings and political connections. Montagu continues to write Ciceronian letters that argue the glory of her kingdom will only be extended by the virtue of its leaders and subjects, and the promotion of classical education and the arts.

The letters of Cicero are forwarded by Middleton as a good example of style and content, which acted as a general guide Montagu herself followed. He lists the excellent features of four types of letters Cicero wrote: the familiar letter, letters of compliment, political (or advisory) letters, and letters of recommendation. I will discuss each of these four types in turn, demonstrating how Montagu used, adapted, or deviated from Middleton’s presentation of epistolary rhetoric.

The familiar letters of Cicero, explains Middleton, do not have elegant diction but rather common, conversational diction, and witty jokes that are not forced, “flowing always from the subject,” including puns. Friendship and openness are aspects Middleton praises in Cicero’s letters, for they “touch the heart of the reader, by laying open that of the writer.” Cicero’s familiar letters were thus a realm of his rhetorical practice which was accessible to Montagu’s imitation.

Montagu also had, during her lifetime, examples of respected female letter-writers, and she herself mentions Madame de Sevigné and Elizabeth Rowe. They are estimated by Montagu according to a Ciceronian model which balances the public fame of wit and influence with the importance of personal virtue. Madame de Sevigné’s conspicuous; one who finds herself so empty she must have vanity to bear her out. Riches make life easy, greatness makes it honourable, but what can fame do? Does it comfort the ear that cannot hear it? ... Alas! that the ghost of Lucretia, and the Wife of Bath, should dispute le pas on the banks of Styx, and have no herald of renown to decide it by our court of honour.” Letters 1:217; to Rev. Freind, 1741.
letters, first published in English in 1727, Montagu admired highly. Mrs. West praises Montagu's epistolary skill by comparing her with Sevigné. In a letter probably written in 1780, Montagu confesses to Mrs. Carter, "I read [Sevigné's] letters with sympathy as well as admiration," for Sevigné's "own pen has written her character on every mind capable of receiving impressions of virtue, and of wit [sic]." She speaks confidently of "Madame de Sevigné's fame as a letter writer" -- she had been publicly compared with Cicero and Cornelia. Montagu's early letters to the Duchess of Portland are written in the chit-chat gossiping style of Sevigné, full of unique conceits, colorful anecdotes, simple professions of affection, and satiric humor. The more pious Elizabeth Rowe's epistolary writing was another model for Montagu. In 1739 in a letter to the Duchess of Portland, young Montagu jokes that she has died of languishing for a letter from her friend, and so she "called for the pen and ink Mrs. Rowe had used to write her letters.

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53 Sevigné's 2nd edition appeared in 1732; additional letters of Sevigné were printed in England in the 1750s and 60s. In 1755 Montagu writes to her sister, "I suppose you know there are two volumes of Madame de Sevigné's letters come out this winter; they are amusing as the anecdotes of a person one has a great regard for, but they were rejected in former editions as not being so brilliant as those published before." (Climenson II: 68-9, January 1755)

54 "The pleasure I receive from your letters convinces me public fame sometimes speaks truth, as I am sure it did when I was told Mrs. Montagu was the most agreeable correspondent in the world. As long as I enjoy that pleasure, I shall be less anxious about the remains of Madame de Sevigné's letters, though I have a great esteem and regard for her memory" (Letters 3:152 from Mrs. West, March 5, 1751.)

55 Blunt II:98; To Elizabeth Carter, Sept 12, n.d. In the 1754 French edition, the editor M. Grouvelle claims that Sevigné has widely been compared to Cicero "whose Letters are the best that antiquity has left us, and who, in like manner, was passionately fond of his daughter. She might also have been compared to a Roman lady, as much celebrated for the style of her letters, as for her chastity and maternal affection—to Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi." (The Letters of Madame de Sevigné "Biographical Sketch" xlix.)

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from the dead to the living." Much of the moralizing and joking about death in
Elizabeth Montagu's early letters can be attributed to an imitation of the style and
sentiment of passages in Rowe's letters.

Elizabeth Montagu's youthful familiar letters are in the style of Maintenon,
Sevigné and James Howell: they unite the elements of playful, insightful rhetorical
display with expressions of affection. There is evidence that she read Maintenon's and
Sevigné's letters carefully and recommended them to others even though their style was
rather outdated. In 1757 she complained to Elizabeth Carter to send her next
philosophical letter to Sevigné or Maintenon: "they will admire your language, they will
approve your sentiments" but will not feel afraid for your health. A most pertinent
example of an imitation of the style of Sevigné and Maintenon is in a letter to Mrs.
Boscawen which asserts that Mr. West loves both her and Montagu herself

for he must honour a generous principle in any one, and love an affectionate one;
so I think I have made out my proposition in a very logical manner, and given it
almost the force of a syllogism, and a syllogism is like a twisted cobweb, though
the single thread will not bear handling, yet twisted, and entwisted, by the
instruments of rhetoric, it is hard to be broken.

In the manner of James Howell's *Familiar Letters*, most of her letters begin with unique,
witty, finely-crafted opening and closing sections that thank her correspondents for their
letters and sometimes apologize for slowness of response and name the specific occasion

56 (Letters I. 68). She refers to Elizabeth Rowe's publication *Friendship in Death* (1728)

57 Montagu refers to Maintenon's letters in 1752, and 1756 (Letter to Gilbert West, Nov. 26, 1752; *Letters*
III: 202, Letter to Sarah Scott [1756?], *Letters* IV: 18.) She also recommended a new edition of Sevigné's
letters to her sister around 1755. (Letters III: 291) and sent volumes of Sevigné to Mrs. Vesey in 1773
(Blunt I: 282)

58 Carter's letter had omitted reference to her health and was all "wit and wisdom" (Letters IV:188)

59 Letters III: 214; October 16, 1749

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of writing. Not one of these openings and closing is a bland "thank you for your letter" or "your most obedient humble servant" but like Desiderus Erasmus' example of approximately a hundred ways of saying "your letter pleased me mightily," demonstrates her copia of thought and style. In one closing, in a letter to Gilbert West in 1753, she writes an artful excuse for the length of her letter:

you know I have your permission to trouble you with long letters, a dangerous license to one whom want of thought, does not reduce to silence, but every line I write must be considered as an elogé of your patience and condescension; having so long dwelt on your virtues, I will now remember your talents, and detain you no longer from such employments as they will naturally lead you to, and you will pardon all my impertinence for the respect and affection with which I am, &c. &c. E. Montagu.60

Elizabeth Montagu was aware of the "forms" of letter writing and played with them, but she often refers to forms as obstacles to expressing her feelings freely in familiar letters. In 1743 she writes to the Duchess of Portland that she is glad to hear the duchess is in a place far from the 'chains and shackles of ceremony and constraint' (namely, the presence of her mother), and immediately Montagu writes of the burden of forms and regulations and tuning oneself to others' opinions.61 Montagu's early letters demonstrate an awareness of the formal language one ought to use to address social superiors, such as "your Grace" to refer to the duchess, and patterns of opening and closing. She is aware of certain rhetorical genres in the letter as well. She thanks Dr. Monsey for his "moral epistle," praising him for it, since a more "vulgar mind" than his would have given only news and politics, "but you send me an admirable panegyric upon

60 Letters 3:249 to G West Sep 27, 1753
61 (letters II. 276, 1743)
truth, and a high seasoned well spiced satire upon falsehood.” She wants more moral epistles, and jokes that if he writes about ethics when visiting a member of parliament, he should send her theological discourse when visiting a chief justice. Monsey’s Erasmian “folly” in his epistolary style is praiseworthy. “I do not love the epistolary forms.” Montagu confesses. “Forms of all kind indeed are good to keep fools from endless deviations; but I like the vagaries of people of sense, and pray when you write to me, go up and down your sheet of paper, saying what you please en passant.”

It is also probable that young Montagu also read Fenelon’s works on rhetoric and applied them to her letters, for his idea of “la bienséance,” or propriety, as a rhetorical principle appears in an early letter to Freind. She tells Freind she will write him a long letter before going to London while she is still his simple country cousin, for “I have always accustomed myself to appear to you without those disguises which we wear as ornaments with our acquaintance, and as armour with our enemies. But amongst friends, truth may appear with no other clothing than la bienséance.” With a similar analogy between words and clothing, Fenelon’s Lettre à l’Academie argues “there is a propriety [bienséance] to be observed with words as with clothes. A grieving widow does not wear mourning clothes with embroidery, frills, and ribbons.”

62 Letters 4:129, July 5 [1757?]
64 Trans. Barbara Warnick. The Sixth Canon 54
Montagu also learned epistolary skills and rhetorical principles by engaging in rhetorical criticism of familiar letters. The theme of retirement to the country was popular during the first half of the century, and Montagu shares this interest. As a hostess of conversation parties among the noble and highly literate, she continued to express curiosity about how rhetoricians and politicians carry their civic virtues into their domestic retirement and old age—she imagines Demosthenes at home and Cicero in his slippered pantaloon, and considers Mr. Pitt a modern Demosthenes. At the age of 25, Mrs. Montagu passed on to her friend the Duchess of Portland a brief letter copied in an unknown hand from Lord Orford (Sir Robert Walpole) to General Churchill, right after Churchill won a battle at Dettingen. Montagu, the Duchess of Portland, and their mutual friend Anne Donnellan had been corresponding regarding the political events earlier in the year surrounding the resignation of Sir Robert Walpole and the king making him Lord Orford. The letter was circulated as a memorial of the occasion on which it was written, and the unique and admirable way its aged writer avoids complaining of his own recent forced retreat from parliament, and avoids flattering the General about his success, instead inviting him to partake of the beauties of his country home. Orford praises nature and contrasts its pleasures to the bustle and flattery of parliament in London:

65 “I daresay Demosthenes at his Villa was all sweetness and gentleness after he had uttered a Philippick” (Blunt I:246; 1771 to Mrs. Vesey); “How is it that Tully makes his style fit equally to every subject? The precise moralist, the discussing philosopher, and the angry consul, are never more nicely adapted than when he shifts into the lame and slippered pantaloon, and relaxing the nerves of style speaks the language of the mitigated meliorated passions of mild old age.” (Letters IV:212; 1759 to Elizabeth Carter); She says Gilbert West supplies Mr. Pitt’s absence by reading Demosthenes. (Letters 3:243 to G West, Sep 27, 1753.)

66 The copy is enclosed within two months that the original had been written in June of 1743, which suggests that Montagu’s circle was not very far divided from Walpole’s.
Men of Wit and Pleasure about Town understand not the charms of the inanimate world: my Flatterers here are Mutes: the Oaks, the Brookes, the Chestnuts seem to contend which shall best please the Lord of the Mannour [sic]; they cannot deceive, they will not Lye. I in sincerity admire them and have as many Beauties about me as fill up all my hours of dangling . . . 

Montagu comments, “if ever he was to be envy’d it was when he wrote that letter.” Earlier in her own epistle she expresses a similar sentiment regarding nature. She is preparing to go to London to be inoculated after the birth of her son, but on the way. “I intend to go and indulge reveries at an old Castle [Donnington] . . . The prospect is of sufficient extent to let the poetick [sic] fancy soar at pleasure among the beauties of Nature.” One of Montagu’s favorite topics in her letters is the description of landscape, garden, and architecture as a rhetorical art.

According to Conyers Middleton, Cicero’s letters of compliment written to superiors show a reasonable desire to please, expressed in delicate sentiment and diction, “yet without any pompous titles and lofty epithets.” Montagu’s early letters to the Duchess of Portland express exuberance and satiric wit, and the desire to entertain her patroness, for the Duchess was not only a noblewoman but six years older than herself. Elizabeth Montagu valued her correspondence with the Bishop of London so much as to forward the Bishop’s letter to her friend the Duchess of Portland in 1760. The letter to the Duchess accompanying the enclosure engages in an explanation of the rhetorical context and an analysis of her rhetorical strategies and the bishop’s strategic reply. The

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67 Climenson I: 156.
68 Ibid.
69 "The beauties of a palace are not so enchanting as those of a garden or park, but they differ only as eloquence and poetry do, and who that has fine taste does not relish both?” (Letters 4:309; to Lord Lyttelton, Oct 21, [1760])
subject at hand is whether the poems of Ossian are falsely claimed to be translations of ancient poetry. She believes them to be genuine and is slightly affronted with the Bishop’s skepticism on receiving her gift of the Highland Poems edited by James Macpherson. She judges the Bishop's character and her relation to him delicately enough to wait for a reply until the proper occasion put a more favorable dress on her correspondence with him: “I thought to write to him and assume the air of being his correspondent would have too much appearance of presumption, and not to thank him for his note might look like neglect, so I waited till the season allow’d me to send him some wheatears [birds] and to assure him I wrote only as his poulterer.”

Under this cover she modestly states her arguments on behalf of the originality of the poems and closes by recommending that the Bishop use her letter as a protective wrapping for the wheatears while they are roasted.

Despite this humble pretense of Elizabeth’s, the Bishop saw through to her intention of pursuing an argument with him. He compares her letter to the second punch in a schoolyard fight among Eton boys, asking her to excuse him from “the Presumption and folly of inviting you to a Combat, in which I can have no hopes of success.” This is not empty flattery, for he continues to expose the wisdom of her rhetorical strategies, especially how she represents her femininity and learning:

In the midst of this Philosophical enquirey [sic] about the Passions, you very artfully turn to your Family Affairs and give (I doubt not) excellent directions to the Cook wch [sic] shows you to be as great in the Kitchin [sic] as in the Closet, which indeed is the only way of being great in either.

70 (Climenson II: 197; September 18, 1760).
Nothing, I think, is more disagreeable than Learning in a Female, when the Mistress studys [sic] Newton, which perhaps she neither does nor ever will understand, to the absolute neglect of her Children and Servants.

In turn, Montagu praises this strategic reply of the Bishop's as appropriate to his religious role. Also, in view of his advanced age and the fact he had to use an amanuensis to write her, she observes that the letter contains cogent reasoning and fluent expression. Thus by praising the Bishop's letter and setting it in rhetorical context, she demonstrates how well her own letter inspired him to such a well-wrought reply.

The political letters of Cicero, writes Middleton, contain maxims drawn from experiential knowledge: he "always touches the point on which the affair turns" and so his political advice was prudent and his political insight often turned out to be prophetic." Elizabeth Montagu's letters, while they do narrate and comment on political events and speeches, do not often give directive political advice about what should be said or done in a particular case. However, they do contain literary and educational advice which was at times both prudent and prophetic. For instance, in 1753 she advised Gilbert West not to waste his time and risk his reputation in writing a discourse on miracles since the taste of modern philosophers is so skeptical. "Arguments of equal credibility are not always equally believed," she reasons, because physical and moral objections will arise from experience and from recent detections of fraud. In 1760, nine years before Lyttelton's Dialogues of the Dead were published (including three dialogues by herself), Montagu's response to an early draft may have spurred him to change them

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71 Life of Cicero I.312-314
72 Letters III: 220, to Gilbert West, Jan 13, 1753

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into dialogues. She says to him that the manuscript of letters, written in the characters of famous dead persons, seem like dramatic characters. The fact the letters are written secretly makes them seem more realistic, and the style and contents suit the characters of their supposed authors.\footnote{73}{Climenson II: 179; January 15, 1760.} Her comments on the dialogues as "dramatic" and her indirect reference to Fenelon’s theory of \textit{la bienséance}\footnote{74}{the propriety of language to the situation and character of writer} had an effect. Eventually the final collaborative work took on the dramatic dialogue form and even the title of Fenelon’s work, \textit{Dialogues from the Dead}. 

The closest Elizabeth Montagu comes to a complete theory of a rhetorical education is in her letter to the son of her friend Sir George Lyttelton. Thomas Lyttelton, on graduating from Eton, receives an advice letter from Montagu which reveals her attitudes towards Classical rhetoric and modern Belles Lettres. The letter itself is a fine specimen of Montagu’s rhetorical skill, as she interweaves Classical and Biblical analogies of courtship and education. Letter-writing is to be an important tool of his education, for she warns him that she will write long letters to him and she will "expect full answers to them." Her first observation is that she would be happier to hear of his engagement to Cicero or Livy than to a woman, for she is against his taking leave of classical studies and "fall[ing] into the study of \textit{les belles lettres}, as we call our modern books." This "fall" into belles lettres would be like coquetting with a woman. She reasons that we call modern books \textit{belles lettres} "from the same courtesy as the weakest part of the rational species is styled the fair sex, though it can boast of few perfect

\footnote{73}{Climenson II: 179; January 15, 1760.}
\footnote{74}{the propriety of language to the situation and character of writer}
beauties, and perhaps the utmost grace and dignity of the human form is never found in it." From associations with the "fall" and the "fair sex" Montagu then launches into metaphors of gardens and Eden-like Parnassus: "As you have got a key to the sacred shades of Parnassus, do not lose your time in sauntering in the homely orchards or diminutive pleasure gardens of the latter times." Thomas Lyttelton's "key" to Parnassus refers to his training in Latin and Greek, and/or his access to a university education where the classics will be studied.  

As for eloquence, in her letter to Thomas Lyttelton, Montagu makes good use of the tradition of representing "Rhetorica" and the muses as feminine. But unlike the negative feminization of belles lettres which enforces her proscription, the female muse of true eloquence does not trace her ancestry to seductive Eve. Virtuous eloquence has a tradition that Montagu traces to the ancient feminized spirit, Sophia, by whom God created the earth, according to Solomon's Proverbs —the principle of practicality, invention, political power, virtue, and verbal wit:  

As to the particular study of eloquence I need hardly exhort you to it, for eloquence is not only the most beautiful of all the daughters of wisdom, but has also the best dowry; and we may say of her, as Solomon did of her mother, riches and honours are in her right hand. —Elevation of sentiment, and dignity of language are necessary to make an orator; modern life and modern language will hardly inspire you with either. I look upon virtue as the muse of eloquence, she

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75 Montagu also envied Elizabeth Carter's knowledge of Greek which was her "key" to understanding Longinus in the original (Letters IV.211; 1759 to Carter).

76 See the whole of Proverbs 8 for the creative role of Sophia (wisdom). Proverbs 8:12 in the King James Version reads "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions." Montagu, who likely read this version, would make a logical connection between "witty inventions" and eloquence.
inspired the philippics of the Grecian and Roman orator, her voice awakened Rome, slumbering in the snares of Catiline. Public spirit will teach the art of public speaking better than the rules of rhetoric, but, above all things, the character of the orator gives persuasion, grace, and dignity to the oration.77

Montagu is thus carrying out, in a creative way, Lord Lyttelton’s instructions that she guide his son Thomas “as Minerva did Telemachus to avoid the dangers of the Calypsos” and “let him learn by admiring you that no [female] charms are truly amiable but those that are under the government of virtue.” She does more than merely warn him about his choice of women; she teaches him the very Ciceroian principle of the “good man speaking well”—that even the masculine “charms” of eloquence require virtue and religion as their support. Lord Lyttelton’s high esteem for her talents and advice resulted in a high encomium of her eloquence in a letter to his tutor Mr. Graham.78

Montagu’s epistolary corpus has few samples that can be called letters of recommendation.79 Middleton had praised Cicero’s letters of recommendation higher than the three other sorts of letters (familiar, commendatory, and political): “the others shew his wit and his parts, these his benevolence and his probity.” Such letters use “warmth and force of words” and argue that his own interest and honor are entwined with

77 Letters 4:86-91; to Thomas Lyttelton, n.d [possibly 1758].

78 “I doubt not but that the voice of thousands has made you acquainted with [Mrs. Montagu’s] extraordinary talents, her genius, her wit, and her admirable erudition; she embellishes every subject she speaks or writes upon, by the most happy flow of eloquence; and by the exquisite nicety of her perceptions, throws a new light and new grace, on the most commonplace topics. She is really possesset of the true Philosopher’s Stone for under her touch everything becomes gold.” (Blunt 1:33, Quoted in Lord Lyttelton to Montagu, 6 Sept 1762.) Reginald Blunt, the author of these memoirs, minimizes the value of Thomas’s assessment of her knowledge and skill: “High praise this from a young Eton lad, and doubtless penned with a laudable desire to impress the tutor, and to be quoted to the lady.” However, Blunt himself explains that Thomas had been writing to Mr. Graham, and it was only upon his father asking if there were any secrets in the letter, that Thomas showed his father the letter.

79 She voluntarily “commends” the virtues of her friends and acquaintances to others, but does not seem to do so by their request.
the success of his friends.\footnote{Life of Cicero I.312-314} But Montagu disliked what appeared to be “vanity” in Cicero’s character, a product of this warmth of style and the pursuit of his interest and that of his friends. While Montagu herself was patroness to many young artists and literati, she was reluctant to forward other people’s requests and thus make use of her familiarity with the great. She even refused her friend Lord Kames such a service, asking him instead to use his friendship with Lord Mansfield to persuade the Bishop of Litchfield to write the introduction.\footnote{National Archives of Scotland, f. 265-66; Montagu to Kames, n.d. Kames published \textit{Loose Hints Upon Education, Chiefly Concerning the Culture of the Heart} in 1781.} The young Edmund Burke wrote to Montagu when he was still only a distant acquaintance in 1759, asking for her influence with Mr. Pitt in getting the Consulship of Madrid. He writes “I venture to ask your advice whether I can with propriety proceed at all in this affair, and if you think I ought to undertake it, in what manner it would be proper for me to proceed.” He even gives Mrs. Montagu a gracious opportunity to decline his request, adding “I am sensible that there are in all people’s connections many points that may make a person of delicacy unwilling to ask a favour in some quarters, and yet more unwilling from the same delicacy to tell the person for whom it is to be asked that they have such difficulties.” He apparently judged that women were not without their influence among men of politics, for “It occurred to me that a letter from you to Miss Pitt might be of great service to me. I thought too of mentioning Mrs. Boscawen.” The letter also makes mention of her kindness to their mutual friend Emin as a reason to believe in her goodness to those in need, and mentions their mutual friend Dr.
Monsey. Apparently Mrs. Montagu declined his request, and he writes a gracious reply, saying "the reasons you have been pleased to give me for not making the application are very convincing and obliging." He also adds that he concurs with her in the difficulty of attaining the goal he aimed at but was willing to try despite the discouraging situation.

Knowing the scrutiny that she and others applied to published letters, Montagu was sensitive about the possibility of her letters being published or transmitted in manuscript. Middleton praised Cicero's letters because they were written by a great statesman who, despite his greatness, "had never designed [his letters] for the public, nor kept any copies of them."\(^8\) Because of this lack of design, the letters appear to express genuine character "without disguise of affectation; especially in his letters to Atticus, to whom he talked with the same frankness as to himself." Middleton writes in a footnote that Cicero himself chided Antony for publishing one of his letters, saying "how many jests . . . are often found in private Letters, which, if made public, might be thought foolish and impertinent?\(^4\) When Messenger Monsey asks Montagu if he may regularly show her letters to Mr. Affleck, she says no, and this is her reason:

I have known such disagreeable things arise from a communication of private letters, that I beg to be excused; there is so much envy, malice, and nonsense, in the world, that the most innocent amusement cannot escape; some fool might

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\(^8\) Climenon II: 169-70; September 24, 1759
\(^3\) Life of Cicero III: 313
\(^4\) Life of Cicero III: 314n
know my letters were shewn Mr. Affleck; that fool would tell another, who would report to a third fool, that I was vain of my letters, and loved to have them communicated; and to what three fools assert some wise man would assent, and I should be ridiculous.  

In other words, it is vain and foolish to blatantly appear to want one's letters to be transmitted, regardless of whether one desires such fame or actually does write with posterity in mind. Only when someone made a point of explicitly asking her permission did her modesty call her to put limits on whom she would permit to show them. Like Madame de Sevigné herself, Montagu was frequently told that her letters were being copied or circulated among friends, and this flattery she did not protest very often or very strongly. She repeatedly received requests from correspondents who wish to show her letters to others, and at one time she even received a threat that some letters of hers would be published before her death. By refusing to write exact dates on the majority of her letters, she made it difficult for her recipients (and future editors) to accuse her of intentionally writing for posterity, and thus she makes herself a path to Ciceronian fame for her greatness of wit joined to her personal virtue in humility.

Montagu's correspondence with Henry Home, Lord Kames, author of *Elements of Criticism* (1762), also went beyond Kames' expectations in his female correspondent. Montagu responded to his request for her thoughts on “ornament” and she complied in

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85 Letters 4:136, July 26 [1757?]

86 She tells Monsey that she does not mind him showing her letters to his daughter for her amusement, but not to “a scholar and a divine, and one who has taken his master of arts degree,” which would be an affront to the muses, sciences, and graces (Letters 4:152; Aug 28, 1757).

87 Montagu was told by her relative the Primate in 1786 that “Junius Junior” has hold of some of her letters and is threatening to publish some, hoping to extort money from her. Blunt gives no information about Montagu’s response. (Blunt II:205)
sending him her thoughts upon it in a very long letter. However, they seem to have had
different ideas about the purpose of the correspondence. Kames takes several paragraphs
from her letter, revises them, and places them in his fourth edition of the *Elements of
Criticism* appearing in 1769. In response to this, Montagu complains that he did not
offer her any resistance or feedback as she expected, and this is apparently one of her
purposes and pleasures in correspondence:

> you have disappointed me terribly about my notable letter on the subject of
ornament. I was in hopes it would have given occasion to a paper war between us.
I imagined you would laugh at me, quarrel with me, rally me, confute me, & do
everything but what no disputant ever does with his antagonist, convince me; but
instead of that, you are mighty silent, & mighty civil, & you put my letter quietly
in your pocket, & now very politely say you may hereafter put some of my
conjectures into yr [sic] Elements of criticism, but the Muses forbid that my
reveries like poor maggots in amber should there lye so conspicuously
preserved!

It seems that her thoughts were not to be so “conspicuously preserved.” A comparison
between Montagu’s letter on ornament, and the section on ornament in an edition after
Kames’ last revisions, reveals a great disparity of thought and expression, enough to give
evidence that Montagu was in fact his antagonist on several points. For instance,
Montagu writes “Almathea’s horn will always be a darling ornament, tho we have not
now any regard to her for her care of Jupiter Ammon.” Kames writes “Almathea’s horn
has always been a favorite ornament, because of its connection with a lady who was

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88 “... there is a shining passage Vol:2 page 449 which I owe to your Lady-ship, tho I ventured not to use
your name without your consent. The bulk of what is said upon ornaments page 474 of the same volume are
your hints; and you may judge whether hints are not well bestow’d upon me when I make so good use of
them.” (Randall 109; Kames to Montagu, Dec 9, 1769.)

89 National Archives of Scotland MSS GD24 / 1/ 572-57 f. 198. Montagu to Kames, May 9, 1767

90 Randall 99; Montagu to Kames, April 13, 1767.
honored with the care of Jupiter in his infancy.” Montagu claims that diamonds, when
used as buttons, appear more noble than jewels paraded without functional purpose. She
comments on the absurdity of a diamond grasshopper in a lady’s headdress, and she
explains that showy ornament makes a man seem effeminate and a woman seem
coquettish, for parade is associated with littleness of mind in both sexes. But Kames
limits the discussion of jewelry to women, and allows that diamonds in the hair are
“splendid” and “proper for a young beauty.” Kames also leaves out Montagu’s
arguments about the origins of ornaments, the differences among ornaments in various
countries, and her related claim that “Art will not be established on any principles”
controverts Kames’ repeated claim that rules of criticism may be established based on
universal human nature.

When Montagu forwarded Kames’ revisions and her original letter to Lord
Lyttelton, he replied in anger, “I am vexed [sic] to see that so much of your admirable letter
is stolen and spoilt here. You must, if you can, leave out or alter the parts he has
mangled.” But Montagu let the issue rest, satisfied with the apparent esteem Kames had
for her. Kames apologizes for altering the vivacity of her style to better suit his own, and
apologizes for not quoting her. However, in another section on winter gardens, he does

91 Elements of Criticism 460, Ch. 24 “Gardening and Architecture,” New Edition, New York: Huntington & Savage, 1849; the editor claims that this edition is taken with accuracy from the edition just before the author’s death in 1782, which could be the fifth edition of 1774 or the sixth edition of 1785 that claims in its title to be based on the author’s last revisions.
92 Ibid 460, 461.
93 Randall 104n.
quote her by name in a lengthy footnote, and in this case she and Kames are in complete agreement about the rhetorical purposes of a winter garden, that is, to inspire meditation and reasoning.\(^{94}\)

Why did Kames not engage with Montagu in debating these divergent ideas in their correspondence, as the Bishop of London did on the issue of Ossian's poetry? One of Kames' early letters to Montagu proposes that the correspondence be "merely chit chat, confined to no subject nor rule. . . . let us both write without fear; as for wit let it come as it may, only the best preparation for it is not to aim at it."\(^{95}\) For him the letters are to be mental relaxation and recreation, but for Montagu they are these and more: they are ideally part of a mutually instructive friendship, and she was hoping for some instructive debate more than for a silent adoption of her ideas.

It is clear by the number of letters that were preserved by correspondents and how well they were cared for, that Montagu's letters were considered artifacts of literature, perhaps comparable to manuscript poetry. One of Montagu's earliest correspondents, the Duchess of Portland, preserved Montagu's youthful letters very carefully in a letter-book arranged by date received. Montagu herself treats her own letters with a more studied indifference to their longevity. On several occasions Montagu speaks jokingly of her letter being waylaid and ending up as a liner for a pie, as when she writes, "Mr. Boswell himself who drunk or sober is not too partial to the productions of my pen, wd not

\(^{94}\) Kames *Elements of Criticism* 449n-450n. Randall says this footnote is present in the fifth edition

\(^{95}\) Randall 94; Kames to Montagu, November 17, 1766.
condemn them to so hard a fate till they had been *almost* half read.” However, nearing the end of her life, she allows herself to take pleasure in the thought of her letters being preserved by others. In 1789 Elizabeth Montagu writes to her niece,

You did my letters an undeserved honour in taking the trouble to copy them. As I am arrived at an age to look back on my past life with more pleasure, perhaps, than to future expectations, I have found some satisfaction in the recollection of former days, which letters then written present to the mind in a more distinct and lively manner than memory can do. Whatever gave one great joy or great grief, leaves strong marks on the mind, but the soft, gentle pleasures, like ye annual flowers in a garden, pass away with ye season, unless thus preserved.

**Anne Grant (1755-1838)**

Anne Grant, born nearly forty years after Elizabeth Montagu, shares many similarities with Montagu in the ways in which she learned and used epistolary rhetoric. Though they had different mentors, models, and correspondents, Grant also used the letter to educate herself and others in epistolary rhetoric. The familiar letter was still seen as a window to the soul and character of the writer, and the female writer still felt it necessary to avoid the imputation of writing letters with their future publication in mind. However, ornament, wit, and argumentation, already suspect in Montagu’s early life, became even more censured in epistles of the later century. Even while the letter became more “naturalized” and de-rhetorized as a genre, Grant was able to articulate the principles and methods by which a “natural” woman’s persona was to be conveyed in a letter.

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96 Blunt II:55
97 Doran 350-351; Dec. 31, 1789.
Grant dealt with proscriptions on epistolary and gendered language use by making excuses for her own transgressions. By emphasizing her middle-class humility and lack of formal education, she creates a background for her obvious epistolary excellence.

Anne Grant's foundation for a rhetorical education was built in spite of adverse circumstances. She did not come from a wealthy family like Elizabeth Montagu; her father was an army chaplain. Her parents did not give strong encouragement to Grant's early development in language. While her mother did teach her to read, she gave her more tasks in the departments of needlework, child care and housework. Her father was often absent, and when he was at home he discouraged Grant from reading "idle plays" so that she read Shakespeare in secret on a raft by the river. The bulk of Grant's elementary education in language was self-led, directed at times by various mentors, mainly military men and Madame Schuyler, who saw her hunger for knowledge and fed it with access to personal libraries, conversation and gifts of books.

Anne Grant's letter-writing education by means of reading was quite different from Montagu's in that she had access to very few books in her childhood in America, however, there is a crucial similarity since of those books she did read, the majority were published in the early half of the eighteenth century, since access to recent publications was rare. In her early reading she depended on the libraries of military men and of Madame Schuyler,98 her mentor who was widowed and past sixty at the time Grant met her at age eight. Before the age of eight, while with her father's regiment at Fort Ontario, she read Welwood's *Memoirs of the History of England*. She reports having devoured an

98 (the subject of Anne Grant's book *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 1808)
ample quantity of memoirs, histories, biographies, and books of divinity unnamed, from
the libraries in Albany and Fort Ontario, which may have been partially or completely
written in letter format. At Madame Schuyler’s she read the letters and essays of the
Spectator and Burnet’s Memoirs, and it is likely that many letters from government and
military leaders of Schuyler’s acquaintance were read or quoted in conversations that
Grant overheard when Schuyler entertained important company, since details of remote
events are remembered by Grant with such lucidity in her memoir of life in early New
York.

Since Grant’s early education was conducted by means of conversation and
private reading and reflection, she had minimal writing practice until she came to
Scotland. This forced her to develop her capacity for memorization and careful
observation, which enabled her to write memoirs of her life in New York forty years after
the events occurred. While at Fort Ontario when she was around seven years old, Grant
learned handwriting by copying the script of a gentleman soldier part of whose
punishment for misdeeds was that he was assigned to Grant as a writing tutor. She
obtained 20 sheets of his handwriting to work with before he was transferred to another
regiment. While in Albany her education was mostly oral, with the exception of one
poem she wrote at the age of nine.

In Glasgow the only formal education Anne Grant had was a brief tuition at a
dancing school, but she lived in working-class family with extensive knowledge of
scripture and a library of classics from the time of Queen Anne. Since handwriting itself

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was such a challenge to becoming a writer it is not surprising that Grant was a late scribbler. She confesses to her friend Catherine Maria Fanshawe that the letter written in 1773 at the age of 18 that opens her published correspondence was "the first unshackled letter of my very own diction that I wrote in my life" (Grant Memoirs I: 211). As a result of this early neglect her handwriting is consistently very difficult to read.

Anne Grant and Elizabeth Montagu also differed significantly in their early correspondence networks: Grant did not write with a high-born lady whose unequal status could have tempted her to engage in brilliant wit in order to keep the attachment mutually beneficial. Grant's correspondents were her social equals, if not her educational equals, and she did not learn to correspond in the comforts of a leisured home, but during a period of homelessness and travel. On the positive side, when she and her mother followed her father to Fort Augustus in the Highlands, the friendships she left behind in Glasgow and her isolation from peers were strong motives for her to put pen to paper.

It is easy to imagine that by reading her favorite books by Smollett, Richardson, Milton, Ossian, and Homer, and other works, that Anne Grant was able to absorb principles and terms of rhetoric which she then applies to her own and others' letters. Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), a travel narrative constructed of letters by various characters to their respective correspondents, situated letters within a rhetorical context, as did Middleton's *Life of Cicero*. From Matthew Bramble's and Jery Melford's descriptions of discourse between critics and authors, politicians, and ladies

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99 Smollett's character, a student of Oxford whose observations are youthful and spiced with scholarly vocabulary turned to humorous uses.
and their servants, she could observe the vocabulary of rhetoric and criticism ("panegyric," "encomium," "taste," "harangue") applied to everyday situations of speech and writing. She used these terms in order to entertain and inform her correspondents. For instance, to Miss Ourry, Grant concludes a discourse about the taste for intellectual discourse, saying that her "letter of declamation" shall be followed by a letter of narration. The next letter complains of Ourry's flat response, saying "There was a time when such a half-moral, half-political harangue from your friend [Anne] would have made you laugh." References to rhetorical strategy are used for the purpose of humorous display in a deliciously playful letter to Miss Ewing in which every phrase ends with a rhyme ending in "ation/asion." This passage narrates her responses to a letter received from someone she and her friends call "the wee advocate," in which Grant is both flattered beyond reason for her mental attainments, and harshly chided for falling asleep during a sermon:

Were I not afraid of the imputation of pedantick [sic] affectation, I could make this clear by a learned quotation from M.T. Cicero's fortieth oration; therefore, upon due deliberation, being moved by your vexation, beyond any other consideration, I must resume the thread of my narration for your further edification, and my thorough vindication... though we live among a perverse generation, each of us may keep peace in our own habitation, and, by lying in bed, to escape observation, become worthy patterns for general imitation, and not sleep in the face of a whole congregation, which would afford Andrew great delectation.

100 Grant Letters 1:141; May 24, 1774
101 Grant Letters 1:145; March 10, 1775.
102 that silence is often the effect of veneration and admiration.
103 Grant Letters 1; 19-; Sept 21, 1778
Clearly Grant is enjoying making fun of pedantic language. Because of this very fear of being considered a proud pedant, Grant is reluctant to let others see how well-read she is, and how well she can discern what would be, to her society, “worthy patterns for general imitation” in conversation, conduct, and writing. On the other hand, her firm denial of learned status makes her genius and uniqueness shine all the brighter. Her epistolary performances are efforts of conscious, articulated goals to instruct, to entertain, to awaken the imagination, or to persuade, and however subconsciously, to construct a strong ethos for herself, drawing people’s admiration. These playful allusions and self-conscious wit parallel Montagu’s early letters to the Duchess of Portland.

Anne Grant was also a great admirer of the character of Richardson’s novel *Clarissa*. In Grant’s early letters she repeatedly draws attention to her "minute" style, a feature of Richardson’s style which she considers essential to a good letter. To Harriet Reid she engages in “writing to the moment” as Samuel Richardson’s characters did, sending Miss Reid her reflections on various periods of a single day in one of her longest letters: “I could never tell you all this when the warm feeling of the minute had worn off,” she reasons. “I have kept my promise, of being minute, most religiously, for there is merit in it.”

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104 Grant Letters I: 199; Oct 3, 1778
105 Grant Letters I: 171
106 Samuel Richardson wrote “The Nature of Familiar Letters, written, as it were, to the Moment, while the Heart is agitated by Hopes and Fears, on Events undecided, must plead an Excuse for the Bulk of a Collection of this Kind” (Preface to *Sir Charles Grandison*, 4.); Grant Letters I:27; April 28, 1773
Just as Elizabeth Montagu learned by writing letters to her social superior and elder the Duchess of Portland, Anne Grant engaged in an educational correspondence with one who was older: a relative of her father's, Collector MacVicar. She stayed with him and his daughter in Oban for a fortnight, where he had an extensive library built up by his brother. Grant narrates how they conversed about the Collector's brother's early history and she read his early letters and admired their literary richness. Upon parting, the Collector lent her some books of history and biography and asked her to write her opinions of them, to “teach [her] to think.” In response, he received a few very long epistles reflecting on the deeds and characters of Peter the Great, Charles the Twelfth, and Oliver Cromwell, and some criticism of The Vicar of Wakefield by Goldsmith. In these letters she calls on her mentor to help her expand her skills by commenting on her writing: “Not a word more about Cromwell," she writes the Collector, "till you tell me how I acquit myself in the untried region of criticism.” Hers are the letters of an active learner. In one of her letters to the Collector she opens with a humorous self-reflexive comment on her own rhetoric: “I will no longer bewilder myself among figures, for I see you ready to compare me to Hudibras,

‘Who could not ope
His mouth but out there flew a trope.’”

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107 (Grant Letters 1:43; May 2, 1773)
108 (GL 1:105; May 28, 1773).
109 (GL 1:117; )
110 Grant Letters 1: 106; May 30, 1773

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No doubt dazzled by her precocity, Collector MacVicar asks where and how her "premature information and reflection has been derived," and in reply, she dazzles him once again. After a Miltonic invocation to the muse of Biography, she writes a short encomium of Madame Schuyler: her ancestors and their renown, her husband's influence, the great deeds that were deliberated upon at her dinner table, her library, her charitable works, her political influence as a widow, and finally, her instructive conversations with Anne. If this is not an exercise exactly in the form of encomium in the classical Progymnasmata, it is an approximation. Though the Collector asked Grant to give an account of her own education, by this strategy she thwarts the direction of the inquiry and ends up explicitly praising another, not herself, while demonstrating her own virtue and skill. This strategy is similar to Elizabeth Montagu's when forwarding the letter from the Bishop of London.

Simultaneously with her correspondence with the Collector and her thoughts about her own unique education, Anne Grant plays the role of mentor to her friend Harriet Reid, encouraging her to learn from the letters she sends to her. It is clear that Grant believes herself to be in the role of tutor as well as friend when she writes her travel letters, and that continuing their intellectual friendship by means of writing gives her immense pleasure. Grant mirrors the mentoring relationship she has with the Collector,

\footnote{Grant Letters I: 127; June 30, 1773}

\footnote{In ancient Greek rhetorical education, the Progymnasmata were series of graded exercises in narration, biography, praise and blame, etc. They culminated in forensic and deliberative declamations.}

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by conferring the same benefits on her friend. At the end of a lengthy letter to Reid which abounds in history, landscape, literary references, and the events and characters of her travels, Grant writes,

I would carry you with me wherever I go; I would teach you to think, that you might supply the defect of timely tuition, by giving, yourself, some culture to that excellent understanding. [...] How pleasing to see the beauties of such a mind expanding! (Will that pleasure ever again be mine?) Let me suppose it, in the mean time, a mirror, in which the images that pass through mine will be reflected.113

Apparently at about this time Miss Reid has been comparing Anne Grant’s mind and letters with her own, and has become discouraged. Grant writes to console her and say such comparisons are unfair, that “your letter is, like yourself, all truth, nature and candour,” and “you will every day improve.” To show that the grass is not all green in her own educational struggles, she ends the letter by bemoaning the hard mental work she is doing in reading and writing about biography, leaving behind her favorite *Odyssey* and reflections on Highland rivers, and saying Reid cannot expect long letters from her for a while. A quotation from *Humphry Clinker*, from the lower-class letters of the maid Winifred Jenkins, concludes Grant’s letter with a note of half-humorous self-rebuke for leaving behind the domain of domestic femininity to roam in masculine learning: “O woman, woman! . . . If you knew but the pleshur we scullers have when we senster the crabbit werds [sic].”114 The source of this quotation gives some insight into the joke

113 Grant Letters 1:96; May 24, 1773.
114 Grant Letters 1:125; June 5, 1773
between Grant and Miss Reid, and shows it has a lot to do with the theme of letter-writing education. In a letter to Mary Jones, from her first visit to London, the actual text of the novel runs thus:

"I pray of all love, you will mind your writing and your spilling; for, craving your pardon, Molly, it made me suet to disseyffer your last scrabble, which was delivered by the hind at Bath — O woman! woman! if thou had'st but the least consumption of what pleasure we scullers have, when we can cunster the crabbidst buck off hand, and spell the ethnitch w'ords without lucking at the primmer."

As for deciphering Grant’s scrabble, it would be as much a labor of love as deciphering Mary Jones’, though Grant’s spelling is not the problem. In this vignette we see the advisor has pretensions to learning, critiquing Mary’s spelling and boasting of her own spelling skills. Perhaps Grant is thinking that if someone were to read her own letters, they may be able to laugh at a similar irony, especially since the quotation itself very roughly approximates the blunders of the original. Yet it is honorable of Grant to promote Win Jenkins to the status of an authority worthy to be quoted . . . like Shakespeare’s fools.

Hugh Blair’s pronouncement on taste in letter-writing in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) appear to have had an influence on Anne Grant’s letters in the early nineteenth century. Grant read Hugh Blair, John Gregory, and Francis Jeffrey’s Edinburgh Review, and imbibed from them a Scottish belles-lettres rhetoric which, departing from classical and renaissance “rhetoric,” placed in its stead a simpler, more

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115 Humphry Clinker 109, from Win. Jenkins to Mary Jones, London, June 3

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natural use of language termed “eloquence.”  

Several features of Blair’s discussion of the epistle can be seen in Anne Grant’s rhetorical advice to her young correspondents. In a letter written 1805 to Miss Anne Dunbar, Grant complains,

> You are so carried off by one favourite idea, which for the time has possession of your fancy, that you cannot be brought to write a sober letter, -- narrative, descriptive, and domestical [sic], -- that will give one an idea of your present occupations, state of mind, and opinions, -- in short, that will let one into your apartment and preserve the ease of intimacy and truth of friendship, by giving us a clear view of the object which interests us.

Not long after this letter she delivers similar instructions to her daughter giving clear instructions on what she, as an audience, is interested in hearing described and narrated, and why. 

The primary aim of narrative, description and domestic matter, Grant reasons, is to reveal the character of the letter-writer.

Hugh Blair also claims that the readers of letters are pleased “with beholding the writer in a situation which allows him to be at his ease, and to give vent to the overflowings of his heart,” and that the best letters “introduce us into some acquaintance with the writer. There, if anywhere, we look for the man, not the author.”

The situation of masculine “ease”-- the domestic sphere of the “heart” – Blair names as

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116 Grant writes, “Pray read Dr. Gregory’s Comparative View, &c., and observe particularly the last section on the influence of religion; that on taste; and the strictures on false refinement” (Letters II: 5; May 26, 1785). John Gregory’s *Comparative View* repeatedly refers to Blair’s essay on Ossian. Grant herself published an essay in defense of Ossian along with her poems (Letters II: 236n).

117 Dunbar was a former schoolfellow of Mrs. Grant’s daughters who becomes Grant’s unofficial protégée in literature. She elicits from Grant guidance for her own poetry, and critical comments on Burns and other authors. (Grant Memoirs 1:66-67; 18 Nov 1805)

118 “pray get a long sheet of paper, and, without waiting for opportunities, send it directly by post here, filled with a distinct account of your proceedings, the state of your mind, the companions you are likely to have, and the view you take of the modes of life, and the characters you are likely to be connected with.” She desires to judge what influence Charlotte’s environment may have on her character formation. (Grant Memoirs 1:68; 13 Dec 1805)

the appropriate situation for epistolary composition. There is no mention of the strategies of the commendatory, political, and recommendatory letters which Middleton praised in Cicero. The only kind of letters that properly bear features of the genre are familiar letters, "conversation carried on upon paper." This brings the letter out of the public sphere and more into the realm of the family and friendly conversation — a more feminine site. However, the domestic situation is not one of "ease" for women, but rather (in Anne Grant's terms) a situation of "sober" duty in which there are many "occupations." one of which happens to be the proper presentation of the female psyche in letters. Grant implies that the prime object which interests the reader of a letter is not an argument or piece of advice, least of all the wit and learning of the author, but rather a transparent view to the character of the writer. Nevertheless, it requires some skill and discernment for a woman writer to ensure that the proper "domestical" person is constructed in a proper "sober" letter, or else Anne Grant's instruction would not be necessary.

However, the "fanciful" aspects of a letter, which are often the most ornamental and persuasive treatments of "one favourite idea," are those which Grant herself had often apologized for in previous letters when indulging in them. For instance, when Grant had moralized on her mourning for Mr. Grant, she then asks Dunbar to excuse the "egotism" of her "homily."

On another occasion, she stops herself from "moralizing" to Dunbar, since "If once I wander into digression, farewell to order, connexion, and information; and to you, of all others, I am most apt to digress. Now for a succinct, dry narrative."  

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120 Grant Letters II: 190; April 24, 1802
121 Grant Letters II:216; Jan 20, 1803

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According to Hugh Blair, in a female writer such as Madame de Sevigné such extravagance of "compliments, and expressions of fondness, to her favorite daughter" is excusable, especially since it is joined with "perpetual sprightliness" and "easy and varied narration" – the latter being a skill that Grant denies but nevertheless demonstrates. Throughout Grant's letters she often "digresses" into what she calls "declamation," essayistically or figuratively developing a favorite idea by analogy and argument. Such flights of fancy are treated harshly in Blair's lectures as something that "might be tolerated in a harangue; but is very unsuitable to the style of one friend corresponding with another." He gives examples of a "forced" introduction and a "stiff" compliment in Pope's letters, which are faulty because they combine elegant diction and syntax with a curious simile. Grant writes that "Female wit has generally a kind of gay elegance that makes its manner recommend its matter." This principle parallels Hugh Blair's when he says that while Sevigné's letters are about "trifles, the incidents of the day, and the news of the town," her "sprightliness" and "easy and varied narration" makes them "justly entitled to high praise." It is clear by Grant's many apologies that she believes rhetorical flourishes in a woman's style are to be excused by the more "sober" and "domestical" features of its content. On the other hand, these flourishes and

123 "I conclude this letter of declamation . . . " (Grant Letters I: 141, June 13, 1773); "I know I need not have recourse to declamation to interest your tenderest sympathy." (Ibid. I: 273, May 16, 1789); "I have taken the declamation, and left the action to you." (Ibid. II:11, Aug 3, 1789).
125 Grant Memoirs I: 281-282; Feb 7, 1811
126 Blair Lectures Vol. 3:69
trifles are not to be imitated by men: Grant once pronounced that she "never saw good come of lads who wrote fine feminine billets, and knew much about things not worth knowing."\(^{127}\)

In Anne Grant's criticisms of the letters of Elizabeth Hamilton and Elizabeth Montagu, we see further evidence of the later eighteenth century's feminization, naturalization, and privatization of the letter. She tells one unnamed male correspondent that Elizabeth Hamilton's letters show a "want of self-respect" because Hamilton is not "on corresponding terms" with the daughters of Lord Lucan, yet still uses their names and engages in "frequent expressions of tender familiarity & fond & adulatory allusions to her pupils."\(^{128}\) Hamilton does not seem to be "on corresponding terms" with the daughters, yet still uses their names to write letters that are in fact vehicles for essayistic effusions, though well-argued and well-expressed. Grant objects to Hamilton's "frequent expressions of tender familiarity & fond & adulatory allusions to hr pupils" because it is too difficult to believe that such familiarity and her pupil's education could have progressed so far in such little time.\(^{129}\) By this criticism of Hamilton, Grant demonstrates that an important feature she values in published letters is the believability of the emotional attachment between correspondents, and the believability of the claims they make for the characters of correspondents. A fault in letter-writing which Elizabeth

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\(^{127}\) Grant Memoirs II:66; Dec 29, 1814 to Mrs. Rucker.

\(^{128}\) Hamilton's texts are *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* (1801) and *Letters Addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman on the Formation of the Religious and Moral Principle* (1806). The latter are addressed to Lord Lucan's daughters after a very short stay with them as their tutor, and Hamilton was rumored to have left the position because of dissatisfaction with Lord Lucan's conduct. Quotations from Grant, University of Edinburgh MSS La.II.357, f.153 and verso, Dec. 29, 1808

\(^{129}\) University of Edinburgh MSS La.II.357, f.153 and verso, Dec. 29, 1808

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Montagu was careful to avoid was this rhetorical indelicacy of seeming to make market of one's intimacy with the gentry. Grant applied these principles to her own published correspondence in 1806-7. While her prefaces mention the fact that noble and estimable persons had given approbation to the first edition of letters, she makes a virtue of the fact that she resists naming them.

Another feature Anne Grant criticizes in Elizabeth Hamilton's letters is that they "appear to be publish'd merely as a vehicle for sentiments & principles, certainly very commendable & well express'd."\(^\text{130}\) The same reservation about letters being used "merely as a vehicle" appears in Hugh Blair's comments on epistolary writing, when he observes with disappointment that Shaftesbury's and Seneca's epistles merely bear the title of a letter to a friend, but "after the first address, the friend disappears, and we see that it is in truth, the public with whom the author corresponds." Such is not a true letter, according to Blair, but rather "a discourse suited particularly to the circumstances of some one person."\(^\text{131}\)

After reading some of Elizabeth Montagu’s early letters, Grant writes a criticism of them to her friend and fellow author, Catherine Maria Fanshawe.\(^\text{132}\) Grant discerns from the letters "a visible hardness in [Montagu’s] character,--such a total absence of the amiable romance of early life, and such an ungraceful harshness on some occasions, and

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\(^{130}\) Ibid.


\(^{132}\) Montagu's letters to 1760 were published by her adopted nephew in 1809.
petulance on others.”133 She sees that Montagu benefited from great talents such as “good principle, sound sense, brilliant wit, and much intelligence,” and that she profited from “early usage of the world,” but it puzzles her that with such endowments the letters result in a reader’s admiration but not pleasure: “there is every thing to admire, but nothing gentle, graceful, or attractive. I greatly dislike her style. . . . there must be something wanting when it [Montagu’s female wit] pleases me so little, who am so delighted with every thing of that nature.”134 She may have been influenced by Matthew Montagu’s 1809 introduction and footnotes to Montagu’s letters, which mention her levity, satire, and the “drawn out” reflections on death as flaws in her character and epistolary style.135 Grant’s reaction to Elizabeth Montagu’s letters is an example of the Romantic era’s bias against women of wit and talent who seem to lack sensibility of heart. This gendered criticism of Montagu’s style and character persists in Reginald Blunt’s 1923 memoirs.136 Yet the feminization and domestication of the whole genre had gone so far in the late eighteenth century that Blair also applies these standards to Pope’s letters: “There is visibly more study, and less of nature and the heart in his letters . . . [he]  

133 Grant Memoirs I: 281-282; Feb 7, 1811  
134 Grant Memoirs I: 282.  
135 Montagu Letters 1:8, 1:286n  
136 “the more attractive facets of her character were those which flashed most rarely . . . not her learning . . . not her critical faculty . . . not her wit . . . but rather, after all, her tolerant comprehension of human frailties; her frank recognition of her own vanities and weaknesses; her swift and active sympathies in the illness or misfortune of those she cared for; her devotion—never forgotten though so seldom uttered—for the little one [son] she had loved so greatly and lost so soon.” (Blunt 2:368)
is too fond of writing like a wit." When Grant does engage in display and wit in her letters, she embeds within them explicit disclaimers of her rhetorical skill, and emphasizes the motives of the heart.

Anne Grant’s comments on Anna Seward’s posthumously published letters further confirm how difficult it was for a woman’s character and style to gain the approbation of those readers like Anne. The letters are so bitter-sweet to Grant that they elicit quite a long analysis. These letters, opines Grant, clearly reveal Seward’s “bad taste and self-opinion,” but “I am not sure that they detract much from the entertainment we derive from her letters.” The pleasure comes from the uniqueness and paradoxical elements of Seward’s character and style. “The singular artlessness of so artificial a character gives the idea of something unique and anomalous that we know not how to define, nor exactly whether to admire or despise.” Seward’s spontaneous artlessness is both an ethical strength and a rhetorical weakness. While Seward demonstrates “amusing naïveté,” it is surprising to see her literary vanity “naked and not ashamed”—“She furnishes arms against herself, by her open avowal of so many feelings and opinions, that others would carefully conceal.” Grant admires Seward’s honesty, but a highly cultivated woman, Grant reasons, would have more “delicacy” and “refinement of mind” and would not divulge eccentricities of character even in letters. One example of Seward’s naïveté is “the gross flattery which she gladly received and liberally bestowed.” In addition, Seward’s “false taste” is mainly revealed in the fact that her epistolary criticisms and


138 Anna Seward [1742-1809] was a poet, letter-writer, and author of Erasmus Darwin’s memoirs (1808). Sir Walter Scott edited her poetical works in 1810.
descriptions are “over-adorned.” Yet this fault does not obscure the fact that these letters are “lively.” The adornments do not utterly obscure Seward’s underlying natural and good tastes—an “enlarged capacity for enjoyment” of nature and intellect, and “the length and strength of her attachments” to family and friends and her “home feelings and home enjoyments.”

When Anne Grant publishes her letters in 1806 at the age of fifty-one, she repeatedly asserts that she did not compose the letters with any future publication in mind, and only did so out of an unnamed private emergency. Hugh Blair said of Pliny’s Letters

They are too elegant and fine; and it is not easy to avoid thinking, that the author is casting an eye towards the public, when he is appearing to write only for his friends. Nothing indeed is more difficult, than for an author, who publishes his own letters, to divest himself altogether of attention to the opinion of the world in what he says.

We see this difficulty in Grant’s prefaces and in her letters to her friends regarding the suggestion of publication. She declares to a male correspondent in 1803 that it is “wrong and indelicate to publish correspondence in the author’s lifetime; and even were I persuaded to do such a thing, my opinion would remain unaltered. Pope did it . . . but he was head of a sect who thought him infallible.”

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139 Grant Memoirs 1: 286-7; Aug 12, 1811.
140 This mystery in the first edition inspired Rev. Buchanan to discover her identity and find out how he could be of financial assistance. Anne Grant’s letter in reply stated her recent widowhood and costs of setting up her children in professions were what spurred her to publish.
142 Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders 286, Feb. 1803

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How, then, is Grant able to overcome this indelicacy of publishing her own letters? Most importantly, her prefaces re-frame her letters with new social purposes that are so conservative that they counteract the effect of her own transgressive example of publishing. The letters will give entertainment to the "idle and contemplative," she reasons, but they also have social "utility," namely, they help to soften some of the frustrations caused by social inequity. For readers who are of low condition, they will be persuaded to "remain in safe obscurity" by perusing the images of "untutored sentiment, of the tastes, the feelings, and habits of those, who, in the secret shades of privacy, cultivate the simple duties and kindly affections of domestick life". Her letters will also be useful to the upper class, to "learn "to look with complacency on their fellow-minds in the vale of life, and to know that they too have their enjoyments."

This strategy was highly effective. The first edition of letters brought her to the notice of Rev. Buchanan and the Fanshawe sisters, who encouraged George Chalmers to mediate a correspondence with her. Buchanan and Chalmers asked Anne Grant to write an explanation of her domestic situation so that they could offer a charitable contribution appropriate to her needs. Her letter in reply, a frank statement of how her financial and family difficulties forced her to publish her letters, was so impressive that it was copied and circulated among the recipients’ friends, and still exists in two manuscripts at


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separate libraries, in different copyists’ handwriting.\textsuperscript{144} Chalmers also connected Grant with a new correspondent, Mrs. Hook, who was the daughter of Sir Walter Farquhar, and wife of Dr. James Hook who became Dean of Worcester.

Mr. Hatsell, the Secretary of the House of Commons, became one of Anne Grant’s mentors in publishing her letters. She became acquainted with Hatsell when she was eighteen years old at Fort Augustus, and in 1805 wrote to him asking for advice about which publisher she should take her letters to. Grant’s letters to Mr. Hatsell regarding the revision of the letters for the second London edition further reveal her awareness of her rhetorical strategies and goals in publishing these letters. She offers an explanation of why her first edition was so popular despite their moral content: “dressed in the colours that feeling and fancy give to every object they approach, and covered with the light drapery of easy and artless narrative, may possibly, in some instances, attract that attention, which is refused to more solid and serious works of the same tendency.”\textsuperscript{145} Grant also believes that some readers will pick up the book out of curiosity about the life and thought of the Highlanders.

Mr. Hatsell unexpectedly brought Anne Grant the patronage and publishing advice of the present Bishop of London. The way she deals with their revision suggestions sheds light on the rhetorical strategies and effects she perceived in her letters. Grant expresses some reluctance that the Bishop of London recommended removing “so many of my chit-chat letters.”

\textsuperscript{144} British Library. Add. Mss. 39871 f. 93-94; National Library of Scotland MS 5842 /1 [glued into the cover of volume 1 of the first edition of \textit{Letters from the Mountains].}

\textsuperscript{145} Grant Memoirs 1:83; 14 Dec 1806.
Query, whether those marking traits [of the Highlanders] are not most obvious in local, domestic, and in every other point of view insignificant letters, which, like straws in a thatched roof, are nothing singly, yet in a connected form give the appearance of warmth and humble comfort.\textsuperscript{146}

Even her preface to the first edition fears that “much is lost by the necessity of withholding those parts [of letters] which contained most of narrative and anecdote.”\textsuperscript{147}

However, immediately after expressing this reservation about the Bishop’s suggestion, she adds that she does not defend these “trivial links in the epistolary chain” due to some “maternal tenderness” for her written productions. On the advice of her judges (including her daughter Mary who has “solid judgment” and “taste” and “attainments”), she will gladly give them up out of fear of redundancy, which has doomed other letter collections to oblivion.\textsuperscript{148}

In addition, in Anne Grant’s advertisements and prefaces to her published letters, she repeatedly refutes the imputation that her youthful correspondents are fictional. For a woman writer in the early 1800s, it was important to distinguish the letters from an epistolary novel, which had a much lower generic status. In a decade which saw increased publication of letters and memoirs of the previous century’s writers, Grant associates herself with Burns, Cowper, and others. When the first edition of \textit{Letters from the Mountains} was published with only initials for the names of people, at the request of several prominent people such as the Duchess of Gordon. She began to annotate the margins of their personal copies, and promised explanations in correspondence, giving

\textsuperscript{146} Grant Memoirs 1:84; 14 Dec 1806.

\textsuperscript{147} Grant Letters, Advertisement to the First London Edition, March 18, 1806, p.6

\textsuperscript{148} Grant Memoirs 1:84; 14 Dec 1806.
the "key" to who these persons were. The second edition includes these kinds of notes as well as full names in most cases, to "carry conviction home" to those inferior beings who doubt their veracity.\textsuperscript{149} She thus gains rhetorical power for her letters as well by giving proofs of their being genuine. It is noteworthy that this critical imputation of fictionality, and the efforts she takes to prove authenticity, are similar to the process that her fellow Scotsman James Macpherson's translations of Ossian underwent, with less success.

Anne Grant gives ample evidence of her understanding of the rhetorical strategies necessary for women of her time to build a literary reputation. Shortly after publishing her letters, she gives Mr. Hatsell a description of what she calls "Edinburgh literary politics." She sees two camps, "The Philosophers, who are also wits, and the Enthusiasts, who are also loyalists." Grant and her friends are in the second camp. The enthusiasts' religious faith and political conservatism, and especially their belief in the historicity of Ossian's writings, "enrages the Sophs beyond measure":

[the Philosophers'] literary pride is all in arms at the very idea that genteel manners or generous sentiments should precede the existence of the sciences, and cannot conceive how a man should have either valour or compassion without learning it at school.

At this point her letter begins to draw an important parallel between the education and genius of the Highlanders, and the education and genius of women writers like herself—"On the same principle they treat female genius and female productions with unqualified scorn, never mentioning any thing of the kind but with a sneer."\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{149} Advertisement to the Second London Edition, May 4, 1807
\textsuperscript{150} Grant Memoirs I:81, Nov 27, 1806
Much of Anne Grant's published writing is a refutation of the Philosophers' position, demonstrating that eminent writing skill could be learned outside of school and by a woman. For example, Anne Grant's *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders* (1811) develops her thesis that oral rhetorical excellence existed in a pre-literate culture. Appended to the end of this treatise, Grant published several more of her letters which further revealed the attainments of her own "untaught" genius. Elizabeth Montagu agreed with Grant in the very same theory that genius in writing is not based on inheritance of knowledge and tradition, but on the heroic efforts of self-education even in the midst of an illiterate culture:

> the only great and perfect in art or science, are the self taught. [...] There are genius's superior to all impediments, and some who have made to themselves times and occasions, and have risen to the utmost degree of human perfection among the rude and the illiterate; and is it not worth a person's attention to examine these great and original characters?151

Anne Grant's firm denial of learned status makes her extensive rhetorical knowledge and epistolary skill shine all the brighter. As noted by Maria Edgeworth in 1795, the woman who claims to please people by appearing unphilosophical and unlearned is actually following a principle of art and philosophy, because she perceives the cause that will lead to the desired effect of her communication.152 Not only by this paradoxical reasoning, but based on Grant's continual self-reference to her own

151 Montagu, Letters III:214-15; to Gilbert West, January 6 [1753]
communication strategies, one can confidently argue that Grant’s epistolary performances are efforts of conscious, articulated goals to instruct, to entertain, to awaken the imagination, or to persuade.

**Conclusion to the chapter: A comparison of Elizabeth Montagu and Anne Grant**

A comparison of these two case studies, in the context of the century’s trends in epistolary rhetoric, illustrates several important features of women’s education in letter-writing. Neither of these women ever mention using a letter-writing manual, but instead find useful models and epistolary rhetorics in philosophical treatises (by Gregory and Blair), histories (*Life of Cicero*), memoirs (*Sevigné*), and novels in letter format (*Rowe, Smollett, Richardson*). While their epistolary education did involve imitation, more importantly it involved the self-conscious mediation of rhetorical vocabulary to describe and analyze their own letters and those of others.

These women’s education by means of correspondence was necessarily highly collaborative and relational. In contrast, Western formal education in classrooms has traditionally treated students as separate individuals and aimed for an impersonal and objective relationship between student and teacher. But these factors were the very forces that motivated and facilitated much of the women’s education. By aiming to impress and entertain their mentors, Elizabeth Montagu and Anne Grant stretched their skills in witty allusion and vivid narration. Montagu’s exchange with the Bishop of London, and Grant’s correspondence with the Collector, demonstrate how they took initiative in
engaging in instructive discourse, and how they persuaded their “mentors” that they were both intelligent and properly feminine. Their rhetorical and educational advice to peers and younger persons also gave them an opportunity to generalize and justify the rhetorical principles and strategies they admired and employed. The epistolary education encouraged a continual cycle of reading, observing, analyzing, writing, and reflecting.

Both women expressed extreme reluctance that their letters would be put before learned readers who would criticize them harshly. The privacy of the woman’s letter was seen by these women as a protected site for risk-taking away from the critical eye of learned men. Simply put, the educational correspondence involved trust and confidentiality. But the code of feminine modesty was a formidable obstacle to publishing such a correspondence during one’s life, or even seeming to be vain enough to desire it. In Edgeworth’s *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), a male character writes a letter explaining that women must fear “premature memoirs and spurious collections of familiar letters published by needy booksellers or designing enemies,” and that critics will examine women authors’ private lives and will receive twice as much censure as male writers for their faults of character. Nevertheless, Anne Grant, by the strength of her own rhetorical skill and the knowledge of her audience, was able to overcome this obstacle and enjoy a flourishing social career among literati of Edinburgh, London, and America, based on the fame of her letters. During her own life, Montagu’s fame as an eloquent and influential letter-writer enabled her to extend her public influence through correspondence and conversation with numerous eminent men and women such as

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Elizabeth Carter, Lord Bath, George Lyttelton, Gilbert West, and Lord Kames. And the most interesting aspect of their success is that it was not attained merely by chance and a mysterious quality of individual genius, but by means of rhetorical instruction, rhetorical criticism, and mentoring relationships clearly discernible in their letters.

The contrast in the epistolary styles of these two women and the sources of their rhetorical education in this genre reinforce the thesis that letter-writing was feminized and de-rhetoricized over the course of the century. "Eloquent" letters increasingly meant "letters of sentiment," written "from the heart," unmediated by a writer's attention to strategy and effect. The allowable attention to effect was encoded as a desire to please the reader by means of demonstrating the right kind of affection or deference for them, and purity of character. Rhetorical motives and self-educational motives could imply an unfeminine desire for power over one's audience, a development of a masculine intellect and skill. Such a goal to hone one's letter-writing would be seen as an unfeminine desire to shine, to be admired, rather than to please friends and family with one's "home feelings" and tender sentiments. However, this limitation on what could be brazenly avowed did not mean that these motives were not present; in fact, women's letters carry evidence to the contrary: the self-reflexive comments on their own letters, and critiques of others' letters, demonstrate their concern to entertain, instruct, and move, not just to achieve formal and ethical propriety.
In this chapter I demonstrate the means by which eighteenth-century women writers were educated in the rhetoric of expository and persuasive prose composition. Within this broad generic category I include non-fictional and non-autobiographical genres which present an explicit argument and/or are written to instruct the public, such as prose essays, histories, biographies, treatises, and advice literature. Many eighteenth-century women published instructive and argumentative works in the form of letters, yet the epistolary mode itself does not make such writing fall into the category of letter-writing discussed in chapter two, since it is the rhetorical function in context, not the textual form, which I use to distinguish genres. The prose genres I discuss here are pieces addressed to the public upon matters of wide interest, rarely touching on quotidian matters except as a means of demonstrating an argument. To reduce such a broad generic category to a manageable discussion, I shall focus specifically on the non-fiction prose genres used by Catharine Macaulay Graham, Mary Hays, and Elizabeth Hamilton—essays (moral, political, or literary), histories, biographies, and philosophical treatises.
These genres have been more commonly accepted to be "rhetorical" in the traditional sense of the term, since they address a large public audience, much like an oration in fourth-century Athens or the Roman republic.¹ The essayist (at least, in the mode of Addison's Spectator) claimed moral authority based on a non-partisan perspective, and this mediatorial and objective stance was appealing to women who had been taught to avoid political controversy. It was, nevertheless, a stance of objective authority before the public. Perhaps for this very reason, women found it difficult to "break into" this genre of writing, as women (with few exceptions) had no foundation of public authority through the major institutions of the state, church, and university on which to stand. To assume authority to persuade or instruct a public audience in writing seemed presumptuous in a middle-class woman, and inappropriately condescending in a woman of high rank. Men and women of this culture were also socialized to consider such a public display of knowledge (especially knowledge coded as masculine) and rhetorical skill as unfemininely immodest. Nevertheless, women published their expository prose more frequently over the eighteenth century. They often did so with the support of several rhetorical strategies: choosing genres and subject-matter that were acceptably feminine, addressing young women or children, and excusing their publications in their prefaces. In many cases, women published by subscription, not only

¹ There are alternative views of the relationship between the eighteenth-century essay and the public oration. Thomas Miller, in his examination of eighteenth-century rhetoric, considers the eighteenth-century essay of taste and morality as a tool of the hegemony to stifle political discussion and promote self-critique in its place.
for financial reasons, but because it demonstrated that the woman was not standing alone or unsupported before the public—her work was apparently called for and sponsored by the community whose members’ names were usually printed within the book.

The role of informing and persuading the public in writing was considered a masculine one at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but by 1800 it was a type of writing in which women felt relatively more comfortable as published authors, mainly since they had many more peers and predecessors of their own sex. Each eighteenth-century woman writer extended the region of generic freedom for her female peers and the next generation of women writers. Over the course of the eighteenth century, not only were non-fictional prose genres more frequently published by women writers, but fewer of these shielding or excusing strategies were used. With some exceptions, women became increasingly comfortable with the genre in the late eighteenth century.

Looking back from the eighteenth century into earlier European literary history, it had always been rare for women to publish expository or persuasive prose. These rhetorical venues were difficult to access because the publishing and printing industry had male gatekeepers. Such publications were usually limited to queens, highly educated noblewomen like Christine de Pizan, nuns like Hildegard of Bingen, mystics like Margery Kempe, and wives and daughters of great scholars and divines, such as Margaret Roper, daughter of Sir Thomas More. In seventeenth-century England, religious works such as prophecies and tracts were often published by radical Puritan women, and translation work became more frequent. Conduct books and books on cooking and household
management were written by seventeenth-century Englishwomen, and Bathsua Pell Makin and Mary Astell wrote proposals for women's education. During the late seventeenth century, women participated in pamphlet-wars about women's role in marriage, most in poetry, some in prose, usually under pseudonyms. Mary, Lady Chudleigh (in 1701, *The Ladies Defense*) and Judith Drake (in 1703, *An Essay In Defense of the Female Sex*) were two women who engaged in this debate under pseudonyms, whose identities were later revealed. Mary, Lady Chudleigh went on to author *Essays upon Several Subjects* in her real name (1710) with the encouragement of her friend Mary Astell. Other pamphlet writers, such as "Sophia,"\(^2\) remained anonymous, and we cannot verify if these authors were indeed women, for men were sometimes discovered to have written under female pseudonyms.

The essay genre was a pathway for women writers into public instruction and persuasion, as it was more accessible to female authorship than were history, biography, or the philosophical treatise. Women did not have to write the essay before the history or treatise—women of the early and mid-century often stepped over this generic ground completely. However, its scholarly tenor and social status was several rungs below the more serious genres and it drew from genres more common among women: the familiar letter, poetry, and fiction. This genre was placed just above the reach of female authors, far enough to make them stretch, or wait until more of their female peers grasped it. Women populated the genre of the novel in great numbers several decades before they moved into the essay. The essay's loose generic and formal boundaries often meant

\(^2\) *Woman Not Inferior to Man*, 1739; *Woman's Superior Excellence over Man*, 1740

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freedom from rules established by extensive precedent or prescription. This held true at
least until the prescriptive rhetorics of the last quarter of the century began to appear, such
as Hugh Blair's, laying down explicit recommendations for the essay's style. Samuel
Johnson's dictionary defined the essay as an "attempt; endeavour; a loose sally of the
mind; an irregular indigested piece; a trial; an experiment; first taste of any thing."\(^3\) Such
connotations suited the temerity women expressed in their prefaces to essayistic
miscellanies. The essay's connection with Locke, Bacon, and the empirical tradition
made it accessible to anyone (not just learned men) who could make judicious
observations upon life.

Eighteenth-century Britain, which experienced both the rise and decline of the
periodical essay, was the century which saw the debut of women periodical essayists.
From its inception, the periodical essay included both women and men in its audience,
and had a slant toward moral analysis and satire. Thomas Miller speaks of the periodical
press creating a "blurred genre" in the essay,\(^4\) which made it accessible to writers who
had practiced in other genres. Eliza Haywood was the first female periodical essayist,
authoring The Female Spectator in the 1740s. Haywood's long and rambling "essays"—
a menagerie of narratives, dialogues, and poetry glued together with exposition and
commentary, were a hybrid of Addison and Steele's witty commentary and the
"scandalous memoirs" genre of novels popularized by Haywood herself and by

\(^3\) as quoted in Spector 4
\(^4\) Miller 44
Delariviere Manley early in the century. Haywood’s essays, *The Ladies Magazine*, and a few other magazines aimed at women made the path easier for women to publish essays later in the century.

However, it was the *Rambler* periodical by Samuel Johnson that heralded the beginning of an era of female essayists. The three women whom Samuel Johnson invited to write numbers of his periodical at mid-century later became famous for their other works in expository prose. The *Rambler* itself was a great influence upon women’s essay writing. Most of its pieces were so generalized about life and society to be of interest and applicability to readers of both sexes. From a cursory glance at the 208 titles, there are thirty-seven that concern women or involve female characters, and forty-seven which address issues of authorship, textual criticism, and conversational rhetoric. Therefore, as these essays were reprinted again and again over the following decades, its female readers would receive a balanced diet of general morality, insight on women’s concerns, and instruction in rhetoric and the struggles of the author. Encouragement and advice for writers was to be found in pieces like “137. The Necessity of Literary Courage,” “145. Petty Writers Not to be Despised,” and “156. The Laws of Writing Not Always Indisputable”; advice more specifically geared to essay-writing was found in “184. The Subject of Essays Often Suggested by Chance”; and the opening and final essays in which the “Rambler” spoke of his own intentions and accomplishments as a

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1750: Hester Mulso (Chapone), *Rambler*, no. 10 (1750); Catharine Talbot, *Rambler* no. 30 (1750); Elizabeth Carter, *Rambler* nos. 44 and 100 (1751, 1752). Chapone wrote a popular conduct-book *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773) and *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (1775); Talbot’s posthumous works include a collection of essays (1772) and *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week* (1770); and Carter is famous for her translation and introduction to all the works of Epictetus (1758).
writer. Regardless of the fact that the "author" discussed in these essays is understood to be male, the fact that so many other essays by Johnson were applicable across genders would leave these pieces open to similar use by a female reader desiring to imitate the Rambler. Imitate him they did—the subject matter and style of women's essays in the 1770s (the decade in which women's miscellanies really began to flourish)\(^6\) demonstrate a definite Johnsonian slant.

The genres of history and biography were less accessible to women than the essay, and the philosophical treatise even more so, yet this century saw several women make the bold entrance into these means of public address. Dr. Fordyce, author of *Sermons For Young Women*, a popular conduct book for women in the last quarter of the century, writes of women, "I do not wish to see them abound with metaphysicians, historians, speculative philosophers, or Learned Ladies of any kind."\(^7\) Nevertheless, women were encouraged to *read* history by David Hume and others.\(^8\) David Hume recommended the study of history to women because it was a less serious genre than abstract theoretical works, and was soft enough for their supposedly delicate natures while it had a positive moral influence on them. History was not yet a scholarly genre, and was not a scholarly subject in English universities until the nineteenth century. Hume probably never had in

\(^6\) The famous female essayists of the 1770s were Macaulay Graham Talbot, Hester Chapone, Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, and Hannah More, all women of a strict morality and deep religiosity with a stroke of wit and spirit—female Johnsons.

\(^7\) Fordyce 2:102-03, as quoted in Grogan, Introduction to *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* by Elizabeth Hamilton, p.19

\(^8\) Hill 25
mind that women would actually begin to write histories after becoming familiar with the
genre, and that one woman in particular, Catharine Macaulay Graham, would become his
direct competitor as historian.

However salutary it was for women to read history, it was an undertaking of
which even the best qualified women were afraid. In 1775 Elizabeth Montagu meditated
writing a history (or more technically a biography, since it focuses on one individual) of
Queen Elizabeth. She confesses to Elizabeth Carter that she is spending six hours a day
reading memoirs of Noailles and Hardwicke state papers, wishing someone would write
the history of Queen Elizabeth “on purpose to shew the superiority of Prudence above
cunning.”

Let not what I have dropped make you raise the specter of Plutarch to frighten me.
Be assured that as I required a wise, judicious and well inform’d man to write the
History of Henry the 7th, I shall not permit a silly injudicious, uninformed Woman
to undertake that of his wiser, greater, and much more magnanimous Grand-
daughter. So pray do not yawn at the apprehension of my History of Elizabeth. 1
I have only had such a dream after supping on Litterary [sic] Lambs wool when
some of you Learned and ingenious persons had flattered me. The moment I
awoke I perceived my incapacity, inability, insufficiency, etc.9

Elizabeth Montagu refers in the above passage to her encouragement of Sir Lyttelton as
he wrote the history of Henry the 7th, which was still incomplete at his death due to his
extremely conscientious efforts at factual and verbal correctness. Apparently a history of
Queen Elizabeth would require a writer even better than Lyttelton inasmuch as the female
subject of the history was greater than his King Henry.

9 Blunt I:293-294.
As for the philosophical treatise, such a genre seemed incredibly presumptuous in a woman. Women's forays into this genre and its cousins are rare in the eighteenth century, but can be found. Among strictly philosophical and religious inquiry can be classed Elizabeth Carter's introduction to her translation of Epictetus and Catharine Macaulay Graham's *Treatise on the Immutability of Moral Truth*. Aikin Barbauld, Chapone, and others hid metaphysical inquiry in shorter pieces or in the epistolary mode. Educational, political, and moral philosophy also appeared in the educational treatises of Macaulay Graham and Hamilton and the political essays of Wollstonecraft and Hays. All of the above mentioned women published in the last half of the eighteenth century.

Beginning in the 1750s there was more literature published in every genre by both men as well as women, which may have been a factor in helping women to begin to feel less conspicuous as authors since so many had pretensions to authorship. As well, the regulation and prescription of belletristic rhetoric that began to govern print culture during this period may have played an important role in making the rules of the game of prose style and publication clear to all sorts of marginal authors, including women. Around mid-century, the essayistic reviews of literature began to appear. The *Monthly Review* began in the 1740s and the *Critical Review* in the 1750s were the two most influential reviews of new publications by whom most authors were anxious to be reviewed. A young female author could make observations upon the reviewers'
principles of criticism and better understand an important part of their audience. Frances
Burney implicitly acknowledged the importance of the reviewers when she dedicated her
first novel to the critics. While the Monthly, Critical, and other review publications were
often seen as oppressive gate-keepers for authors, they also de-mystified the principles by
which publications were weighed.

Several critics and linguists have noted that in the male-authored belletristic
rhetorics and grammars of the latter half of the century there is an increasing
"feminization" of prose style, which was likely both a cause and an effect of women’s
entry into this genre. While Hugh Blair and other belletrists used the term "masculine" as
an expression of praise for simplicity and power in style, the general perception of style in
general was that it had potent feminine qualities that needed to be regulated, restrained,
and corrected . . . or masculinized. Women readers of belletristic criticism in the
periodicals (and the few women who actually read the treatises of Blair and Kames) had
little difficulty understanding this sort of discourse, having been regulated, restrained, and
corrected in their conversation and conduct through literature and socialization from early
childhood. If they could learn how to behave with propriety, they could rely on similar
advice to learn to write with propriety.

In Blair’s first lecture on taste, the strong connection between discourse and virtue
is verbally made clearly analogous to the alliance between women’s conversation and
conduct.11 A critic, he says, discerns “propriety in the conduct” of the discourse. The

11 The correspondence in terminology across these rhetorical-grammatical prescriptions and conduct-book
prescriptions may have their source in their writers’ occupations. It may well be that Blair’s occupation as a
preacher, pastor, and instructor involved him in disciplining the morals of men in similar ways that conduct
terms used to describe the features of the eloquent text or artwork are the same terms
applied to the excellencies of women’s conversation ("sprightly," "lively," "affecting,"
"refined") and their conduct ("chaste," "simple," "propriety of conduct"). Likewise, the
defects of texts are explained with terminology similar to that used to describe the defects
of women’s conversation ("unnatural character, forced sentiments, affected style," 
"affected brilliancy of wit") and conduct ("false pretensions to merit"). Along the same
lines, the purpose of elegant literature is the same as purpose of female conversation and
conduct articulated in conduct literature: to touch the heart and the imagination in order to
"please,"12 and by means of pleasing, to gently yet powerfully rectify the morals. Carey
McIntosh and others have identified this "prescriptivism" as a common feature of
eighteenth-century grammars and belletristic rhetorics, but few have observed how this
prescriptivism is parallel to that of the same period’s conduct literature for women or how
it was a factor in women’s rhetorical education.

A brief examination of not only the terminology, but the arguments of belletristic
rhetoric in Hugh Blair’s Lectures makes it clear that prose was becoming feminized in the
mid to late eighteenth century, and that Blair himself was a key player in this process.
“Conciseness and simplicity” in writing is achieved in similar ways in text as it is in
women’s conversation and conduct: by self-restraint. Blair writes, “Simplicity I place in

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12 "there are beauties, which, if they be displayed in a proper light, have power to command lasting and
general admiration. In every composition, what interests the imagination, and touches the heart, pleases all
ages and all nations."
opposition to studied and profuse ornament: and conciseness, to superfluous expression.”

In everyday life, well-bred women were to restrain their desire to please through studied posturing and excessive ornaments of dress, and good hostesses and conversants were to restrain their own verbal expression. In the gradation of styles from “dry” through “plain,” “neat,” “elegant,” and “flowery,” Blair clearly teaches that an elegant style is the pinnacle of perfection and the flowery style a symptom of excess. In this context, a “manly” style is a moderately feminized style: it is an exuberant female style chastened, restrained, made “chaste”: “Let ornament be manly and chaste, without effeminate gayety, or artificial colouring; let it shine with the glow of health and strength.”

“Artificial colouring” was a phrase that would connote women’s cosmetics, and “glow” was also used to refer to the natural blush or “bloom” of a young woman’s face. It is therefore appropriate that since Addison’s style is beautiful but not very correct, it is a too exuberant style that is an appropriate candidate for the “chastening” criticism in several of Blair’s lectures.

If the gazing eye of the critic is male, and the beauties of eloquence are feminized, the act of criticism comes very close to being similar to courtship, and a woman writer of the time would have little trouble imagining her words, like her body and talents, being appraised by such admonitory lovers. The critic must be able to discern prostitutes and flirts of language: “A man of correct taste is one who is never imposed on by counterfeit beauties,” one who is “sensible of the smallest blemish.” If reading and criticizing

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13 Lecture 18
14 Lecture 19

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literature is like a man’s part in courtship, then being read is like being courted and writing is like a young woman’s coming out into the world, making herself available to the male gaze. Women were already familiar with the rules of this game of pleasing codified in their conduct literature. Putting on the dress of written language, women already had a good idea of what male critics were looking for. The tasteful critic in Blair’s first lecture is looking for the “chaste and simple beauties” of language by testing them to see if their external virtues, or stylistic features, are aligned with their internal virtues.

As this introduction to the genre has laid forth, the gradual entry of women into public expository prose, the role of essayistic periodicals in discussing matters of authorship and articulating criteria for review, and the feminization of prose style was the general context in which Catharine Macaulay Graham, Mary Hays, and Elizabeth Hamilton learned and practiced the rhetoric of nonfiction prose in the essay, history, treatise, and other such genres. In view of such a setting, Catharine Macaulay Graham’s bold step into history, polemical essays, and philosophical and educational treatises stands out as remarkably bold for her time. The achievements of Macaulay Graham and other women prose writers of her generation were an encouragement for the future generation of women writers. Both Mary Hays and Elizabeth Hamilton still felt it necessary to write anonymously or express deference in the 1790s when writing expository or argumentative nonfiction.

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Catharine Macaulay Graham (1731-1791)

Bridget Hill, biographer of Catharine Macaulay Graham, claims that in Macaulay Graham’s era, women rarely read history, much less often did they write it, and that Macaulay’s entry into history-writing was shocking and viewed as a bold advance into male territory. In Macaulay Graham’s own preface to her first historical volume, she braced herself for “The invidious censures which may ensue from striking into a path of literature rarely trodden by my sex.” Nevertheless, she boldly named herself as a historian in her works, and claimed that she had fulfilled the duties of a historian with the utmost integrity. Only recently have her own claims been read and reinforced by scholars after centuries of neglect. C. J. A. Pocock, in a recent essay on her historical writing, asserted that Macaulay Graham owed her success to her assertiveness and scholarly acumen and declared her “a humanist and a rhetorician” and “the only English historian of her generation capable of dealing with the problems” of English party history. According to Hill, her history “was the first republican history of the seventeenth century based on an extensive knowledge of hitherto unused tracts of the

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15 History of England v. 1 p.4

16 “She was primarily a woman who crashed her way into the writing of history, normally defined as a specifically masculine activity, and made other readers and writers respect her; not, I submit, because her writing of history has anything specifically female about it but because it is politically most outspoken in ways that caught attention, and still more because she was, quite simply, very good at it” (243).

17 Pocock 244

18 Ibid, 245.
Macaulay Graham's education, steeped in the narrative and argumentative genre of history and supported by conversation in several intellectual communities, was what gave her the ability to overcome traditional limitations placed on women's rhetorical genres. Catharine Macaulay Graham's life and writing illustrates the importance of epideictic narrative and argument in assisting women to overcome barriers that discouraged them from producing public expository genres. In Macaulay Graham's case, reading and conversing about history in a moral as well as political framework enabled her to become the first female historian of the English revolution, one whose style and method influenced the development of history as a genre of public writing. In the early years of her eight-volume history, her volumes were more popular in the booksellers' shops than was David Hume's. She was known and admired by the bluestocking women Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Carter's, but they kept a distance from her since she was so deeply involved in republican politics.

Unfortunately, Macaulay Graham fell from popularity to infamy due to an egregious violation of eighteenth-century female propriety. She clearly demonstrated her ambition for fame by her acquiescence in the excessive public flattery of her friend, the Reverend Wilson of Bath. Reverend Wilson's admiration turned to hatred upon her quick and far more scandalous marriage to William Graham, a middle-class Scottish man.
when Mr. Graham was twenty-one years old and Macaulay Graham forty-seven, and the
majority of the public also turned against her. Like Hester Thrale Piozzi, Macaulay
Graham’s second marriage was lampooned in the press, and she, too, was disowned by all
learned ladies. The link between female learning and virtue whose own reputation
depended upon a repudiation of such shocking examples of female desire and
independence. Unlike Hester’s reputation, Macaulay Graham’s was either irrecoverable,
or Macaulay Graham chose not to attempt its recovery in her social life. Nevertheless,
Macaulay Graham continued to publish the remaining volumes of her History and went
on to continue publishing in philosophy, educational theory, and politics until two years
before her death.

Motherless from the age of two, Macaulay Graham is reported to have been raised
in the country by a reclusive father who left her to her own devices under an aged and
ignorant governess. She devoured the books on her father’s library shelves once she had
become bored with the romances that were given her. There she read the Spectator and
the Guardian essays on morals and manners, and Rollin’s history of the ancient world.20
She tells us in the preface to her history that it was at a young age, while reading Greek
and Roman histories, “which exhibit liberty in its most exalted state,” that she formed her
political and moral principles. Through careful reading and conversation she was able to
transform this knowledge into rhetorical action, for Macaulay Graham’s advanced
rhetorical education was wholly carried out in libraries and in conversations among
influential intellectual men.

20 Hays, Female Biography, v.3 p.154
The scant evidence of Catharine Macaulay Graham’s early education makes it difficult to discern at what point she studied various works that relate to rhetorical theory and practice. However, we can discover much about her path of rhetorical training and practice based on the citations, opinions, and rhetorical strategies found in her published works and letters from 1763 to 1790, and from what contemporaries wrote about her. In particular, her treatise on education in 1790 includes ideas about of rhetorical training which arose in large part from the characteristic strengths and weaknesses her own rhetorical education, and in part from the theories of association and education common in the dissenting community.

But first, let us turn to a more obvious record of her reading – her library catalogue. A sale catalogue of texts from Catharine Macaulay’s library in 1790 offers clues to her reading and help to strengthen arguments about textual influence that are supported by other evidence. The catalogue lists several texts in classical, psychological and bellettristic rhetoric, although the largest portion of the catalogue consists of legal trials, political tracts, ordinances, petitions, vindications, and sermons. A large number of the books with publication dates that predate her first historical volume are titles of serious disquisitions on education (especially religious education), philosophy, authorship, and language. She owned an edition of Observations on the Life of Cicero (1741) which may imply she was familiar with the work which it critiqued, Conyers Middleton’s Life of Cicero. She refers to Cicero’s morals and speeches in her 1783 philosophical treatise, where she demonstrated a careful reading of Epictetus’ works as
translated by Elizabeth Carter. The library catalogue also includes a 1733 first-edition text of John Stirling’s *A System of Rhetoric*. Stirling’s rhetoric was written for advanced schoolboys in order to give them critical tools in their reading of the classics, and was only an explication of the figures and tropes of style. Its pedagogical principles were based on association psychology, with which Macaulay Graham aligns herself in *Letters on Education* (1790), and its limited view of rhetoric as mere stylistic manipulation was in agreement with Locke. It is likely that Macaulay Graham considered a book such as Stirling’s as a means of discovering sophistry in others’ writings rather than as a means of inventing or ornamenting her own arguments.

Many of the works cited in her writings are not included in this list, such as Locke’s treatises. Catharine Macaulay Graham’s dissenting religious tradition brought her into contact with the psychological-epistemological rhetorics of Locke, Hartley, and Priestley. In the preface of her treatise on truth, she writes, “Mr. Locke and Dr. Hartley stand the foremost among the literary benefactors of mankind; but Dr. Hartley would perhaps have sunk in oblivion, had it not been for the judicious and well-timed zeal of Dr. Priestley.” While she may not have read Priestley until 1768, Macaulay Graham’s *History* from 1763 reveals her early admiration of and familiarity with John Locke’s works on language, psychology, and government, and Locke’s influence continues strong through all her works.

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21 *Immutability of Moral Truth* xiv

22 the date of an edition of his treatise on government in her library
Her library also contained works by Isaac Watts, who followed in the Lockean tradition, and several other early eighteenth-century works in the Lockean tradition of "Plain English." In her strictures on university education in the preface to her first historical volume, she reveals Lockean opinions on the precision of language and the follies of dispute as she explains the rhetorical behavior of a prejudiced man: "Unequal to the combat, he skirmishes at a distance, willfully converses in generals, and never enters into those particulars which may investigate the subject. Men like these, without the desire of attaining truth, wrangle but for victory; and if they have sense enough to see their mistakes, they never have candor enough to acknowledge them." Passages with similar sentiments are readily found in the writings of Locke and Watts.

Macaulay Graham's explicit denial of rhetoric, like Locke's, does not mean she was innocent of rhetoric herself. The denial is itself a rhetorical strategy. In Catharine Macaulay Graham's observations on Edmund Burke, she confidently claims skill with invention and says she will convince people by the use of logic and evidence. She denies having an eloquent style and a strategic arrangement of ideas. Burke "has been in a manner educated in the great school of parliament" and is "highly favoured by nature and circumstances," yet "when we find him then obliged to substitute a warm and passionate declamation to a cool investigation, and to address the passions instead of the reason of

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mankind, we shall be induced to give a fuller credit to our judgment and our feelings . . .

"In this context we also find Macaulay Graham denying the use of rhetorical figures, which is appropriate both as a woman writer (not expected to have formally studied rhetoric) and as a follower of Locke’s view of language:

[my] following observations on Mr. Burke’s famous Reflections on the Revolution in France . . . claim no popular attention for the ornaments of stile in which they are delivered; they can attract no admiration from the fascinating charms of eloquence; they are directed, not to captivate, but to convince; and it is on the presumption that your lordship attends more to the substance and end of literary compositions, than to the art of their arrangement, which induces me to flatter myself with your approbations."25

Instead of proving that Macaulay Graham was innocent of rhetoric, such a statement with its vocabulary actually demonstrates her familiarity with the Lockean denial of and suspicion of toward rhetoric, and her awareness of the canons of invention, style, and arrangement.

Catharine Macaulay Graham’s rank, beauty, her influential social circles and conversational abilities were other factors that enabled her to learn the trade of a historian, philosopher, and pamphlet-writer. She was an assertive, articulate, beautiful, well-dressed woman of an upper-class family. No doubt these characteristics contributed to the popularity of her historical writings. Her beauty alongside her intelligence made people view her as a prodigy of the female sex. During the height of her fame, her image

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24 Preface to Observations (1790) p. 3
25 Observations 2
was commodified as a waxwork statue; a marble bust; a full-length statue of herself as Clio, the muse of history; a porcelain figure; and numerous paintings and engravings.²⁶

Catharine Macaulay Graham’s eloquent speech was a skill she deployed long before her rise to fame. At the age of 26, she met Elizabeth Carter, the translator of the works of Epictetus. Carter reported in a letter that she met Macaulay Graham at a public assembly and found her an excellent conversationalist who “mightily” overwhelmed both Carter and a less learned lady with the extent of the knowledge she displayed as well as the length of the train of her dress. Her praise was united to reservations about the propriety of Macaulay Graham’s opinions and style. She was “much more deeply learned than becomes a fine lady,” wrote Carter, for “between the Spartan laws, the Roman politics, the philosophy of Epicurus, and the wit of St. Evremond, she seems to have formed a most extraordinary system.”²⁷ In other words, Macaulay Graham was deeply learned in the Classics, yet gravitated towards the philosophical and rhetorical elements that Miss Carter did not. Nevertheless, Macaulay Graham was able to articulate arguments that Carter called “extraordinary,” which at this time connoted that they went beyond the religious, political, and moral bounds of an Anglican woman like Carter. A less critical view of Macaulay Graham’s eloquence came from Macaulay Graham’s close friend Mrs. Arnold, who informed Mary Hays that she “was earnest, constant, and eloquent, in her efforts for rectifying the principles, and enlarging the minds, of her

²⁶ Hill 19-24
²⁷ As quoted in Bridget Hill, p. 11

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friends and connexions. . . There was no arrogance in her exhortations and counsels; her accents were not less mild and persuasive, than her reasoning was energetic and forcible.”28

If Macaulay Graham had intimidated and amazed the scholarly Elizabeth Carter by her conversational eloquence, it is no wonder that women in general seemed to keep a distance from her. Most of Macaulay Graham’s friends and mentors were men, with the exception of Mrs. Arnold, whose brother later became her second husband. She married the first time at the age of twenty-nine to a Scottish medical doctor fifteen years her senior who encouraged her in her intellectual interests and gave her experience as a hostess of dinner parties.29 Macaulay Graham’s friends recollected that after dinner she commonly refused to retire with the ladies and stayed to converse with the men. Sylas Neville’s diary speaks reverently of her qualities of mind, morals, and conversation, and apparently record “every word” of a conversation held over chocolate in her study in 1768.30 However, many women and some men were intimidated by her. Richard Baron, a close friend of Mr. Macaulay Graham, in the early 1660s thought her “quite a phenomenon—a woman without passions” with a face “as abstract as the print of Mr. Locke.”

Macaulay Graham’s social life was extensive both during and after her first marriage as she moved among the well-educated men of her political and religious

28 Hays, Female Biography, v.3 p. 159
29 She moved in two social circles, one was the radical reformers who belonged to the Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights, and the other was a group of Religious dissenters with political interests.
30 Hill 18
circles. Her brother, John Sawbridge, was active in politics, being one of John Wilkes's earliest supporters. Thomas Hollis, a good friend of Macaulay Graham and her husband, gave her access to his historical tracts from the seventeenth century. Three years into her six-year marriage to Macaulay Graham (he died in 1766), she published the first volume of her *History*, and over the next ten years she wrote four more volumes of the history and two pamphlets. Then she withdrew from society.

Over the course of her active political and social career, Macaulay Graham learned a great amount about historiography and its role in her present cultural context. She was very conscious of the sort of research, style and arrangement used in the genre of history. Commenting on Paul de Rapin-Thoyras's *Histoire d'Angleterre* in English translation, she observed that he was more objective than other historians of the English civil war, but his style was “very prolix” and “destitute of all those animating graces and justifications which are necessary to form an agreeable and instructive history.”

William Guthrie’s histories she felt were faithful and just representations whose style could “rise even to the sublime,” but he, like Rapin, was “very prolix to a degree of tediousness.” Macaulay Graham described Hume’s history as “an elegant pastime for the hours of leisure or idleness, leaving the reader perfectly ignorant as to character, motives, and other facts.” Her own history, claiming to finally put all the facts before the public eye, was one of the most detailed and well-documented histories of the century,

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31 Hill 58
34 *History of England*, vi. p.vi
and the depth of her scholarship brought her well-earned credibility in the reviews.  

She seems to have taken Locke's advice about research to a degree of enthusiasm, meticulously following Locke's recommendations on the use of primary sources in history. Not only did she have access to Hollis's collection of tracts, but she went to the British Museum to view seventeenth-century private letters and additional tracts.

The initial reception of Catharine Macaulay Graham's first historical volume was enthusiastically in its favor, with a few exceptions. Joseph Priestley called it a "masterly" work, and Horace Walpole claimed it was the most "sensible" and "unaffected" history yet. Mr. Pitt declaimed in the House of Commons upon the value of Macaulay Graham's history in explicit contrast with the history by David Hume. Among the few women who read sections of it, however, it did not fare so well: Elizabeth Carter commented that the extracts demonstrated Macaulay Graham's high talents, but "I apprehend there is too violent a party spirit runs through it, at which I am exceedingly vexed." By 1768 her publisher decided to republish her first few volumes as serialized weekly numbers to make them more affordable to the common reader. Macaulay Graham's awareness of the rhetoric of publication relationships was demonstrated in her pamphlet on copyright law, published in 1774, which argued for a system of mutual benefit among author, bookseller, and the reading public. Her fame as an historian

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35 The Critical Review of 1769 wrote "in favour of Mrs. Macaulay Graham's narrative," describing it as "concise, clear, and candid" (Hill 36)

36 An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Book 4, Ch. XVI "Of the Degrees of Assent," sec. 11 "Yet history is of great use"

37 Hill 40

38 Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, ed. Revd. Montagu Pennington (1807), 481-2, as quoted in Hill 41
enabled her to change publishers for the last four volumes, negotiating for nine hundred pounds for the fifth volume and a thousand pounds each for the sixth through eighth volumes.\textsuperscript{39}

Macaulay Graham also revealed a consciousness of generic variation and adaptation to audience as she retold history in the epistolary mode and reduced the appearance of her scholarly apparatus. In 1778 Macaulay Graham published a \emph{History of England from the Revolution to the Present Time in a Series of Letters to a Friend.} While it in no way resembled the familiar epistolary style expected of women, it occasionally addressed its "correspondent" and avoided footnotes, and was therefore more readable by a less educated audience. Similarly, in the later formal volumes of her \emph{History}, she aimed to make her work "useful to men of all conditions," and decided to avoid scholarly apparatus and spin an unbroken thread of narrative. She explained her shift in style by saying that she had heard that "long notes were tedious and disagreeable to the reader."\textsuperscript{40} Her generic adaptation over time reveals an awareness of her rhetorical situation and aims, and her desire to match her genre to her political opinions about accessibility to knowledge.

Catharine Macaulay Graham is unusual among women writers in that she did not seem to have many insecurities about her \emph{ethos} as a female writer. In Macaulay Graham's political pamphlets, she writes with force of argument and clarity of logic without any prefatory excuses regarding her sex. She expressed her role as historian as

\textsuperscript{39} Hill 50

\textsuperscript{40} Macaulay Graham, \textit{History of England} vi. advertisement.
one of serious public trust that she had to uphold with moral integrity and faithful
representation of the facts. This serious and studious ethos took the emphasis off of her
gender and put it on her civic duty to discover the truth about past political motives and
action. Horace Walpole admitted that Macaulay Graham "exerted manly strength with the
gravity of a philosopher." Her rhetorical strategy for the most part was to avoid
bringing up arguments about the equality of the sexes, except on rare occasions when she
embedded them within a longer text (an instance of which I will discuss below). She
indirectly proves the equality of the sexes, however, by writing and reasoning as a peer
among male historians and politicians.

In general, Macaulay Graham's arguments against absolute power in monarchy
and on behalf of liberty and equality are transferable to other power relationships such as
that which existed between man and woman. For instance, in her pamphlet against
Hobbes' system of government, she sarcastically praises Hobbes for stating clearly the
difficulty of advising or redressing the wrongs of an absolute monarch. Her strategy is to
point out how he provides strong evidence against his own arguments. The advisors or
critics of the absolute monarch, she reasons, would be considered "offensive,
contumelious, and justly liable to severe punishment," and it would be irrelevant whether
the advisers were wiser than the monarch. "By this plain-dealing," Macaulay Graham

41 Horace Walpole, Memoirs of the Reign of George III, iii. 121-3, as quoted in Hill 45
42 Loose Remarks on Certain Positions to Be Found in Mr. Hobbes' Philosophical Rudiments of
Government and Society with a Short Sketch of a Democratical Form of Government in a Letter to Signior
Paoli by Catharine Macaulay Graham. The Second Edition, with Two Letters, One from an American
Gentleman to the Author, Which Contains Some Comments on Her Sketch of the Democratical Form of
Government, and the Author's Answer. London, 1769

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writes with tongue in cheek, "Mr. Hobbes does fairly acknowledge, that there is in this
sort of government a malignity which cannot be avoided, or in any manner corrected.
This is one of the prevailing arguments which Mr. Hobbes uses to make men in love with
kingly power."43 By such sarcastic praise, Macaulay Graham demonstrates that Hobbes,
by trying to exalt kingly power, has in fact brought forward its deep injustices.

But what has this argument to do with women? It is simply that many of the
seventeenth-century arguments on behalf of hierarchy in both government and gender
share similarities, and to attack the one is to attack the foundation of the other. Hobbes'
point about the jeopardy of advisors and complainers to the king puts one in mind of a
passage in The Ladies Calling where the author recommends absolute submission to men,
explaining that "women have a native feebleness, unable to back and assert their angers
with any effective force" and therefore, when they show anger, "they render themselves at
once despis’d and abhorr’d; nothing being more ridiculously hateful, than an impotent
rage"—such women are compared to barking dogs.44 As Hobbes admits about absolute
monarchy, Allestree admits that in marriage, without love, the relationship is "a tyranny
perhaps on the mans [sic] part, and a slavery on the womans [sic]."45 Such are the
arguments used to make women in love with husbandly power – sarcastically speaking.

43 Loose Remarks 19
44 Allestree “part I section II: Of Meekness” 48
45 Allestree 181

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There is strong evidence that Macaulay herself saw a close relationship between systems of religious belief, government, and marriage. On two rare occasions, Macaulay Graham directly asserts the equality of the sexes in the midst of her defense of the righteousness of God and the moral duty of humankind, *A Treatise on the Immutability of Moral Truth* (1783). Her assertions about property and power relationships and the spiritual, mental, and emotional equality of the sexes are inseparable from her assertions about the nature of God. In a passage where she refutes Lord Bolingbroke’s claim that men ought to be free to practice polygamy, she writes,

> Nor is it any wonder that justice, in its more abstract or general sense, should be little considered, or little understood, by those who can believe that it is agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of an all-perfect Being to form two species of creatures of equal intelligence and similar feelings, and consequently capable of an equal degree of suffering under injuries, and should consign one of these species as a kind of property to a different species of their fellow-creatures, not endowed with any qualities of mind sufficient to prevent the enormous abuse of such a power.46

The second instance in which Macaulay Graham asserts the equality of men and women is in her proposed system of education, where she recommends coeducation of boys and girls. Macaulay Graham explicitly denies “the notion of a positive inferiority in the intellectual powers of a female mind,”47 criticizes educational systems that cramp women’s talents and bodies as children, and briefly describes the kind of virtuous and confident woman she hopes to form by her system. Her educated woman will be “a careless, modest beauty, grave, manly, noble, full of strength and majesty,” one who

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46 *Immutability of Moral Truth* 158
47 *Letters on Education* 49

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values chastity in both sexes. The adjectives convey the simple assertion that much of what her culture valued in men only (i.e. strength and majesty) and some of what her culture valued in women only (chastity, modesty) are admirable qualities of all humans regardless of sex. This description of womanly character and its accompanying system of coeducation boldly defies the common opinion that female virtues were the opposite, or the complements, of male virtues, and therefore demanded a different education. There are probably less than fifteen pages out of her five hundred that refer exclusively to female education in her treatise. Yet when she mentions the topic, she is unequivocal. Her opinions are stated confidently and not debated or extensively supported. Thus, one measure of her confidence in sexual equality is the degree to which it is assumed and forthrightly stated as fact, rather than anxiously, angrily contested or protested, throughout her authorial career. With her it is not a subject worthy of debate; her own talents in the service of God and humankind are her strongest argument for women's equality.

The unisex system of education Catharine Macaulay Graham recommends in *Letters on Education* deserves a close examination for the ways it proposes to teach rhetorical skill to its male and female students. A large part of the text focuses on necessarian theology and the association of ideas, the foundations of her educational system. These philosophies argue that it is possible to persuade without coercion, deception, or verbal enchantment. The emphasis of necessarian rhetorics is managerial: they focus on arrangement and long-term planning. Based on beliefs about the orderly

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48 *Letters on Education* 221
organization of the human mind and God’s program of involving humankind in their own collective and individual moral development, Macaulay Graham found extensive room for human agency. She desired to set forth a theory and practice to educate a generation who would be moved by the persuasive arguments of historical writing such as her own. Just as she argues in her history that a good system of government promotes virtue and restrains vice, a good system of early education works through careful arrangement and organization of motives and circumstances. Young pupils learn the rhetoric of self-persuasion and self-government through imitating internally the tutors’ external arrangement of their circumstances, thoughts, and motives. The good tutor “will teach him [the student] the art of arranging circumstances in such a manner as shall give an insuperable power to that motive which shall produce the best volition.” Virtuous tastes and associations were the end of such training—a firm foundation for free and critical thinking. Macaulay Graham seems to argue that only in the hands of these virtuous communicators who write and speak within an egalitarian system of education and communication would the powers of language be wielded without tyranny.

While early education is a matter of circumstantial and internal persuasion through mental association in this treatise, the child’s higher education is to be steeped in reading and writing. The printed and written text is paramount in her system, so students are introduced to a system of readings and composition exercises. Macaulay Graham seemed to consider Samuel Johnson the major composition theorist of her era, one who encouraged the practice of composing under time pressure in order to learn quickness in
arranging ideas. Her educational program includes the transcription of Addison’s *Spectators* to learn grammar, and then, while the student is reading a course of history, she is to compose “Themes written in Latin and English . . . with a proper attention to Dr. Samuel Johnson’s practical precepts.” Like Cicero and Quintilian, she emphasized the importance of written composition in the education of a civic leader.

Also like Cicero and Quintilian, Macaulay Graham clearly prefers the “sublime author” with a liberal education over the “mere,” or physically gifted, orator. Yet her emphasis on the role of textuality makes her differ from the classical trainers of rhetors. She clearly favors textuality over orality. The sublime author “is the offspring of judgment, attention, memory, and acute apprehension.” and is therefore more worthy of praise and useful to society. “Though the mere orator can never become the sublime author,” she reasons, “yet the sublime author may, by early habits of composing with celerity, become the orator.”

Perhaps she means to praise the role of the orator (in the sense of “public leader/persuader”) who “speaks” primarily through print media, for her suspicion of oral genres extends to the common arenas of forensic debate. Her ideal tutor would accompany a reading of Cicero’s orations with criticisms upon instances where Cicero compromises his moral integrity to win a legal case.

Macaulay Graham reveals her familiarity with Plato’s *Phaedrus* in her educational treatise. She advises tutors to illustrate, as Plato did in the *Phaedrus*, “the potent power of numbers” and “the delusive power of sound,” by translating some passages of poetry.

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49 *Letters on Education* 35
into "plain prose." She gives an example of how this can be done with a passage from Pope's *Essay on Man*, a passage which "will be found to be quite nonsense when stripped of the pomp of verse."\(^5\)

Not only is Macaulay Graham, in the tradition of Plato and Locke, suspicious of poetic seduction, but she is also suspicious of conversational rhetorics and verbal dispute. She charges Samuel Johnson with the desire of winning arguments in conversation at the expense of reason, giving as an example one of their own conversations. Thus Macaulay Graham makes it clear that she believes written rhetorics are more virtuous and more sublime than oral rhetorics, since writing gives a reader time to critique and reflect, and freedom from visual and aural deception.

The order in which various written genres are introduced in Catharine Macaulay Graham's system of education reveals her beliefs about which genres are formative or foundational, and which genres are too difficult to handle without mature judgment. In appendix C, I have included a complete list of the subjects and books that Macaulay Graham includes in her plan of "literary education," a term which denoted the full range of written genres. In Macaulay Graham's recommendations, the child progresses from grammar to history, to morality, to poetry and belles lettres, then to geography and natural science, next to philosophy, rhetoric, and logic; then politics, ancient religion, and finally Biblical studies and modern controversies about religion. The early foray into history is likely intended to instill the love of liberty that Macaulay Graham confesses was a result of her own historical studies. Rollin's ancient history is first in her list of histories, and

\(^5\) *Letters on Education* 130
Rollin's work on Belles Lettres is also included as an extra book of interest to "pupils of
taste." She is suspicious of the intellectual and moral value of "the lighter parts of the
belle lettre [sic]" such as poetry, drama, and novels. 51

The delay of Biblical studies in Macaulay Graham's plan rests on a similar
foundation of the contrast between oral and written rhetoric. Religious argumentation in
the form of writing is delayed until the mind is strong enough to comprehend it and feel
its influence. She argues that if scriptures are offered too early, without any alternatives
to compare them with, the natural result will be doubts. Her pattern of education is
intended to "make a true Christian, that is, a Christian on conviction," or, if the pupil
decides not to believe, "he will at least be an Infidel on rational principles" rather than
one who rests his faith on intellectual fashions or blind submission to authority. 52 In any
case, the reading of atheistic writings is safer for the young student than hearing "lively
observations taken from these writers, when flung out in discourse," since a young and
weak mind will quickly give way to such oral arguments. But the pupil's mind will not
be attracted to spurious arguments without their emotional appeal, when they appear in "a
string of arguments logically arranged in an elaborate treatise." 53 The whole tenor of this
scheme of literary education is to train the mind to appreciate serious textual
argumentation, and to develop a taste for the work of the "sublime author," if not to form
the sublime author him/herself.

51 Letters on Education 148
52 Letters on Education 137, 139
53 Letters on Education 138
Although some would dispute Catharine Macaulay Graham's own status as a sublime author, the historical record shows she was a sublime individual at least in terms of her bold efforts and wide influence. Historians of the twentieth century have discovered she was a highly influential figure in the American and French revolutions. Macaulay Graham also encouraged her husband to enter university when he was 30, and after she died, he continued his education and earned his M.A. Her final work on the Education of both sexes was a powerful encouragement to Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays who both express their indebtedness to her. Wollstonecraft wrote to Macaulay Graham a year before the latter's death, saying "You are the only female writer who I coincide in opinion with respecting the rank our sex ought to endeavour to attain in the world. I respect Mrs. Macaulay Graham because she contends for laurels whilst most of her sex seek only for flowers."  

Catharine Macaulay Graham, while she never formally studied rhetoric nor wrote a treatise on rhetoric, was steeped in the informal learning and teaching of rhetoric as she observed and debated the uses of power in language and society. She was certainly a very large thinker about more subjects than rhetoric, and this contextualization is what makes her remarks on rhetoric expressed by-the-way all the more valuable. For her, to write history was to have a hand in re-shaping the rhetorical landscape of the present and future. Early in life through her reading and conversation she became aware of the power  

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54 The Americans and the French read her history and used it as a source of argument for liberty. She engaged in correspondence with key political figures such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Revolutionaries from America and France would even travel to London and Bath to visit and converse with her.  
of historical forces and the power of historical writing and reading in shaping social relationships not only between monarchs and subjects, but between men and women, tutors and pupils, writers and readers. Yet her life was neither socially isolated nor merely focused on matters of theoretical or antiquarian interest. Her thorough research in history and her attention to generic experimentation and copyright arrangements reveal her as a very active member of a largely male community of political, economic, literary, religious, and educational theorists and workers. Within this context, Macaulay Graham reveals herself as fully a child of the print revolution of her century, favoring the new technology of text almost as the savior of the human capacity for critical reasoning. To a mind attuned to social arrangement, the arrangement of text was a natural point of focus for her program of social change. Ironically, her most powerful arguments for women's inclusion in the realm of rhetoric are not expansive verbal explorations of the issue such as Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but her simple unabashed presence and activity in what she seemed to consider the human (rather than gendered) realm of rhetorical production, reception, and education in the media of expository and argumentative prose.

**Mary Hays (1760-1843)**

Mary Hays' rhetorical education in expository and persuasive prose, like Catharine Macaulay Graham's and Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld's, was conducted in a dissenting community active in religious and political controversy. Many dissenters, such
as Joseph Priestley, prided themselves on their refusal to oppress women with ideas of passive obedience, encouraged women to become more thoroughly educated, and welcomed them into intellectual conversation. While Macaulay Graham moved in a community of politicians and Aikin Barbauld a community of educators, Mary Hays' mentors tended to be philosophers. All three women were influenced by Joseph Priestley's necessarianism and his advocacy of Hartleian theories of association. Hays became a professional literary rhetorician. An advocate of women, Hays attempted to achieve independence as an author of philosophical and polemical essays and reviews, biographical collections, and novels.

Hays described her own education as self-initiated from the beginning, and it was one of her commonplaces that a great mind overcomes all discouraging circumstances. She also complained that her upbringing and education was too secluded, claiming to have had little acquaintance with the female conversational and conduct norms of the culture at large. Her selective submission to those norms became a major social handicap. Her autobiographical novel *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, in which she describes the upbringing that led to her ill-fated courtship with Frend, gives us some clues to her own education. Its details are exaggerated to demonstrate the dangers of

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56 "from the first dawning of reason, amid all the disadvantages of worse than neglected, perverted, female education, the governing principles of my mind have been an ardent love of literature and an unbounded reverence for truth and genius" (Letter from Hays to Godwin, Oct 14, 1794, as quoted in Love Letters of Mary Hays, p. 229)

57 "The truth is, from having been so much the child of seclusion, I am very ignorant of the forms enjoined by the varnish of half civilization, the proof of corruption, & the miserable substitute for virtue, called punctilio." (Letter to Godwin, n.d. [probably 1796], New York Library Pforzheimer collection.)

58 I do not claim an exact match between Emma and Mary Hays, but Hays' correspondence with Godwin demonstrates that the novel's character and life matches her own character and life quite closely. She used
feeding a romantic sensibility and using that sensibility as a basis for moral and philosophical development. Emma’s literary education is described as being built on a foundation of oriental tales. At six years old, her heroine Emma performed recitations of Pope’s Homer and Thomson’s *Seasons*, and the applause of her family and friends encouraged her to read more books (largely the sentimental literature that was accessible to her) and to practice her elocutionary and dramatic skills.\(^5\) \(^9\) Years later, Emma’s uncle tried to counteract the effects of her romantic reading by opening his library to her, where she read Plutarch, classical history, ecclesiastical history, polemic divinity, and Descartes. These readings gave her a taste for history, theology and metaphysics, the inspiring “republican ardour” and a “high-toned philosophy.”\(^6\) \(^0\) (This part of Hays’ pseudo-autobiographical narrative roughly parallels the early education narratives of two of her heroes—Macaulay Graham’s description of early reading and Madame Roland’s revelation in 1795 about her early forays into history.) Hays’ veiled self-portrait in Emma, if it matches its original at all, explains the emotional and intellectual enthusiasm that fires her persuasive prose. Even if the narrative is not autobiographically accurate, it reveals Hays’ values in 1796 regarding the utility and dangers of various spoken and written rhetorics in the early education of an author and philosopher.

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\(^5\) Hays’ character Emma writes “Emulation was roused, and vanity fostered: I learned to recite verses, to modulate my tones of voice, and began to think myself a wonderful scholar.” (48) Playing with other children, she would act scenes from the romances she read.

\(^9\) *Emma Courtney* 56
Like her fictional counterpart, Hays was strong-willed and enjoyed contradicting people, but such rhetorical education and practice conflicted at many points with the norms of female culture which recommended self-restraint and modesty, silence and submission towards men in authority, and safe, entertaining displays of lively and light wit and humor. In contrast, Hays openly expressed both her ideas and her passions, preferred discussing issues in the company of intellectual men, and tended to be melancholy and serious in company. Her early formation exercised her ability to argue on opposite sides of an issue. Hays’ argumentative and inquisitive disposition was likely encouraged by her father and his male friends before he died when she was fifteen. It was also encouraged by dissenting pulpit oratory, which tended to be theologically and politically argumentative due to the dissenting community’s attempts to repeal the Test Acts during this time. The logic and rhetoric of sermons was a common topic of her conversations and also appeared in her correspondence with John Eccles.

We can be certain that one of Hays’ early initiations into written genres of persuasion and argument occurred through her love letters with John Eccles written at the age of nineteen. As Hays became more aware that she was socially awkward because of her outgoing, passionate, critical personality, she focused on the issue of female conduct in order to learn and critique its rules. In the love letters between Mary Hays and John, the roles of men and women in courtship and marriage became the ruling preoccupation.

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61 She told Godwin that he need not go to the trouble of inviting other women when they visited Thomas Holcroft and his family, because she was “more used to, & therefore more at ease in, the company of men” (Hays to Godwin, March 8, 1796).

62 Hays describes Mr. Eccles, Sr.’s political and religious arguments with herself in conversation in 1780, saying that he bears with her contradictions just as a father would.
She posed many questions about her own conversational and epistolary rhetoric. Was she too delicate in her morals and manners, or too permissive and playful? was she restrained enough, or did she display enough honesty and candour? how seriously was she permitted to admonish or critique his behavior or letters? to what degree should she allow herself to be persuaded and encouraged by his flattering letters? —these questions of women’s role in mixed-sex conversation and letter-writing were central to her rhetorical education and would later reappear in almost all of her letters, novels, and essays in the 1790s.

Eccles died shortly before their wedding was to be held, and Hays experienced several years of depression, from which she emerged with a hunger for learning and renewed pleasure in writing and conversing about what she learned. In the 1780s, Hays began pursuing a course of study, and developed a mentoring correspondence with the Rev. Robert Robinson and a friendship with Rev. John Disney. In religious debate, Mary Hays’ early tutor was Rev. Robert Robinson of Cambridge, a preacher renowned for his pulpit elocution and his advocacy of civil and religious liberty. Their correspondence dates back to 1783, ten years before Hays published her *Letters and Essays*, and ends in 1789. Robinson aimed to encourage Hays as a writer and free thinker through their correspondence, while keeping her away from Deism. He expressed his anger toward London preachers who would not allow their flocks to criticize or question their assertions, and told Hays how he thoroughly enjoyed the intellectual sparring between himself and Hays, as he enjoyed it between himself and his married daughter. At times Hays was too contentious even for Robinson’s taste, so he recommended to her the
rhetoric of assuming a virtue in the audience where there was none, in order to encourage them to live up to the description. At one point in their correspondence, when Hays writes him exulting that she has refuted Dr. Clarke, instead of disagreeing with her (which may have only made her cling more tenaciously to her opinion), he refers her back to footnotes in Clarke's text by page and volume number, so that she could discover for herself that Clarke was open to alternative ideas. During this period, her friend Dr. Disney apparently preached a few sermons she had written, and Hays published a few poems and an oriental tale in the *Universal Magazine*.

Hays' first published work on morals and religion in 1791, a response to Gilbert Wakefield's pamphlet criticizing forms of public worship, was one of the first of many responses to be published. In the following year were published a host of other responses to Wakefield by her friend Dr. Disney, by Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, and two other men.

Should Mr. Wakefield take the trouble of perusing the following pages, he will probably charge the writer with great presumption; a woman, young, unlearned, unacquainted with any language but her own; possessing no other merit than a love of truth and virtue, an ardent desire of knowledge, and a heart susceptible to the affecting and elevated emotions afforded by a pure and rational devotion;

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63 In the following year were published a host of other responses to Wakefield by her friend Dr. Disney, by Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, and two other men.
endeavouring to divest herself of every improper bias; to search the scriptures, and
carefully compare with them the various ideas of the different sects and
denominations of Christians, with a full determination of preserving her mind free
and open to conviction, and pursuing and embracing truth without partiality and
without prejudice, wherever it may be found.64

What follows is a series of arguments from scripture demonstrating, in refutation of
Wakefield, the propriety of social prayer and worship. Wakefield's only response to her
in his second edition (1792) was an obscure and jocular remark about the ideal woman in
the book of Proverbs.

Hays responded to Wakefield again by publishing a second edition of the same
pamphlet in 1792 which included a new postscript. The postscript reveals several aspects
of rhetoric that she was in the process of learning through this public debate in print.
First of all, she is led to compare Wakefield's arguments in writing with the rhetorical
strategies of a forensic orator, a comparison which, in the dissenting community, was
clearly negative.65 Wakefield's response, as she is told by a friend, seems to imitate the
"artifice of a council [sic] who draws off the attention of the court from the question in
debate" and who "excite[s] by an excursion of fancy quite foreign from the subject a
laugh at the expense of the witness." Second, she discovers a strategy of shaming
Wakefield by allusions to his rhetorical unmanliness and sophistry:

64 Cursory Remarks 3

65 Dissenters were prevented (by their conscience, upbringing, and law) from the education and the office of
a lawyer. In the tradition of Locke and Isaac Watts, forensic debates are criticized for their inability to be
used as tools of inquiry.
Abashed and wounded, I withdraw from a polemic controversy to which I profess myself very unequal: convinced that truth and simplicity are by no means a match for wit and talents, talents, which though they may fail in enforcing conviction, yet dazzle and perplex, "and make the worse appear the better reason."^66

Hays' future behavior discovers the sarcasm of the lines above: she did not "withdraw from polemic controversy" at all. In fact, the first essay of her 1793 miscellany revives the debate Wakefield excited over the rhetoric of pulpit oratory and social worship, and demonstrates her knowledge of Ciceronian and Lockean rhetoric and their relationship to the rhetorics of Priestley and Enfield. Hays' interest in the rhetoric of delivery and the interplay of *pathos* and *logos* carry over into astute observations and analyses of men and women's conversational rhetoric in all her works—yet here I must merely point out how these interests relate to the development of Hays' rhetorical skills in written argumentation.

Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* appeared in 1792, and Hays soon obtained a personal introduction to Wollstonecraft at the home of Joseph Johnson, the publisher of both their works. Wollstonecraft became Hays' next rhetorical mentor, in person and through correspondence. She encouraged Hays to be more confident as a writer and to think more critically about the strategies by which she constructed ethos in her prefaces. In 1792 Wollstonecraft was helping Hays revise the volume of letters and essays. Wollstonecraft's letters are concise and come directly to the point regarding the revisions

^66 *Cursory Remarks* 24 (Note the citation of the phrase from Plato's *Gorgias*, which was a commonplace in Hays' time)
she recommends to Hays' early pamphlet on Wakefield. It is interesting to note how comfortably Wollstonecraft uses the male pronoun in discussing the role of "the writer" in creating an ethos, and then applies her observations to Hays.

I do not approve of your preface. [...] Disadvantages of education &c, ought, in my opinion, never to be pleaded (with the public) in excuse for defects of any importance, because if the writer has not sufficient strength of mind to overcome the common difficulties which lie in his way, nature seems to command him, with a very audible voice, to leave the task of instructing others to those who can. This answered; and till a work strongly the author in the back ground. [...] indeed the preface, and even your pamphlet, is too full of yourself — inquiries ought to be made before they are answered; and till a work strongly interests the public true modesty should keep the author in the back ground.

This advice had a great effect on Hays' future prefaces and her strategies of ethos in general. One can see the great contrast between the humble opening passage of her early pamphlet ("a woman, unlearned . .") and a passage from the preface of *Letters and Essays* (1793):

> It is observed by the sensible vindicator of female rights—"that as society is at present constituted, the little knowledge, which even women of stronger minds attain, is of too desultory a nature, and pursued in too secondary a manner to give vigour to the faculties, or clearness to the judgment." I feel the truth of this observation with a mixture of indignation and regret: and this is the only apology I shall make to the critical reader, who may be inclined to censure as unconnected, or inconclusive, any of the subsequent remarks.

Mary Wollstonecraft even advises Hays to construct a less servile ethos in her business relationship with their publisher Joseph Johnson. She seems to point to a passage in a letter from Hays to Johnson when she writes to Hays,

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67 Wollstonecraft to Hays, Nov. 25, 1792. RP 677 British Library
68 that is, Wollstonecraft
69 *Letters and Essays* v-vi

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you must be aware, Madam, that the honour of publishing, the phrase on which you have laid a stress, is the cant of both trade and sex: for if really equality should ever take place in society the man who is employed and gives a just equivalent for the money he receives will not behave with the servile obsequiousness of a servant.70

In the tradition of Catharine Macaulay Graham, Wollstonecraft advises that a female author behave as if the social equality she promotes were already in existence. “Let me remind you,” writes Wollstonecraft to her pupil, “that when weakness claims indulgence it seems to justify the despotism of strength.”71 The ethos that Wollstonecraft describes, and Hays learns to practice, is itself a form of indirect persuasion to change the ways in which men and women, writers and publishers, speak and write to one another. Of course, some readers would remain unpersuaded. The English Review, for example, reacted to Hays’ bold, new ethos in Letters and Essays with extreme gender prejudice.72 Reeling from their defamation, and without the encouragement of Wollstonecraft to support her next endeavors in print,73 Hays did not publish in the next three years.

In 1795 Hays initiated a correspondence and intellectual friendship with the philosopher William Godwin, from whom she asked and received feedback on her work as a novelist and reviewer. This correspondence helped Hays to climb out of her personal

70 Wollstonecraft to Hays, Nov. 25, 1792

71 Ibid.

72 “In the first number Miss Mary Hays conceives but her conceptions are an indigested heap and the whole of this paper is an abortion. We cannot pursue this Lady in all her wanderings.—In the work before us we see nothing to commend—for it everywhere excites our contempt. We despise dogmas that originate in affected wisdom, and we are disgusted by flippancy and frivolousness that betray all the conceit of an half-educated female—such are the crude effusions of Mary Hays. Female philosophers while pretending to superior powers carry with them (such is the goodness of providence) a mental imbecility which damns them to fame.” (as quoted in a letter from Mr. Evans to Mary Hays, n.d.)

73 Hays had traveled to France during the Revolution, and then to Scandinavia in 1795. Mary Hays reported to Godwin in May of 1796 that “Mrs. Imlay” (Wollstonecraft) had returned.
despair and back into the realm of intellectual debate. In this mentorship, Hays would write long letters engaging in philosophical and political issues and grueling psychological self-analysis, and Godwin would respond in person when they met over tea. Hays reveals herself as a self-motivated learner who respects her mentor but is confident enough to disagree with him in matters of philosophy and lifestyle, to try to persuade him, and to make suggestions about how their relationship should be run.

In 1796 Hays once again took the opportunity to practice writing polemic with a masculine ethos (for there was no ungendered ethos in this culture) when she contributed anonymously as “M. H.” to debates in the Monthly Magazine regarding the psychological-metaphysical theories of Helvetius. She may well have felt supported in her essayistic endeavours by female authorial precedents, for the principles of Helvetius had been admired and critiqued in writing by two of Hays’ idols, Madame Roland and Catharine Macaulay Graham. Due to her esoteric subject matter, her confident ethos, and the assumption that periodical authors were male, her respondents in the magazine treated her as a male writer.

In the midst of Hays’ work as a magazine writer, she commenced an apprenticeship as a book reviewer. Wollstonecraft gave Hays helpful feedback on the way to talk about books in reviews. She had discovered in Hays’ reviews the tendency to speak of a work as if the audience had already read it.74 This tendency betrays some

74 In reviewing, will you pardon me? you seem to run into an error [sic] which I have laboured to cure in myself: you allude to things in the work which can only be understood by those who have read it, instead of, by a short summary of the contents, or an account of the incident on which the interest turns, enabling a person to have a clear idea of a book, which they have never heard of before. (Wollstonecraft to Hays, n.d. [1796])
generic confusion or overlap between the way in which Hays had learned to handle
Wakefield’s pamphlet and the way in which one ought to handle works under review. It
was the common practice of reviewers at the time to insert very long quotations from
works under review, which they then commented upon, or left to the reader’s own
judgment.

Wollstonecraft’s good advice either came too late, or was not followed, when
Hays’ practices got her into trouble. In 1796 when Hays reviewed Elizabeth Hamilton’s
first fiction, she encountered severe backlash from Hamilton for the way in which she
handled the text. Hays had aimed where Hamilton was vulnerable: Hamilton’s feminine
ethos of sincerity, and her claim to religious neutrality:

In the writer’s laudable, because apparently sincere, zeal for Christianity, she
sometimes betrays a spirit not perfectly consistent with the mildness and
simplicity of the religion of Jesus: railing is substituted for reasoning, and a
frightful picture held up of the adversaries of revelation, in which truth and
soberness are sacrificed, as is not unusual with controversialists, to undue alarm.¹⁵

This passage is not linked to any quotation, paraphrase, or summary from the work that
would support her claim. Hamilton wrote to Mary Hays the following year, in response a
letter from Hays justifying her review, pointing out that Hays was not acting the part of
the sincere, uncritical writer of reviews, and that Hays was herself being masculine
in her militant rhetoric:

The task [of reviewing] was not put upon you. No. With the Ardour of an ancient
champion did you Volunteer your entrance into the lists but not with the
generosity of an Ancient Knight did you Maintain the combat. Instead of fairly,

¹⁵ *Analytical Review* 24 [1796]: 430

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and openly, pointing out the passages which displeased you, that betwixt you & the author the world might have it in their power to decide, You, in the dark, and with a muffled dagger aimed the blow which was to fix, as far as it is in the power of a review to fix, the fame, and character of the person you saluted as a friend!\(^\text{76}\)

This letter signaled the end of Hays’ friendship with Elizabeth Hamilton, who was, in her turn, “to fix the fame and character” of Mary Hays to that of the character Bridgetina Botherim in Hamilton’s satiric novel.

In Hays’ anonymous 1798 *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women*, she writes with even greater confidence, refusing to defer to critics in the preface, and omitting all reference to the faults of her female education. Hays directly addresses the issue of female *ethos* in the postscript to her *Appeal* as she self-consciously discusses the style and diction of her text. Hays openly attempts to negotiate with the authority of speaking to the public as a woman in “dictatorial” genres like expository and persuasive prose. Given Wollstonecraft’s advice against false humility, it certainly would have made Wollstonecraft pleased to see Hays openly admit that when an author publishes anything, a certain degree of confidence in one’s own abilities, must lurk at the bottom; however much those who detest the imputation of vanity or presumption, may wish to conceal it, even from themselves.\(^\text{77}\)

Perhaps recalling Wollstonecraft’s negative comment about being “too full of yourself” in her early pamphlet, in this postscript Hays directly addresses her conscious and frequent use of the “forbidden” pronoun “I,” the “deadly sin” of shifting pronouns between third person and first person, and the apparently presumptuous use of the

\(^{76}\) Elizabeth Hamilton to Mary Hays, March 13th 1797 (Pforzheimer collection)

\(^{77}\) *Appeal* 296
first-person plural form "we." She explains that "we" was used in her text to reduce the "dictatorial tone of composition." On the other hand, she will not apologize for her apparent presumption in taking on a dictatorial genre.

After thus expressing her confidence in her own abilities, and her refusal to comply with the established norm of false humility, she remarks upon her own style and education in a rather jocular manner. Hays admits that her usage is open to severe criticism both grammatically and ethically, nevertheless she reasons (like many a postmodernist would today) that it is dangerous to depersonalize one's prose. "Vanity will always lie in ambush and pop out some where,—or she will spring a mine upon you—if not allowed to charge in front." Hays concludes her *Appeal* with a sarcastic observation on the double standard of criticism which points out vanity in female authors but overlooks it in male authors:

Alas! throw what garment we please over *l'Amour propre*, the cloven foot will sometimes appear and betray its owner. And whatever cowl Hypocrisy or Prudence,—those darling sisters,—may shuffle them in; the horns will occasionally butt against the reader, and expose the author in a reasonable degree. But perhaps this is only the case, when the little urchin is of the feminine gender. For the men—authors and all—bear their faculties so meekly; and their faults,—if indeed they will allow they have any,—lie so deep, that they are scarcely visible to the naked eye.

Around 1798 Hays turned away from polemic controversy in *The Monthly Magazine* and the *Appeal* to the work of a biographer of women. This is not to say that she left behind the skills and ideas she used as a controversial writer. Hays' repeated contention throughout her biographical volumes was that circumstances, rather than

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78 *Appeal* 299

79 *Appeal* 299-300

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innate genius or sex, contribute to the formation of character and talents—a thesis she was fond of advancing in her defenses of Helvetius in the *Monthly Magazine*. The genre of biography was one to which Hays was attracted from her early love of history, and she was very likely familiar with the histories of Rollin, Hume, Macaulay Graham, and her friend Robinson.

In 1798 Hays’ foray into the genre of biography was spurred by her friendship with Mary Wollstonecraft which at that time had ended abruptly with Wollstonecraft’s death. Hays wrote for the *Monthly Magazine* an obituary of Mary Wollstonecraft praising her “impassioned reasoning and glowing eloquence”; and in 1800 published a piece on Wollstonecraft in the *Annual Necrology*.80 The editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, R. Philips, had published in his November 1797 issue an article by an unnamed writer who discussed the features of a good biography, to which Philips appended a call to write pieces for his *Annual Necrology*. There is little doubt Hays read Philips’ piece and other articles in the *Monthly* on biography and history even before she wrote her biographies of Wollstonecraft, as they seem to have inspired her to write in praise of Wollstonecraft’s eloquence. The writer urges biographers to adorn their portraits with classical eloquence that would fire the ambition of youth to emulate the character portrayed, or to avoid his or her vices. The new style of biography would also narrate the education and training that led to the exercise of their talents or their illustrious errors. Such a revival of the epideictic rhetoric of praise and blame would be fully exercised in pieces which would

80 *Annual Necrology, for 1797-8, Including also, Various Articles of Neglected Biography* (London: R. Phillips, 1800)
not be buried in a literary periodical but placed in appropriate volumes, or a periodical
devoted to biography—such as the proposed Annual Necrology. Unlike the French
Necrologue, it would not be confined to men of one nation, nor only to literary men, but
would extend to “the natives of every civilized country”—terms which implied the
inclusion of women, and presaged the international scope of Hays’ work.\footnote{only one-third of Hays’ subjects were Englishwomen.} There was
only one issue of this periodical, in 1800. But Philips and Hays saw that there was a
market for a biographical dictionary of women’s lives. The Lady’s Monthly Museum had
begun publishing a series of short pieces called “Celebrated British Ladies”\footnote{in 1802 these were renamed “Anecdotes of Celebrated and Eccentric Female Characters”} by George
Bedingfield in 1799 which was still running in 1802. The pages of the Monthly itself
were frequently devoted to biography of women.\footnote{For instance, Cordet and Lafayette of the French Revolution are memorialized in May of 1796; the
Empress of Russia’s memoirs are given in an extended supplement to an issue in 1796; an account of Lady
Compton in September of 1796.} R. Philips commissioned and
published Mary Hays’ six volume \textit{Female Biography} (1803).\footnote{He paid ten shillings six pence per sheet, and the work took three years to complete (Ty, “Mary Hays” 157).}

Literary critics have noted that for the most part, the biographies Hays wrote were
compilations based on secondary sources, yet most critics have underestimated Hays’
unique contribution through the way she goes about ordering, joining, paraphrasing and
selecting from these sources. Her efforts in making thematic observations upon the
biographies unifies a work that may seem like a collection of fragments.
These compositional techniques are similar to those used by David Hume, who also relied largely on secondary sources and made critical observations on the materials that he encountered.

Hays learned these skills not only by careful reading of Hume’s and others’ histories, but through reading historiographical theory and rhetorical criticism of histories in the dissenting periodicals. For instance, Hays’ portrayal of Queen Elizabeth draws from a critical debate about her historical representation. In 1797 on the first page of the June and July issues of the *Monthly* were criticisms by Gilbert Wakefield on Hume’s portrayal of Queen Elizabeth (one of Hays’ biographical subjects). Wakefield mainly focused on the improprieties in Hume’s style, but while doing so he happened to argue that Elizabeth should be judged according to her sexual character, as a woman, rather than (as Hume claimed) as a “rational being, placed in authority.” A defense of Hume’s portrayal followed in the August issue, arguing that Wakefield misjudged the propriety of Hume’s writing by assuming masculine qualities could not be strengths in a female monarch. In *Female Biography*, Hays makes her observation on Wakefield’s criticism in her biography of Queen Elizabeth as if Hays were addressing him and other male readers:

Those who require more softness of manners, greater lenity of temper, and more feminine graces to form the character of a woman, to whom they could attach themselves as a mistress and a wife, must be reminded, that these amiable weaknesses, which arise out of a state of subjection and dependence, are utterly incompatible with the situation of an absolute sovereign.

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86 as quoted in Ty, “Mary Hays”, 158 (my italics)
By thus addressing a male audience (who would not be likely to read *Female Biography*), she instructs her female readers to reply in such a manner to a masculinist objection to these qualities in Elizabeth and in other women.

*Female Biography* and Hays’ later biographical and historical works (which I cannot cover here) deserve further attention for the ways in which they illustrate the rhetorical education of the women they represent. Hays’ *Historical Dialogues for Young Persons* (1806-1808), her contribution to a didactic genre developed by other women writers in the late eighteenth century, is considered by Gary Kelly to be “a thorough feminization of historiography.”

In the last few years of the eighteenth century, Mary Hays, like Hester Thrale Piozzi, Catharine Macaulay Graham, and her own mentor Mary Wollstonecraft, lost her reputation for female virtue due to her expression of female desire. It soon became known that her first novel, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) was largely autobiographical of her own assertive advances toward the philosopher William Frend, which had ended in her disappointment. A friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lloyd, further defamed her character by claiming that she offered herself to him and suggested a life together without marriage. The controversy resulted in the decision to publish anonymously her polemical *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* in 1798. Two years later, Elizabeth Hamilton’s novel *Memoirs of Modern*
Philosophers appeared to satirize Hays. Bridgetina Botherim, the character Hamilton created, became a symbol of the sensual corruption and imbecility of freethinking women of the New Philosophy. Nevertheless Hays’ Female Biography (1803), a massive compilation of nearly three hundred famous women’s lives, was successful enough to later earn her the nickname of “the Female Plutarch.” Hays withdrew from Godwin and his circle and published a few children’s novels for Hannah More’s publisher, a signal of her attempts to reclaim her reputation. Hays eventually had to give up her financial independence and public life, but fortunately she had family members who still valued and supported her. Her last work in 1821 was a shorter biographical dictionary, Memoirs of Queens.

A complete view of Mary Hays’ literary career provides ample evidence of how, by degrees, she was educated in the rhetorics of conversational debate, letter-writing, controversial writing, reviewing, and finally biography. Her rhetorical expertise was achieved through the critique and practice of conversational argumentation, through mentorships by means of letters, through the feedback received by reviewers and respondents in periodicals, and by reading and writing in the genres in which she became more expert. Hays’ intellectual enthusiasms and passions and the public, unguarded nature of her later rhetorical education led her to make a number of costly rhetorical mistakes. But these very same personal dispositions, supported with her grounding in

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88 It was actually intended by Hamilton as a satire on young women who modeled themselves on the character of Emma Courtney, but the resemblance to Hays convinced reviewers and readers that Mary Hays was the intended target.
practical rhetorical apprenticeships with Robinson, Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and Philips, gave her persistence to learn from those mistakes and adapt her language skills to different genres of discourse and different constructions of ethos.

**Elizabeth Hamilton (1758-1816)**

Elizabeth Hamilton, a popular satiric novelist, an educational psychologist, and experimental biographer, was always “diffident” (as she would say) about her role as an author. She and her contemporaries explained that Scotland, where she grew up, was not as favorable a climate as England for the growth of a female author or learned lady during the late eighteenth century. In conversation, she avoided talking about her works because of the appearance it had of pride, and in her prefaces and letters can frequently be found the consciousness that authorship and certain kinds of learning were beyond her socially prescribed sphere as a woman. She confessed to a friend that much of her early encouragement as an intellectual and an author came from friends in England who treated her with respect for her mental powers during the short period she lived with her brother in London, and during her residences in Bath and the northern lakelands. Only in the early 1800s, when she was over forty years old and already an acclaimed author with

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89 A friend of Hamilton wrote that in 1804, “A female literary character was even at that time a sort of phenomena in Scotland. Even though most Scotch women read, and were not inferior to their southern neighbours in general information and good taste, very few had ventured to incur the dangerous distinction of authorship. The vulgar term of ‘blue stocking,’ was more hackneyed, even in the polished circles of our literary metropolis, than you can easily imagine” (Benger I: 176-177)

90 “The character of an author I have always confined to my own closet; and no sooner step beyond its bounds, than the insuperable dread of being thought to move out of my proper sphere (a dread acquired, perhaps, from early association,) restrains me, not only from seeking opportunities of literary conversation, but frequently withholds me from taking all the advantage I might reap from those which offer.” (Elizabeth Hamilton to Dr. S. May 29, 1802; Benger 2: 40)
friends in high places, did she become the hostess of a weekly conversational party at her home in Edinburgh. Commencing from that period, she associated with almost all of the members of the Edinburgh literati, including Anne Grant. She was important enough a social figure to warrant the publication, two years after her death (1818), of a two-volume memoir by Elizabeth Benger, including selections from her letters, journal entries, and unpublished works.

Elizabeth Hamilton's interest and expertise in the rhetorics of satiric fiction and instructional and persuasive non-fiction could each warrant a lengthy discussion. Indeed, regarding the first of these genres, literary scholars have recently edited new editions of her two early satiric novels and have written scholarly articles about her fiction. However, her training and practice in the rhetoric of expository and persuasive prose has long been neglected. It deserves attention not only because of the sheer bulk of writing she published in this genre, but more importantly, due to the contributions she made to the development of educational psychology, her unique blend of feminism with Christianity and contemporary psychology, and her experimentation with historical biography. She and her contemporaries also set a higher value upon her work in this genre in comparison with her labors in fiction. The novelist Maria Edgeworth wrote an obituary of Hamilton which expresses this opinion. Her fictional works, writes Edgeworth,

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each a different grace of style and invention, have established Mrs. Hamilton’s character as an original, agreeable, and successful writer of fiction; but her claims to literary reputation as a philosophic, moral, and religious author, are of a higher sort, and rest upon works of a more solid and durable nature—upon her works on education, especially her Letters on Female Education. 92

Like Catharine Macaulay Graham and Mary Hays, Elizabeth Hamilton’s skills in expository prose, specifically exposition and argumentation, were developed both in conversation and in letter-writing. Hamilton lived in a home where daily oral reading and conversational criticism of history and miscellanies was the norm. She was usually chosen to be the reader, and from this experience she was led to believe that “the best prose style was always that which could be longest read without exhausting the breath.” 93

The readings were largely historical in theme: Shakespeare’s historical drama, histories of England and Scotland, and the works of Homer and Virgil. Throughout the 1780s, after her aunt died, Hamilton continued reading to her uncle for three hours a day, mainly from histories and travel literature, prose and poetry from magazines and miscellanies, and now and then a novel. They would often discuss the readings until bedtime. This practice was such a central part of her practice and so highly valued by her guardians that it is used to develop the virtuous character of her fictional heroines. 94

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92 Benger I: 208. The actual title was Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education.

93 Benger I: 50. The connection between oral rhetorical performance and the prose essay was strong in the 1780s and 1790s, when elocutionary “readers”, textbooks for the practice of recitation and pronunciation, began to be published. They commonly included prose excerpts from periodicals like the Spectator.

94 In the unpublished historical novel she began as a child, the character she molded from her own experience speaks of reading “the most renowned authors” of Greece and Rome, and hearing “the sentiments of the author refined and purified by those of my friend” through conversation. (Benger I:55). In Memoirs of Modern Philosophers, the exemplary heroine has her servant read aloud to her Hume’s history of England.
The cycle of reading and critical commentary also appears in her nonfiction *Letters to the Daughter of a Nobleman*, as short tales or fables are followed by detailed explanations of the characters, the moral, and its application to life.

Since so much of Elizabeth Hamilton's published writing was religious in content, the rhetoric of religious instruction in her family was no insignificant influence on her later choice of arguments. Unlike Mary Hays and Catharine Macaulay Graham, Hamilton's background was denominationally mixed: her uncle was Episcopalian, and her aunt was of the Church of Scotland. Neither of these religious communities was as polemical or political as the Unitarian dissenting community during the late eighteenth century to which Macaulay Graham, Hays, and Wollstonecraft belonged. Hamilton usually attended both churches on Sundays, one service after the other, and her guardians' friends were of both backgrounds, so she participated in religious discussions across communities of faith. One of those friends greatly shook her faith through ridicule and forwarded skeptical arguments, and in response, instead of engaging in debate with him (as Hays may have done), Hamilton read the scriptures more intensely in private in order to find answers for her doubts. Hamilton's published writings explicitly disclaim any desire to teach the narrow doctrines of any particular Christian sect, and recommend religious tolerance both within the Christian community and towards those of other faiths, such as the Hindus. However, she was not an extreme latitudinarian, but predicated her arguments on an understanding that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures were truth and the revealed word of God.

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95 Benger I: 44
Journal writing was one of Hamilton’s methods of rhetorical self-education. Through spiritual journals she investigated within herself the science of the human mind and heart that she later wrote so many texts about. Elizabeth Benger’s memoirs of Elizabeth Hamilton include excerpts from her spiritual Journal in which she wrote regularly from around the age of thirty (the late 1780s). In *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* Hamilton recommended to others that they observe their own faculties and affections at work, although she did not, of course, stipulate that it be done in writing.

In Elizabeth Hamilton’s early efforts at letter-writing, she learned some skills of persuasion that transferred to her later published works. When her father died, she was sent at the age of six to live in Scotland with her maternal aunt, a woman who Hamilton claimed to be one of the best letter-writers she had ever known. It is likely that once Hamilton learned to write letters as a child, she corresponded with her mother in Ireland. Although none of this correspondence remains, what makes it probable is the preservation of a monitory letter from Mrs. Hamilton to her son Charles (Hamilton’s brother) who was being educated at home under a tutor.96 The strategies of insinuation used by her mother in this letter, along with the argument of using one’s talents and time wisely, are common persuasive techniques in Hamilton’s epistolary educational treatises, as I demonstrate below. When Hamilton was a teenager, while traveling in the

96 “You are now growing up to manhood, and you should consider what a shame it is to see a boy of your age trifling away that precious time which he ought to employ in laying up a stock of knowledge that may be of the greatest use to him in his future life,—sacrificing an important interest to a childish amusement. You have understanding enough to know that there is nothing aimed at by your master or me but your advantage.” (Benger 1: 28)
Highlands, she wrote letters to her aunt, and a male friend who saw the manuscript of her letter sent it to a local magazine "in which it appeared to the unspeakable dismay of the youthful writer, who, in thus becoming the object of curiosity and criticism to her neighbours, had a foretaste of the pains and pleasures attending celebrity." 97

Elizabeth Hamilton's aunt's encouragement of letter-writing and the description of Hamilton's drawing-room reading material may lead one to believe that her aunt was more liberal about female education than she actually was. Being told that a woman should conceal her learning, much of Hamilton's reading was done by stealth, even at home, as revealed in her oft-told anecdote of hiding Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism* under her seat cushion as a child when she heard someone approach. In order to take her mind off of books and put them on objects of sense, her aunt sent her to Edinburgh and Glasgow to learn accomplishments such as dancing from masters; however, there she was introduced to Dr. Moyse, lecturer on experimental philosophy. They pursued "a literary correspondence" through which he directed her studies. 98 Her elder brother Charles became an even more important "director of studies" by letter after he went to India as cadet for the East India Company in 1772. Benger writes that "this epistolary intercourse soon became to Miss Hamilton a second education, in some respects, perhaps,

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97 Benger 1: 52
98 Benger 1: 46. there is no clue given as to how long this correspondence lasted
more important than any preceding course of instruction." Charles also included important rhetorical responses to the style and content of her letters: detailed praise for her vivid description in letters, and criticism of her tendency to worry about his moral purity.

From the genre of the letter, it was not a large step to the essay. In 1785, a fictional narrative epistle Elizabeth Hamilton had sent anonymously to the Scottish periodical The Lounger was published. In this traditional periodical epistle to the editor, the narrator engages in a unique argument: she complains that the knowledge, taste, and intellect that the Lounger recommends to women does not help them at all in the marriage market, which is still overruled by monetary and class considerations. With this background in the genre of private and public letter-writing, it is little wonder that so much of Hamilton’s publication was in an epistolary mode, although in some cases only nominally so, as a way of making a public genre seem less public and formal, and thus more feminine.

It was likely during the late 1780s, shortly after she published in the Lounger, that Elizabeth Hamilton and several unnamed friends (perhaps her brother and sister included) wrote unpublished periodical essays for their own magazine called “The Breakfast Table.” The short series demonstrates the influence of rhetorical analysis of style in Hugh Blair’s Lectures and the stylistic and moral preoccupations of the literary periodicals of

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99 Benger 1:47
100 The monthly periodical had a short run of less two years (1785-86); yet its popularity warranted their reissue in a three volume set in 1792, which included the piece authored by Hamilton (2: 92) along with several others of similar style and subject matter.
the time. One of these essays is a comparative analysis of the rhetoric of Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson. In terms of content and effect on their audience, the essayist deems that Addison was preferable, since his sprightly humor brought readers more hope than Johnson’s more sour and depressing view of life. However, in direct contrast with Blair and other stylistic critics who uphold Addison’s prose as a standard of taste, the correctness and flow of Addison’s style is shown to be uninteresting, a mere negative virtue that anyone can achieve by correcting one’s language. Johnson is said to have a style that everyone tries to imitate but cannot, a style that is forceful, energetic, profound, and deep because it was written while he was feeling intensely and seriously at the time of writing. This essay produced by her coterie, along with another one regarding literary criticism in the reviews and in conversation, are evidence of her growing rhetorical awareness as part of a community of critical readers and writers. Hamilton’s reading in the miscellanies and periodicals of her era provided her with a firm grounding in the terms by which prose style and content was critiqued, a vocabulary which she used in her later works, as I demonstrate below.

Elizabeth Hamilton’s development in invention and argumentation techniques intensified after 1788 through her increased social contact with writers and scholars. Hamilton’s life had been spent largely in rural seclusion until this year, at which time her brother returned to England on a five-year leave while he finished compiling a Rohilla history and translating a Persian Islamic law book, the *Hedaya*. She then lived with her brother in London and conversed with his friends, the fellow members of the Asiatic
Society, who were scholars and antiquarians interested in the languages and cultures of the near East. Hamilton often assisted her brother in his literary labors, and participated in conversations about customs, laws, manners, and politics in India, of which she demonstrates knowledge in her *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796). Through these activities she became more aware of the differences in the ways women were educated in Scotland, England, and in India, one of the major themes of her *Hindoo Rajah*.

London society also brought Hamilton into contact with the beliefs and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, William Godwin, and others, and the debates regarding Helvetius and women’s education in the *Analytical Review*. While she did not agree with all that Hays and her radical group advanced, nor all their methods of argumentation, she became thoroughly convinced of women’s equal right to education, and equally convinced that she ought to use her talents in writing for the enlightenment and moral training of other women. She was less convinced of women’s (and her own) right to the authorship of instructive and persuasive literature. After her brother died in 1792, she was brought out of her depression into authorship by recalling his encouragement “to engage in some literary pursuit”\(^{101}\) to distract herself from the pain of separation from family members, advice which he had taken himself by becoming an author.

\(^{101}\) Benger I: 115
Much of Elizabeth Hamilton’s continuing rhetorical education came in the form of reviews of her work which made her more aware of the particular moral, generic and stylistic obstacles faced by female writers. When Hamilton entered the stage as a published author in 1796, she experienced the shock of having her work reviewed by a former acquaintance, Mary Hays, with whom she was once on good terms. The piece Hays wrote for the *Analytical Review* in 1796, while it dealt her both praise and blame, received an angry response from Hamilton and an exchange of letters between them that ended their friendship. Such a review, both argumentative and public, broke the rhetorical norms of female friendship.

The politicized and anti-feminist reception of *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* in the reviews was a second shock to Elizabeth Hamilton, and may have made her wary of using the genre of satiric fiction in the future, preferring history and straight exposition. \(^{102}\) The *Anti-Jacobin Review* proudly claimed that Mary Hays herself was the model for Hamilton’s character Bridgetina Botherim, despite Hamilton’s prefatory claim that she wrote a satire of “opinions, not persons.” As the fictional editor of *Modern Philosophers* points out in his footnote, Bridgetina was a character who modeled herself on the heroine Emma Courtney, not Hays herself. Bridgetina’s foolishness partly consists of the ability to recognize Emma as a *negative* example, which Mary Hays, after all, had intended her to be. Using their review to damn Mary Hays, the *Anti-Jacobin* assumed that Elizabeth

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\(^{102}\) Hamilton did return to fictional satire in *Cottagers of Glenburnie* in 1808 with a much more successful result, as a Scottish woman was pointing out the faults of lower-class fellow countrymen and women whose characters could not be matched with individuals.

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Hamilton was on their conservative side of the “woman question,” when in fact Hamilton was herself an admirer of Wollstonecraft, and many of her arguments on behalf of women in *Elementary Principles of Education* are similar to those of Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication* and Mary Hays’ *Appeal*. In her satiric novel, Hamilton had attempted to point out the *misuse* of the New Philosophy by persons who wished to justify what she considered immoral and foolish behavior. Hamilton later attempted to make it clear that the *Anti-Jacobin Review* and other readers who read her novel as an attack on Mary Hays were themselves examples of an error in judgment stemming from the inability to generalize.  

After Elizabeth Hamilton’s forays into print in the more acceptably feminine genre of fiction, once her authorial reputation was established, and once she understood the political world of book reviews a little better, she decided to stretch her generic wings and write an educational treatise. Like Catharine Macaulay Graham’s educational treatise, it is no less philosophical merely for being in the form of letters, although that

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103 The *Anti-Jacobin Review* is grateful “that all the female writers of the day are not corrupted by the voluptuous dogmas of Mary Godwin, or her more profligate imitators.” The writer also addresses Hays, calling her back from philosophy and sensuality to the female virtue and innocence symbolized by needlework: “To your sampler, to your sampler; poor wretched, infatuated creature, and by honourable and becoming exertions endeavour to acquire that peace of mind which you can never attain in your present worthless, nay, unprincipled pursuits.” (Appendix, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, ed. Grogan, 411-412)

104 “The Author of these Letters has, in a former publication [Modern Philosophers], endeavoured to expose the consequences of this exercise of the united powers of abstraction and imagination, where judgment had been uncultivated. She is, however, apprehensive, that many who have been amused with the fiction which she at the time made the vehicle of her sentiments, have failed in drawing the inferences from it, which it was her wish to have rendered obvious. . . . Those who are incapable of general reasoning, think it impossible to draw genuine pictures of human character but from particulars. They are, therefore, for ever hunting after the originals from which such pictures must, in their opinion, have inevitably been drawn; and thus they lose the advantage that might have been derived from making proper inferences: while all their ideas of what is just & natural, being drawn from the same confined and narrow source, their criticisms are equally unjust and imperfect. (*Elementary Principles of Education* 2: 448)
form was an appropriate shield or signal to critics who would expect from a formal
treatise a more scholarly (and therefore masculine) method, tone, and knowledge-base.

Hamilton admitted to a young female apprentice that this treatise was more important
to her than her first two publications of satiric fiction, confessing that she even stopped
the press to revise the introduction. That she herself felt it was a serious treatise is
hinted by her reference to "chapters" instead of "letters" when she mentions the work to
this friend.

The letter form of the treatise was appropriate for her audience, for Elizabeth
Hamilton directly addressed young mothers whom she could expect to have both read
epistolary works and engaged in correspondence. However, deeply aware of the
confusing expectations about her style and goals that may arise from her unconventional
use of the genre, Hamilton instructs her readers to adjust themselves to her style:

As I shall be much more solicitous to convince than to amuse, you are not to
expect from me those beauties of style, and that profusion of imagery, which
adorn the works of some admired writers of my own sex on the same subject:

105 Elizabeth Hamilton had initiated a correspondence with a younger female author while in Bath, and
continued this mentoring-friendship until her death. There is some possibility that it may be the memoirist,
Elizabeth Benger, since not even the initials of this mysterious woman are given. Benger, in the common
practice of memoirists of this period, provides only the initials of living persons mentioned in
correspondence.

106 "I am infinitely more anxious for the success of my bantling [Letters on Education] than ever. The
mother's favourite is not always the most promising of the family; but if partiality does not blind me, I think
this will not do any discredit to its friends. When the first proof came home, I did not like its look in print;
so stopped the press, and wrote another first chapter. Indeed, I believe it ought to be a rule with every
author, on every subject, to rewrite the beginning of a work after the whole has come to a conclusion; for
there is much truth in the observation, that 'we understand a subject because we have written upon it.'"
(Benger 2: 143)

107 Elsewhere she refers to Hannah More as an eloquent writer on the subject, and Madame Genlis's
educational works.
For though I am sensible that these ornaments diffuse a charm over the pages of the author; I am not so certain, that they do not distract the reader's attention, and break the chain of reasoning, so as to leave upon the mind an imperfect idea of its connecting links.  

This passage, demonstrating her rhetorical awareness of the effects of style and their relation to gender, is also an instance of good arrangement. It was a wise move to include such prefatory material in the body of the first letter for those readers who usually skip introductions. She also attempts to tutor her readers' generic expectations in the fourth letter, which opens the second volume:

In a book on Education she [the reader] will not seek for mere amusement; nor will she cast it aside, because it contains principles which require some degree of reflection to understand.

The epistolary genre, freeing Elizabeth Hamilton to use personal pronouns, first and second person, enabled her to construct the "you" of the reader, as well as her own ethos, more directly than the distant third person of the treatise. For example, the second letter opens with the sentence "You say, that 'without having ever read a page of metaphysics, you can easily comprehend what I mean by the associations of ideas.'"

By means of describing the intellectual hunger or clear understanding of her "correspondent," she is able to implant a feeling of that hunger or understanding in her wider reading audience. In addition, many letters begin with a reaction to an apparent misunderstanding in her correspondent, which provides an opportunity to remove an objection, as in the opening to letter eight: "Your observations, my dearest Friend,

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108 _Elementary Principles of Education_ 1: 23
109 _Elementary Principles of Education_ 2: 98
110 _Elementary Principles of Education_ 1: 30

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convince me, that I have not sufficiently explained myself, with regard to the use of history in early education." In these ways Hamilton shows herself more consciously and creatively blending genres than Catharine Macaulay Graham did in her epistolary educational treatise.

At the same time, Elizabeth Hamilton’s treatise is no less scholarly than was Macaulay Graham’s in its contents, and actually reflects the contents of Macaulay Graham’s treatise with respect to the importance of developing virtuous mental associations and talents in children. *Elementary Principles of Education* refers to, quotes from, and often boldly disagrees with a host of philosophical writers: John Locke, Dugald Stewart, Archibald Alison, Lord Kames, Rousseau, Isaac Watts, Gibbon, Thomas Reid, David Hartley, Madame Genlis, and others. The technical terms of faculty psychology are deployed in careful argumentation to prove her thesis that early childhood associations, caused by repeated and forcible impressions, are the primary means of fostering rational thought, moral behavior, religious sentiments, and domestic affections in both women and men. While the emphasis on the formative power of circumstances helped her to argue that many sexual differences that seem inherent are culturally manufactured, she did not let this determinism excuse readers’ laziness in self-reformation. She argued that by means of following her advice about careful reasoning

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111 *Elementary Principles of Education* 2: 228

112 Hamilton’s continuation of this treatise in *Popular Essays* (1813) dropped the epistolary mode altogether, although this treatise still clung to the apparently informal genre of essay and the non-erudite connotations of the term “popular”, i.e. adapted to the populace. While this generic choice may have shown an increasing sense of comfort with public genres of prose, the choice came with its costs. Benger expresses regrets that the essays were not in the form of letters because it made them less accessible to female readers.
(suitably conveyed in the form of careful reasoning), adult women could break unfortunate associations and reverse the process that had malformed and cramped their minds and hearts.

Although Elizabeth Hamilton's mode and audience were suited to her culture's construction of femininity, while writing this philosophical work, she encountered gender prejudices about subject matter and abstruse reasoning. Many of her male friends who read drafts were less concerned with its feminist arguments than the immediate application of that feminism in the very content and manner of the work itself. They expressed the concern that her text was too metaphysical (and therefore not practical for women) and that her arguments were above the mental capacity of the average young mother.\textsuperscript{113} In response to this criticism, she tested her letters on their intended audience, found that their fears were unfounded in most cases, and revised accordingly in the cases where potential misunderstanding existed. Every letter provides practical illustrations and advice as well as scholarly backing. As a result of her careful revision, the \textit{Elementary Principles of Education} was a great success in the booksellers' shops and reviews.

The success of Elizabeth Hamilton's philosophical work led her to try a second experiment in genre in the form of a historical biography of a Classical Roman woman, Agrippina the elder. It was written in order to exemplify the basic principles of human

\textsuperscript{113} "I was, however, much disheartened on finding that all my male friends, on reading the three last letters, declared, that they believed them to be above the comprehension of all, except a learned female reader. Glad am I, however, to find that their apprehensions were groundless. All the ladies of my acquaintance here have read them with satisfaction; and I have received letters, even from young ladies, upon the subject, which show not only that they understood it, but were capable of weighing, with accuracy, every argument adduced." (Letter to H. M., Esq., 1801; Benger II: 33)
psychology which formed the foundation of her *Elementary Principles of Education*.

Hamilton’s early and continuing familiarity with historical genres was a good preparation for her undertaking. To perform such an ambitious feat without public shame, Hamilton had to do serious scholarly research in the classical authors who were her primary sources, relying on learned friends to give her their own translations from works available only in Latin. Her educational publication spurred Dugald Stewart to initiate a correspondence and personal friendship with her in 1801, and it is likely that Stewart’s ideas on biography had some influence on her methodology. Stewart himself proposed a new genre of “theoretical or conjectural history” to fill up the chasm of missing information about people’s lives.

Although reviewers naturally accused her of writing fiction,\(^{114}\) Elizabeth Hamilton and her biographer firmly distinguished the fruit of her scholarly labors from the novel, which had a lower generic status. However, Hamilton herself was not very comfortable appearing on the public stage as a historian or Classical biographer. Already diffident about her pretensions to instruct the reading public, she engaged in prefatory gestures of humility deeper than any she had yet engaged in:

\(^{114}\) The *Critical Review* wrote in a review of *Agrippina* that “In the ancient historians we have only the coarse and strong outlines. They detailed characters no farther than as these were connected with events, and without any reference to the history of mind. Now, if a modern chooses to fill up these outlines and to finish the picture, it is (considered as an illustration of any theory) to all intents and purposes a modern manufacture—a fiction, with this disadvantage, that the author, cramped by facts, is not likely to amuse us half so much as if the whole piece was left to himself.” (*Critical Review* 7 series 3 [1804] p. 188.)
In one whose range of information is, even when compared with many of her own sex, extremely limited, and who in classical learning vies not with a school-boy of the lowest form, an attempt to approach so near to classic ground, may have the appearance of presumption: but as the most enlightened are always the most liberal and candid, she has little reason to fear being thus interpreted.115

In the remainder of her preface to *Agrippina*, Hamilton performs a concise yet convoluted apologetic for her unfeminine and experimental generic choice. It is likely that she was influenced to make this argument by reading the *Edinburgh Review* of 1802, which contained a two-part essay on “The Uses of History” that explained the contrast between fiction and history in arguments similar to those of her preface.116 She claimed, first of all, that fiction was unsuitable for the type of persuasion she aimed at. Indirectly referring to fictions by Rousseau, Hays, and Godwin, Hamilton felt that fiction was so often misused as a malleable material able to promote unsound philosophy that it was therefore not to be trusted. In addition, she reasoned that when readers know that a biography or history is fictional, they are disposed to be entertained and are often led astray by their passions rather than brought to think and change their own behavior for the better. Biography of recent individuals is a possible candidate for the elucidation of experimental philosophy, but biographies of periods and persons too near ourselves cause readers to become entangled with political and personal issues that obscure the possible

115 *Agrippina* xxviii

116 “Fancy may be amused by the details of fictitious history: the ignorant and the idle may doat on such productions as suspend thought and animate not to action. But the man whose mind is refined by science, and whose heart feels the force of those obligations he is under, as a member of society, will value books only in proportion as they tend to strengthen and improve his moral powers in union with his intellectual faculties. From the delineation of imaginary scenes, such a man may indeed receive entertainment; but it is at most a transient unsubstantial pleasure. When most deeply interested in the fate of the ideal hero, the uneasy recollection will be perpetually recurring, that all before him is as airy as the baseless fabric of a vision, and as useless for any of the purposes of real life.” (*Edinburgh Review* 64 [1802], p. 964).
moral application. For these reasons, Hamilton felt it was preferable to choose a biographical subject from history, yet traditional history does not give the deep insight into a character’s upbringing, domestic habits, and motives in order for it to sufficiently reveal the causes of character and action. Therefore, while she chose Agrippina’s tale and held strictly to the “facts” of her life related by Tacitus and others, she felt it necessary to conjecture while describing manners and conversations that could have taken place given the evidence provided about her and her historical circumstance. Her justification proves her awareness of the rhetorical choices and creative strategies involved in historiography.

Elizabeth Hamilton’s rhetorical education progressed through oral reading and discussion, letter-writing with mentors and mentees, apprenticeship with her brother as a historian, and through receiving feedback on her drafts and publications from scholars, friends, and reviewers. Her theories of educational psychology can be considered, like Catharine Macaulay Graham’s, as a means of pre-rhetorical or internal rhetorical training of children and parents. Her historical work and its context deserve further analysis to determine to what degree Agrippina reveals the rhetorical, psychological, and metaphysical principles she expresses elsewhere. Her reciprocal influence on Dugald Stewart leads naturally to the question of how far her generic influence spread into the greater development of biographical and historiographical theory and practice in the nineteenth century.
Conclusion

This triad of women writers reveals more similarity among its members than the previous sets of women exhibited in other chapters. All three of these women lived in London for some time, and were significantly influenced by the dissenting community. Elizabeth Hamilton had the least amount of time in London and identified with both Anglican and Presbyterian communities, yet it is likely Elizabeth Hamilton was acquainted with Mary Hays in London during the time Hays published her first tract. The connection between Catharine Macaulay Graham and the two women of the later generation is clear—though it is unlikely that they ever met, since Macaulay Graham lived a rather secluded life after 1778. Mary Hays was spurred to direct emulation of Macaulay Graham’s ethos and polemical rhetorical practices through her mentor Mary Wollstonecraft, and likely agreed wholeheartedly with all she read of Macaulay Graham’s works. Elizabeth Hamilton’s link to Catharine Macaulay Graham was indirect and more silent due to Hamilton’s aversion to political controversy—yet the Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education owes much to the metaphysical theory and epistolary mode established in Macaulay Graham’s Letters on Education. Catharine Macaulay Graham, the representative of the older generation in this chapter, displays more of a classical rhetorical influence than do Mary Hays and Elizabeth Hamilton, and the latter women display a stronger belles-lettres rhetorical influence and a sympathy with the romantic era’s emphasis on female sensibility and domesticity.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The preceding histories of rhetorical genres and biographies of rhetorical lives contribute to a fuller view of women's contributions to rhetorical history in eighteenth-century Britain. Here I will summarize the historical findings and describe the sort of transformation they may bring both to women's rhetorical history in general, to the rhetorical history of this culture and era, and to modern rhetorical education.

From these historical findings flow important implications for our historiographical methods, as well as our definitions of rhetoric and rhetorical education. I suggest that the further development of rhetorical theories and histories of genre, and rhetorical biography of women as well as men, will invigorate rhetorical history by opening fresh perspectives of historical rhetorical education as a process. This enriched view of rhetorical education should also contribute to further the development of rhetorical pedagogy today. Common elements of these women's rhetorical education, such as a community of rhetorical mentors and peers and the reading, critique, and practice of many genres, can be introduced into our formal systems of education and
observed in practice outside of them. An understanding of these women's rhetorical obstacles also urges us to continue to break down cultural, economic, and gender barriers to rhetorical education and practice.

Summary of historical findings

This study's historical and biographical illustrations of four genres and women's rhetorical education and practice in them augment and complicate our current view of rhetorical theory, education, and practice in the eighteenth century. In addition to the four major rhetorical schools or theories that have been identified by historians (neoclassical, elocutionary, belletristic, and psychological/epistemological), at least two other schools emerge that overlapped with these traditions. The rhetorical schools and sites of everyday conversation and conduct and letter-writing were rich with gendered communication theories and rules. These rhetorical traditions present in the eighteenth century have not been recognized as rhetorical because previous scholarship has focused on the rhetorical performances of men, and has privileged their more clearly public forums and genres. The preceding rhetorical biographies make these traditions recognizable as rhetoric by pointing out that they functioned in the same way as traditional schools and rhetorical theories did for orators, preachers, and lawyers, but were adapted to mixed-sex rhetorical forums and women's rhetorical identities.
The preceding chapters have shown that despite women’s exclusion from the formal educational institutions that practiced rhetoric and from the public, civil, positions in which men practiced rhetoric, at least eight eighteenth-century women writers, and very likely many more, learned and used the rhetorics that belonged to what Connors calls the “oral, civil, argumentative and pedagogical tradition.” They made use of these traditions with rhetorical “forms, strategies, and goals” (Lunsford) that were available to them, gradually extending women’s sphere of rhetorical practice and influence through their creativity.

Yet women were not limited to these traditional rhetorics alone. Rhetorics of conversation and conduct were essential and effective in making women aware of themselves as rhetors, and training them to speak and act appropriately as women within their rhetorical situations. Epistolary rhetorics and schools of correspondence among peers and mentors provided an additional space for women to develop and practice rhetorical awareness and agency. In both conversational salons and correspondence, women learned and discussed the rhetorical traditions that permeated their culture, and by learning the rules of various rhetorical activities, they discovered means of extending female rhetorical practice into the sites where these rhetorics prevailed.

These rhetorical biographies have demonstrated that eighteenth century women writers practiced and learned rhetoric. They achieved their rhetorical skill not by means of genius alone, nor self-education in isolation, but by rhetorical training in a community of texts and mentors. We have discovered that women who had sufficient economic,
educational, social, and cultural foundations were not excluded from learning the rhetorics formulated by men from classical times to their own era. The increase in women's literacy and publication over the eighteenth century and the increasing practice of mixed-sex conversation as a rhetorical school and stage of rhetorical performance also made it easier for women to weave their rhetorical voices and perspectives into their culture.

Various cultural and social contexts contributed to these eight women's rhetorical education, factors which made all of their rhetorical education to some degree similar. These women's families and communities all provided encouragement, mentorship, and economic support for their rhetorical training and performance. Conversation and letter-writing were educational sites and rhetorical products in this practical apprenticeship in women's rhetoric. The books they read and their tutors and mentors brought rhetorical traditions to them and helped them develop practical rhetorical skills. Over time, women's reputation and published texts brought them into the unmistakably public realms of discourse, enabling their discourse and example to impact others beyond their conversational and epistolary networks, especially women of the next generation.

The four distinctive types of eighteenth-century rhetoric (neo-classical, belletristic, elocutionary, and psychological/epistemological) were each important in the education and rhetorical practice of these eight women. Women writers of the century found ways of adapting the major rhetorical theories to their own uses, without drawing attention to the fact that they were using rhetoric.
When these rhetorical biographies are viewed chronologically, one can see reflected in them the gradual transformation of communication theories over the century. The early eighteenth-century “Augustan” or “neo-classical” era emphasized classical rhetoric, but this focus shifted gradually to the later century’s pre-Romantic and Romantic age of “sensibility” with its belletristic and psychological rhetorics. Belletrism provided a theoretical base for the increasing practice of drawing-room recitation and discussion of writing and speech. Women rhetors were pleased to find the visual arts as well as fictional, aesthetic and epistolary literature (which comprised a large area of female education and reading) considered as useful and ethical pursuits rather than merely entertainment or ornamental “accomplishments” of genteel women. The mid-century blend of belles lettres and classical rhetoric also implied that women’s letter-writing, poetry and fiction could have neoclassical rhetorical aims such as moral improvement and political change.

In general, neoclassical rhetorics were more familiar to the women who grew up in the first half of the century: Catharine Macaulay Graham, Elizabeth Montagu, Hester Thrale Piozzi, and Anna Letitia Barbauld. Yet these very same women were attracted to belletristic rhetorics as they grew older. Like Blair and many other mid-century writers, Elizabeth Montagu bridged the neoclassical and the belletristic, the ancient and the modern: her essay on Shakespeare compared him with ancient Greek and modern French dramatists. Both Elizabeth Montagu and Hester Thrale Piozzi matured as rhetors during the withdrawal of neo-classical rhetoric to scholarly classes and the infusion of belletristic
rhetorics into upper- and middle-class culture over the middle decades. Elizabeth Montagu and Hester Thrale Piozzi learned ancient Roman rhetorics and applied them to their speech and writing as wives of public men, patronesses of literature and art, and hostesses of conversational salons. Catharine Macaulay Graham was so steeped in Roman history as a young girl that there is little doubt she knew a great deal about its rhetorical theories and traditions. Macaulay Graham aspired to bring her nation back to the glory of Republican Rome through her historical, philosophical, and polemical writing. Cicero's texts and his rhetorical biography by Conyers Middleton were read carefully by Elizabeth Montagu, inspiring her with dreams of becoming a Roman matron.

While women of the later generation had less classical influence, most women of both generations picked up some principles of classical rhetoric indirectly. Even Anne Grant, who was limited to the libraries of her hosts and mentors, imbibed some classical rhetorical knowledge filtered through secondary sources such as Rollin's history of the ancient world, and through the English belletristic rhetorics which drew on Quintilian and Cicero. Plutarch's lives, which were important in the education of Macaulay, Mary Hays, and Elizabeth Hamilton, exposed them to rhetorical biographies and comparisons of famous leaders and rhetors; Plutarch inspired all three women to write history or historical biography that revealed how men and women were trained to speak, act, and write.
Belletristic rhetoric had the widest appeal among women of both generations, the upper and middle ranks, and among all political and religious backgrounds. The upper-middle-class Anglican women Elizabeth Montagu and Hester Thrale Piozzi entered wholeheartedly into belletristic and conversational rhetorics, becoming lively, witty mediators of literary discussion in their large social networks. Yet Catharine Macaulay Graham and Elizabeth Montagu expressed suspicion of belletristic rhetoric. Macaulay Graham's drawing-room discourse (mainly among men) was more about philosophy and politics than literature, and her educational treatise restricts the role of fictional and ornamental genres. In a similar vein, Montagu argued in her letter to Lyttelton's son that the step from classical authors to belles lettres was a fall and a feminine move. These women were well aware that belletristic genres and rhetorics were associated with aesthetics and femininity, and were thus less valued by most men. However, Hester Thrale Piozzi, although only slightly younger than Montagu and Macaulay Graham, fully embraced belletristic rhetoric and broke from neoclassical definitions of rhetoric. Her rhetorics of conversation, expressed in British Synonymy and her anecdotes of Johnson as well as in the drawing room, were centered around the discussion of language, literature, aesthetics, and morality—the interests shared by most belletrists. Anna Letitia Barbauld, like Thrale Piozzi, also benefited from both a classical and a modern belletristic education, and as a prose writer, poet, and educator, she drew freely from both traditions.
The four women of the later generation, including the Irish Quaker writer Mary Shackleton Leadbeater and the Scot Anne Grant, were all educated with a strong belletristic slant. Belletristic rhetorics were accessible to all these women writers because they did not rely on archaic terminology, were publicized through the periodical press, and were discussed in the drawing-rooms of England. The theories surrounding the *belles lettres* were also appealing to these women's rhetorical experience and interests, for they dealt with genres that more and more women were already practicing or beginning to practice: letters, novels, poetry, essays. Mary Hays grew up reading novels and became a novelist as well as an essayist and historical biographer; Anne Grant fed on Milton, Shakespeare, Ossian, and Smollett, whose phrases appear as allusions in her letters; Shackleton-Leadbeater was steeped in letter-writing, poetry, and the belletristic discourse of the Edinburgh Magazine; Elizabeth Hamilton was fostered on letter-writing and the periodical press, and focused later in her career on the formation of the moral taste. As their rhetorical lives illustrate, this later generation of women was more confident in the appropriation of belletristic rhetoric.

Another very influential rhetoric, especially among religious dissenting women, was the stylistic and psychological tradition of Locke, Hartley, Campbell and Priestley. Through this tradition women learned to use such terms as “the imagination” and “the passions” to understand their own audiences’ responses, and to regulate their own responses to rhetorical appeals. In Locke and other advocates of plain English and unornamented logic, women found arguments that recommended a simple conversational
language already accessible to them, which made exclusion from rhetorical knowledge into a linguistic virtue for both women and men. Catharine Macaulay Graham pointed to her plainness of style in her pamphlet battle with Burke, and Elizabeth Hamilton asserted that her logic was unornamented in her nonfiction prose. In the last quarter of the century, Joseph Priestley's rhetorical treatise may not have been read by many women, but women Dissenters who read his sermons, essays, and educational treatises were attracted by what his psychological associationism, gathered from Hartley, implied about the intellectual and moral equality of men and women. Mary Hays was enchanted by philosophical necessarianism, for it held forth the hope of the eventual social equality of women and called upon women's agency to assist in social transformation. Those women who deeply imbibed Priestley's philosophical ideas (Barbauld, Macaulay-Graham, Hays, and Hamilton) also shared similar attitudes about rhetorical invention as a matter of memory, arrangement as a mode of discourse and of education, and stylistic ornament as a necessary, yet ethically suspicious, means of persuasion.

The elocutionary rhetorics such as Thomas Sheridan's may have contributed to eighteenth-century theories of female oral and bodily rhetoric, but was not a major influence on most of these women rhetors. Sheridan and the famous actor David Garrick merged the conscious art of drama with the untaught expression of natural sentiments, reinforced the idea of women's silence and tears being acts of communication, and stressed the moral value of pathos. But while elocution was a fairly minor movement in the male rhetorical sphere, conversation and conduct was the foundation of women's
rhetorical sphere. Women may have shared elocutionists' interest in drama and expressive reading and preaching, but they were well aware that male elocution did not concern itself very often with women's performances. William Enfield's influence on Anna Letitia Barbauld encouraged her to compile a *Female Speaker*, yet she saw the overlap between male and female elocution only in matters of pronunciation and oral recitation. Mary Hays wrote about the power of men's expressive pulpit oratory but distinguished it from men's conversation and women's oral reading in her early essays. Hester Thrale Piozzi appreciated the dramatic performances of women such as Sophy Streatfield, who could cry on command, and the famous actress Mrs. Siddons, who became one of her close friends after the Piozzis returned to England, but there is little trace of elocutionary theory in her diaries and published writing about conversation.

For the most part, not elocutionist's lectures and books, but women's conduct books, novels, and periodical essays were the major rhetorical manuals of women's speech and action in eighteenth-century society—they provided explicit written advice on how women should speak and act, and women's rhetorical intentions, purposes and effects. These didactic materials mediated and interpreted Christian rhetorics of conversation and conduct, keeping in place the paradox that women's rhetoric (unrecognized as rhetoric) ought to be naturally virtuous and feminine, yet was acquired through education and practice. Conduct-books encouraged women to see themselves as sustaining and building their religious, literary, and local communities through their everyday words and deeds. However, these rhetorics also had a restrictive tendency.
Conduct-books, as interpreters of gender ideology, were instrumental in reinforcing the gender restrictions they articulated, making gendered norms of conduct the key to women's rhetorical success or failure. This was true not only of the genre of conversation. Issues of female conduct overshadowed authorship in every genre in which women communicated—three of these women writers (Thrale Piozzi, Macaulay Graham, and Hays) sacrificed their reputation as rhetors when they appeared to violate the norms of feminine Christian conduct as represented by conduct-book writers.

Conduct's sister art, conversation, was theorized as women's rhetoric by many of the same writers and often in the same works on conduct. Together, conversation and conduct were the backbone of these women's rhetorical education and practice. The rhetorical careers of Thrale Piozzi and Montagu as hostesses were synonymous with this art, and all of the women writers in this study learned through, and paid considerable attention to, the rhetorics of women's conversation and conduct.

The combination of conversation and conduct rhetorics with epistolary and belletristic rhetorics was a powerful mixture in the rhetorical education of almost all these women writers. Not only were these rhetorics the foundation of women's leadership in the bluestocking circles of Elizabeth Montagu and Hester Thrale Piozzi, but they were also the basis of the Quaker circle around the Shackleton and Leadbeater families, and the community of Edinburgh literati that nourished the rhetorical lives of Anne Grant and Elizabeth Hamilton in the early nineteenth century. The dissenting circles of Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, Mary Hays, and Catharine Macaulay Graham had less belletristic
theoretical influence than the other eight women had, but the practice of literary
conversation and epistolarity were equally important to their rhetorical education. In their
speech and writing on politics, religion, and education these three women were more
influenced by Classical Roman rhetorics and psychological-epistemological rhetorics than
they were influenced by Blair or Kames and other belletrists. Nevertheless, all of these
eight women developed their rhetorical skills through both letter writing and
conversation, and as they grew older, they educated younger men and women through
these informal schools and wrote works which contributed to women’s rhetorical
participation in this realm.

Women’s religious traditions often modulated the effect and importance of
conduct-book rhetorics on conversation, conduct, and various written genres. For Mary
Shackleton Leadbeater, rhetorics of conversation and conduct were not gathered primarily
from conduct book traditions but from Christian and specifically Quaker rhetorical
traditions, which magnified the significance of women’s conversation and conduct and
encouraged women’s didactic or epideictic speech and writing far more than the conduct
book tradition did. Catharine Macaulay Graham, Mary Hays, and Anna Letitia
Barbauld’s dissenting community encouraged them to stretch the conduct-book norms of
female docility and modesty by welcoming them into their argumentative discussions in
theology and politics. Anglican and Scots Presbyterian religious traditions were more in
line with restrictive women’s conduct-book traditions, so it is not surprising that religion
was not a major source of encouragement for Montagu, Thrale Piozzi, or Grant—their encouragement to write and spoke authoritatively came largely from other rhetorical and philosophical traditions.

Genre

From the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, the rhetorical activity of women reached a wider audience as more women ventured into genres and sites of discourse previously occupied only by men and a few noblewomen. Mixed-sex conversation became an arena for the public debate of values and norms through the seemingly frivolous discussion of literature and aesthetics. The simultaneous rise of literate discourse—publication—gave eighteenth-century women unprecedented access to the public sphere, both through their reading and writing. Women had already been poets and translators in the seventeenth century, but in the eighteenth they became authors of conduct books, novels, essay collections, and treatises on education. Through these means, eighteenth-century women’s discourse mediated and blurred the boundaries between the public and the private worlds, for in these genres they addressed issues of public importance.

Eighteenth-century British women’s reading provided them with access to rhetorical theories and vocabularies as well as models of spoken and written genres. Eighteenth-century women found that writing, although it had its restrictions, gave them kinds of rhetorical freedoms that their culture did not allow them through rhetorics of

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conversation and conduct: a site in which they could be “heard” without being interrupted, without having eyes distracted by gazing at or judging their bodies instead of attending to their arguments. Women's writing, whether disbursed through handwritten letters or print publication, was also a “site” that was more mobile than their own bodies could be, for even in the nineteenth century, women could not safely walk on streets unaccompanied or without a hat. In addition, unlike the voice and body, writing could be reproduced and carried into multiple sites simultaneously, which gave them access to a broad audience. A broad audience, as Cicero acknowledged, brings both the excitement of opportunity and the consciousness of risk, a condition that is conducive to the formation of a rhetorical culture and pedagogy that increases influence and manages this risk. Regarding risk, not only was there always a possibility of failing to inform or convince parts of one’s audience, there was still a sense of feminine immodesty attached to appearing in the public scene of print—a woman’s name on a title page evoked the female body and all its associations. Therefore women’s publications still often engaged in prefatory strategies of ethos construction, as we see in Anne Grant’s prefatory advertisements and Hester Thrale Piozzi’s preface to British Synonymy. Women also learned to blend public genres like treatises, essays, and histories, with shadows of “private” discourse such as the epistolary and dialogue modes—Macaulay Graham’s and Elizabeth Hamilton’s Letters on Education camouflaged treatises within an epistolary structure, and Elizabeth Montagu’s and Anna Letitia Barbauld’s published dialogues educated men and women in the practice of conversational rhetoric. In addition, women
decreased generic risk by addressing issues that their audience would assume they were 
experts on, topics which were acceptably feminine, such as education and morality.

All of these strategies are analogous to the ways in which nineteenth-century 
American women, educated by non-acedemic parlor rhetorics, symbolically moved their 
domestic rhetorical space with them as they engaged in public speaking careers. Nan 
Johnson speaks of how nineteenth-century American culture “required the performance of 
conventional femininity” by women when in masculine rhetorical space.¹ For eighteenth-
century women writers, the restrictions were felt in written genres as rhetorical spaces. 
As women blended feminine ethos with traditionally masculine genres like the treatise, 
the definitions of conventional femininity were, by means of this blending of spaces, 
gradually being stretched so that the genres could accommodate women.

Eighteenth-century women engaged in argumentative and philosophical discourse 
with increasing boldness insofar as they recognized their claim to public authority. They 
took risks which stretched the norms of female gender and genre, in some cases stretching 
them so far into traditionally masculine territory that it compromised their rhetorical 
success. For example, Hester Piozzi’s last book *Retrospection* was her step of confident 
self-assurance as an interpreter of history, a blend of conversational discourse and 
scholarly matter that disturbed critics. Elizabeth Hamilton also experimented with her 
biography of Agrippina, and later abandoned the safe epistolary frame of *Letters on 
Elementary Education* when she continued her educational treatise in *Popular Essays.* 
Hamilton’s experimental works, blending a feminine ethos and a feminine unscholarly,

¹ *Gender and Rhetorical Space 2*
conversational arrangement and style with male genres and traditionally male subjects (metaphysics, classical history, and psychology), did not fit the expectations of her readers. Anna Letitia Barbauld, like Catharine Macaulay, wrote confident, argumentative expository prose that offered little in the way of a performance of deferential, modest femininity. This ethos and style carried her far as an editor (she edited an elocutionary reader, a collection of early- to mid-eighteenth-century periodical essays, and a fifty-volume edition of British novelists), but when she spoke with a feminine ethos in her prophetic poem, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, her authoritative stance on politics was condemned by a reviewer to be inconsistent with feminine modesty.

These eight women's risks, and even their rhetorical disappointments, were not the result of rhetorical blindness and inexperience, but of hope and creativity. They demonstrated their courage in the face of real restrictions in gender and genre, pressing forward at the leading edge of rhetorical innovation for women, considering their aims and strategies worth attempting despite an often resistant audience. The fact that their discourse was as influential as it was testifies to their overall rhetorical success despite the apparent failures of some of their rhetorical experiments. All of them wrote in several genres and were published authors, many enjoyed influence through conversation as well, and their fame and/or authorial profession outlived the infamy some of them experienced due to unfeminine conduct in life and in writing.
The influence of women's rhetorical performances on succeeding generations also reveals the increasing strength of the rhetorical traditions they transmitted, despite the apparent setbacks women experienced due to cultural change at the end of the eighteenth century. Some historians have argued that after an increase in women's public participation in the years up to 1792, the French Revolution brought about regression and repression of women's discourse. The short-lived presence of women on the lecture stage in the 1780s, and their disappearance due to official repression, confirms this trend. But long before the upheavals of the 1790s, conversation had already become a site where men and women, public and private, intermixed and benefited from each other. Likewise, letter-writing had been increasingly feminized by handbooks and bellettristic critics. Hugh Blair and others had begun to speak of English prose style in female-gendered terms, and as more women became published authors, it became increasingly assumed that women could become authors of socially edifying works. As the rhetorical lives of Mary Hays, Mary Leadbeater, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and Anne Grant show, what actually happened during this period from the 1790s to the 1820s was that networks of women continued to build up and pass on their rhetorical traditions to other women through education-centered conversation and writing.

The increasing emphasis on women's domesticity at the end of the eighteenth century and the naturalization and privatization of authorship in the Romantic era pressured women authors to deny having rhetorical knowledge and training. Yet these

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2 Romanticism has been accused of being anti-rhetorical because of the ambivalence to audience and prose expressed by some Romantic poets. In many ways, Romantic authors' denial of rhetorical audience-awareness and rhetorical theory parallels women rhetoricians' denial of rhetoric. However, some recent
very changes in gender ideology and authorship affirmed women's importance in maintaining the political and social order of the family through their private and public rhetorical activity, and made formal education and rhetorical training seem even less of a prerequisite for rhetorical authority than it ever had been before. The redoubled emphasis on motherhood in the Romantic era reinforced conduct-book restrictions on women, but did not reduce the freedoms they had previously gained to participate in public discourse. The religious and moral authority accorded to women, especially mothers, also increased women's opportunities to enter public discourse especially through epideictic, hortatory rhetoric such as that of Hannah More. More was a highly influential and prolific female author and educator admired by all the women in this study who lived to the early decades of the nineteenth century. Mary Hays remade her reputation as she wrote more conservative works in the nineteenth century, yet she still found ways of expressing her feminist principles in this climate, as her final work, Memoirs of Queens (1821) illustrates. These and other women's precedents as educators of the public set the stage for nineteenth-century women to stand before the American podium as "mothers of the nation" and to assert that they were behaving as properly and womanly as drawing-room conversationalists, as Nan Johnson describes.  

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rhetoricians have observed that despite this apparent denial of rhetorical consciousness of audience, the Romantics still theorized and practiced audience-centered rhetoric, but that it was helpful for ethos-construction and composition for experimental authors to free themselves to compose without anxiety about an audience's prejudices and criticism. See Kathleen O'Brien, "Romanticism and Rhetoric: A Question of Audience"

3 Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910.
Whether women wrote in a conversational style or genre, or in a literate, rational, ordered, abstract style or genre; whether they performed in feminized genres such as published letters or in masculine genres like political histories; whether they converse about literature or politics, over the course of the eighteenth century it was generally true that print and its associated drawing-room rhetorics first began to bring women as a class into rhetorical sites with large mixed audiences—a public. Except for the brief period in which women became public speakers at lecture halls in the 1780s, not until the nineteenth century were English and American women once again enabled by cultural conditions to maneuver themselves into respectable roles as popular public speakers. Eighteenth-century British Women’s participation in written rhetoric and mixed-sex conversation, therefore, played an important role in preceding and even arguing on behalf of women’s bodily presence on the podium. Without the rhetorical successes of eighteenth-century women in the drawing room and in various written genres, women of the nineteenth century would not have had a foundation of women’s rhetorical precedents that enabled them to mount the public speaking platform with increasing success.

Historiographical implications

The epigraphs at the opening of this work hint at the implications that flow from a study of these eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical education. Andrea Lunsford’s words remind us that women have often been excluded from rhetorical history because

\[4\text{ Andrew 410-415 See chapter five for a fuller description of this brief period of women lecturers.}\]

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their rhetorical "forms, strategies, and goals" have not been recognizable as rhetoric, and she implies that the way to make them recognizable as rhetoric is to demonstrate that women's and men's rhetoric arise from the same spring: "the arts of language are after all at the source of human communication." Connors was skeptical about finding traditionally-recognizable women rhetors before 1820, suggesting that women's formal exclusion from The Rhetorical Tradition was effective and complete, barring them from participation in "the traditional oral, civil, argumentative and pedagogical tradition." My third epigraph makes a suggestion that, like Connors', is based on the assumption of separate traditions: "Instead of writing women into the history of rhetoric, let us proceed to write rhetoric into the history of women." In this study, I have endeavoured not to do one instead of the other, but both, and thereby to enrich and revise our view of human rhetorical history. These women's rhetorical lives were inseparable from the rhetorical traditions that had been infused into the culture around them, and yet their rhetorical education and practice were different from men's because of their gender.

The abundance of historical data discovered through these rhetorical biographies of women strongly recommends alternative research methods and relatively neglected sources in the historiography of rhetoric. By considering conversation and the familiar letter and diary as not only evidence of rhetorical production but also as the actual sites of informal education, and by looking for the functions and processes of such an education in this site, we can explore a vast store of documentary evidence to learn more about how

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6 Raymie E. McKerrow, "Corporeality and Cultural Rhetoric: A Site for Rhetoric's Future."
women learned advanced rhetorical skills before they were granted access to higher education. These materials and methods should be used by historians of rhetoric if the complete story of rhetoric is to be told.

Comparative rhetorical biographies share some features of case studies in that they provide what Linda Flower calls "historical reconstructions of rhetors in action"; these reconstructions, Flower points out, can assist us in the process of building well-grounded theories of how people learn to write and speak well. The previous chapters illustrate how rich these sources are in information that rhetorical treatises usually cannot yield because the latter are more prescriptive than descriptive of rhetorical practice. For example, Hester Thrale Piozzi's letters, her Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson, and her thesaurus for conversation British Synonymy, all include a great amount of personal reflection and anecdote regarding the rhetorical skills and knowledge displayed and honed in conversation, and vivid examples of how to conduct oneself properly and persuasively as a woman. Rhetorical theories are not lost in such texts, but are embedded within the personal and communal life represented in these documents. Mary Leadbeater's Quaker educational community in Ireland developed rhetorics of philanthropy, literary discussion, and moral education which were carried out in conversing and living in the community; the principles of these rhetorics and the processes of learning them are revealed in her anecdotes of local life and biographies and histories of Quakers.

7 Linda Flower 703
I have relied on letters, diaries, published works and biographies to construct these women's rhetorical education and practice. For these selected women, the textual record was overwhelming. Instead of being reduced to speculation on fragmentary evidence, I found so much text and relevant data that both my research and the presentation of my findings had to be selective. For example, my discussion of Elizabeth Montagu was based on published letters and a few unpublished letters at British archives, but the bulk of her correspondence is at the Huntington Library awaiting a historian of rhetoric to interrogate it with a view to her rhetorical process. Some important aspects of historical rhetorical process are oral and cognitive and there are few traces left of these processes in the historical record. It is difficult to find early drafts of published works or manuscripts with revisions or feedback marked on them, but these are treasures of rhetorical history where they exist, as in the case of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater's early drafts. Historians of rhetoric can seek out these documents in archives and use them in studies of historical rhetors' composing processes.

Eighteenth-century women's rhetorical theories are seen not in official rhetorical treatises but in conversations, dramatic performances, novels, correspondence and published letters, histories, conduct books, and religious literature. Recently, the alternative historiographical methods practiced by Susan Jarratt, C. Jan Swearingen and Cheryl Glenn have introduced further thought about the sources and methods of rhetorical history. In Winter 2002, an issue of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* was devoted to this issue. In this issue, Richard Leo Enos, who has been a strong advocate of continuing primary
research in rhetorical history, introduced a new idea of how women's rhetorical history can be excavated where no texts remain, only artifacts such as vases with artistic depictions of women reading.\footnote{Enos, "The Archaeology of Women in Rhetoric: Rhetorical Sequencing as a Research Method for Historical Scholarship"} While I recognize the importance of discovering historiographical methods where little textual data remains about women's rhetorical practice, this study emphasizes the comparative ease of access to a large amount of eighteenth-century British women's published and unpublished texts in a variety of genres, including the secondary textual sources of their contemporaries' reports and opinions about their rhetorical practice.

As historians of rhetoric turn to women's writing as sources for rhetorical biographies, they will need to face the awkward fact of women's occasional denial of their own rhetorical skill. In some rhetorical traditions, like the Lockean tradition, the denial of rhetoric was a virtue for men as well as women, as seen in Macaulay-Graham's denial of rhetorical figures and strategies in her pamphlet on Burke. Yet a rhetorical critic will consider such denials of rhetorical craft as themselves rhetorical acts which could make persuasion all the more effective by rendering it subconscious. Eighteenth century women well understood that rhetorical craft and intention, whether or not they named it "rhetorical," was necessary to attain the position of author or wit. But once a woman attained rhetorical skill and status, her public authority would best maintained against foes and outsiders by the denial of rhetorical craft. In her educational community, her skill and status would be maintained by a different strategy: the dissemination of her rhetorical craft to others through collaboration and mentorship. But there has been a high
cost involved in women’s denial of rhetoric. Denials tend to mystify and exalt extraordinary rhetorical skill as something innate or God-given, and can thereby discourage rhetorical education and reduce the number of people who have access to the means of discursive production. Women’s denial of their own rhetorical education and practice, conspiring with the ideology of the society around them, propagated the beliefs that the female rhetor was a rare bird and that women’s education had, and should have, little to do with rhetoric. The historian of rhetoric needs to consider the political motivations of this denial and the fact that women’s avoidance of rhetorical terminology and their boasts about their limited education do not mean that they did not learn rhetoric.

Nevertheless, despite this general climate which taught women to deny rhetorical skill as much as shun the arenas where men’s rhetorical skill was displayed, we stumble upon Hester Thrale Piozzi in her diary affirming the skill behind her apparently rattling and random discourse. William McCarthy, in his study of Hester Thrale Piozzi’s writing observes the relevance of Mary Hiatt’s work on women writers. Hiatt, in her study *The Way Women Write* (1977), found that in her sample of twentieth-century prose, the women authors “are as a group more aware of rhetoric than the men; they are more aware of effect than the men.” 9 McCarthy, after quoting Hiatt, reasons that “it is at least reasonable to assume the same of their eighteenth-century forebears; at any rate, in no

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9 Hiatt, as quoted in McCarthy 200
case should we assume blank innocence of rhetoric." \(^{10}\) Such awareness of rhetoric can be discovered in historical representations of women’s conversation and conduct as well as in women’s writing.

Historical women rhetoricians often hid from the public the fact that they engaged in rhetorical education or understood rhetorical theories. But one may ask, how can one identify eighteenth-century women’s rhetorical awareness when they themselves often tried to hide this awareness from others? The answer is to look for the functions of rhetoric rather than the specific vocabulary or “metalanguage” of rhetorical theory. In Hester Thrale Piozzi’s diary, not once did she use a term specific to rhetorical theory, and yet she was describing a rhetorical awareness of her communication choices. In Cicero’s treatise on oratory, Crassus talks of the origin of rhetorical rules. He admits that “[it is] not that orators by adhering to [rules] have obtained distinction in eloquence, but that certain persons have noticed what men of eloquence practiced of their own accord, and formed rules accordingly.” \(^{11}\) If the foundation of rhetoric is not the precepts themselves, but rather the creation of precepts based on observation of eloquence in action, then anyone who observes and formulates her own principles is a theorist of rhetoric.

\(^{10}\) McCarthy 200

\(^{11}\) De Oratore Book I section XXXII
Definitions of rhetoric and rhetorical education

Comparative rhetorical biography offers an alternative method of writing the history of rhetoric, and with it, a different view of the definition of rhetoric. Of course, definitions of rhetoric determine the kinds of rhetorical histories that are written. The view of rhetoric that takes shape from rhetorical biographical research is less formalistic and theoretical than most histories of rhetoric have been before the 1990s. It presents a picture of rhetorical function and the application and construction of theory within rhetorical practice.

When “rhetoric” is defined in the tradition of Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, it necessarily comes packaged with classical cultural definitions of public and private. Classical rhetorical theory and practice was shaped by classical audiences, the most common sites of classical oratory, and classical cultural views of politics, morality, writing, and women. The rhetorical canon, and rhetoric itself is limited if one defines it by the opinions of theorists from a particular culture and time period. Rhetorical histories that assume a tradition-transmission model have proceeded as if the scholarly goal were to trace the lineage of classical ideas over the centuries, demonstrating where the true noble blood of classical theory was maintained, and where it had degenerated by mixture with foreign or plebian ideas. Other rhetorical histories, such as Nan Johnson’s study Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America, have critiqued this classicist bias and taken a more comparative view of rhetoric, demonstrating the ways in which older theories have been adapted, or discarded and replaced by new theories, due to changes in
the overall cultural scene.\footnote{See Johnson's introduction, p. 12} A balanced comparison of eighteenth-century rhetorical theory with classical theories and modern theories demonstrates that rhetorics adapt and grow out of the cultures of which they are a part, and that "the rhetorical tradition" has not been monolithic from century to century, or from country to country, even within western Europe and among men.

When rhetoric is viewed as a tradition handed down from Classical times to the present, one can point out definite influences from teacher to student, and from treatises read to treatises produced. But women, excluded from this system of formal and masculine inheritance, did not often leave behind them a trail of influence such as references to men's rhetorical treatises they may have read, or the male rhetorical mentors they may have had. This poses a problem for historians of rhetoric who privilege the tradition-transmission model.

For instance, John Ward excludes Hildegard of Bingen from his article on medieval Latin women rhetors because her rhetorical education appears "intuitive." Since she aimed at "sermo humilis" and actively concealed her rhetorical art, we cannot see a "reliance upon what the rhetors taught"—that is, a clear reliance on what the well-known male rhetors taught.\footnote{Ward, p. 122.} Ward's article on Medieval Latin women's rhetoric expresses a search for definitive origins, a desire to distinguish in Heloise's letters the proper line of descent for influence: which printed manuals did she read and what kind of rhetorical teaching was active in Paris during her early education? how can we distinguish
between "what she learned from Abelard . . . and what he imbibed from her . . . and what they learned together"? While they often name influential texts and authors, these texts do not always point to male rhetoricians as the primary origins of women's rhetorical skills and theories. Many of the mentors and models for women such as Elizabeth Montagu are other women writers and speakers in public or domestic life—in Montagu's case, her mentors were the Duchess of Portland and her circle of female friends, Conyers Middleton, George Lyttelton, Gilbert West, and Elizabeth Carter.

"The exact picture of women in the rhetorical classroom is unclear," Ward complained. Even in clearer instances of attribution or instruction, one cannot calculate the exact degree of dependence on one mentor or text more than another. Exactly who is learning and who is teaching at any one time may be difficult to distinguish in situations such as Anne Grant's correspondence with her friends, children, mentees and mentors, in which participants continually learn from one another. When we continue to assume that classroom walls are the boundaries of rhetorical education, and if pedagogical influence is only defined in unidirectional and linear terms, the education of rhetors like Mary Hays, who did not spend time in a classroom, would remain unclear.

Some traditional rhetoricians may fear that this view of rhetoric expands the idea of "rhetoric" beyond useful boundaries, yet Cicero himself wrote statements about the expansive nature of rhetoric: "All eloquence is one . . . regardless of the regions of

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14 Ward, p. 125  
15 Ward p. 125

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discourse it is diverted into.\footnote{\footnotemark[16]\footnotetext{find this in De Oratore... it is quoted without reference in introduction to Pedagogy and Rhetoric, as used by James Murphy as epigram in Rhetoric in the Middle Ages.}} What is it that makes eloquence “one,” that keeps its identity like a river “diverted” into a variety of landscapes? On its surface lie terminologies and theories; in the depths and tributaries are pedagogies and skills. Bennett and Leff write that “the preceptive lore changes its specific content and purpose as time and circumstances change, but the activity of teaching persists.”\footnote{\footnotemark[17]\footnotetext{Bennett and Leff 10.}} Beth S. Bennett and Michael Leff point to this flexible understanding of rhetoric as the one which assisted James J. Murphy to rewrite the history of medieval rhetoric. Murphy’s comparison of Ciceronian theory with medieval rhetorics did not make an idol of either era’s body of lore and practice, but simultaneously demonstrated the continuities and wise adaptations, a flexibility that is recommended by Cicero’s own most liberal statements about rhetoric. The pedagogical and pragmatic definition of rhetoric I share with Cicero and Murphy enables me to extend one of Murphy’s statement about genre in the direction of gender:

Underlying every medieval rhetorical treatise [and I would add, every eighteenth-century woman’s description of how to act, converse, or write effectively], whatever its genre, is the assumption that the communication process can be analyzed, its principles abstracted, and methods of procedure written down to be used by others. This is the essence of rhetoric. This commonality makes it possible for the modern observer to understand the basic agreement among the various genres despite the apparently bewildering array of writers, books, and subjects.\footnote{\footnotemark[18]\footnotetext{Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages 363, as quoted in Bennett and Leff 10-11.}}
These methods and perspectives on rhetorical history are potentially very useful for educators today because they demonstrate how individual students of rhetoric and their communities have adapted and applied the rhetorical traditions handed down to them. The top-down view of rhetorical history that focuses on textbooks, treatises, educational institutions and their cultural contexts ought to be balanced with a bottom-up view of rhetorical education and practice. A balanced view shows the opportunities within discourse as well as the theories that categorize them.

**Pedagogical implications**

The perspective this study provides of historical rhetorical education also introduces implications for current and future rhetorical education. First of all, it encourages today’s educators to continue to introduce students to men’s and women’s rhetorical traditions and texts and to see them as processes in social contexts. Secondly, the powerful pedagogies that enabled these women to overcome tremendous rhetorical obstacles due to gender are an incentive for us to foster rhetorical mentorship and stable communities in which rhetorical practice is learned and critiqued. Finally, these women’s generic flexibility helped them to alter generic restrictions on identity; therefore, it would be wise to guide students toward rhetorical effectiveness in everyday personal genres as well as more difficult public genres, so that they may negotiate identities and genres to create rhetorical opportunity for themselves and others.
The emergence of new technologies of communication, such as print in the eighteenth century and computers and the internet in our own era, provide opportunities for new identities, genres, and ideas to enter public rhetorical practice. The similar historical and ideological *conditions* of women's rhetorical practice in eighteenth-century Britain created some important similarities among the unique informal *methods* of rhetorical education. While the eighteenth-century women writers studied in this project did not share a common school system, they shared the marginalization of their gender from realms of discursive power, a limited (but increasing) access to themes and generic forums of expression. Most importantly, they shared a historical period, nation, and language in which more and more women were emerging into print and conversational influence as a result of successfully developing rhetorical skills. The similarities in pedagogical method are easy to point out. All of these women were given the social, economic, and educational foundations requisite for an advanced education in rhetoric, although some, like Anne Grant and Mary Hays, acquired these foundations not through their families but through chance and their own initiative in seeking out mentors. To take advantage of these opportunities, individuals need to participate in rhetorical education that helps them link their current technologies of discourse to the less familiar ones.

Rhetoric is an advanced form of education that depends on expertise in grammar and communication technologies, and it has usually been limited to a social and economic elite who have leisure for study, encouragement from family and peers, and access to the relevant rhetorical forums. As such, it has historically been limited to very few.
Eighteenth-century women in general were not provided with the educational, social, and economic foundations for rhetorical training. The eight eighteenth-century women in this study, however, received their advanced education in a network of influential, well-educated people who helped them to discuss rhetorical ideas and practice rhetorical skills. Their social communities also helped provide a forum: a conversational “salon,” a network within which to disseminate manuscripts and practice letter-writing, people to promote their works with publishers, and publishers willing to print women’s writing. In order to gain entry to these educational and performative venues, a woman’s family members had to approve of their social connections, and the women themselves had to be of a similar cultural class or community to the one they sought admission into as rhetors. This community was not always politically based; it was often based in a religious community or educational community. Margaret Jacob starkly characterizes the economic requirements for participation in the new public sphere of the eighteenth century: “money was required for membership in salons, societies, and lodges and attendance at theaters: if not money for initiation or entrance fees, then for dress, for the learning of decorum, for gifts given, books purchased, for commodities as necessary but expensive as fine paper, good quills, and stamps.” In addition, the majority of literate

\[\textit{Jacob 100}\]
social communities resided in large towns and cities, so geography could also be a
limitation to a woman’s rhetorical education, except when a rural community was
exceptionally well-connected to national or international public discourse.20

Once an eighteenth-century woman had access to the means and foundations of
rhetorical education, we can point to certain activities that would have developed her
rhetorical knowledge and skill. Because rhetoric is theoretical as well as a skill
developed through guided practice, it is difficult, and to some degree always artificial, to
separate knowledge from skill. According to Cicero, the general cultivation required for
an orator involves “experience, attentive hearing of other orators, reading, and writing.”21
Likewise, John Locke, critiquing the traditional method of rhetorical education, proposed
that “rhetoric [. . .] as all other things of practice, is to be learned not by a few, or a great
many rules given, but by exercise and application according to good rules, or patterns, till
habits are got and a facility of doing it well” (141). Eighteenth-century women writers
had access to these means of rhetorical education—of course, in Cicero’s description,
instead of “hearing of other orators,” I would substitute “observing of other speakers” and
“attentive reading of other writers.”

20 Mary Leadbeater’s Quaker village in Ireland was remarkably well-connected with a larger community. Margaret Jacob also points out that in 1785, the first European women’s scientific society, emerged in an unlikely town: Middleburg, Holland. A main factor, suggests Jacob, was that the newspapers of that town routinely included events from all over Europe and even Turkey, ev...
A command of rhetoric involves a vocabulary and theory of studying rhetorical situations and techniques which is useful in increasing awareness of the possibilities and powers of discourse in a variety of situations. Rhetorical knowledge includes the terms and categories by which speech and writing are divided into units and analyzed, such as the three kinds of Aristotelian appeals ethos, pathos, and logos; the five rhetorical process canons of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery; and the genres, aims, or sites of discourse such as epideictic, deliberative, and forensic. While I do not limit eighteenth-century women's rhetorical knowledge to their use of these and other traditional terminologies and categories, the categories and terms that women and their mentors used can often be compared to these classical ones to demonstrate that they are indeed rhetorical concepts, just different terminologies and systems. Eighteenth-century women such as Anne Grant learned or invented these systems and vocabularies by observation, reading, and by engaging in rhetorical criticism of discourse during conversation or writing. When she instructed Anne Dunbar in letter-writing, she used terms like narrative, descriptive and domestical to describe the sort of rhetorical performance she desired. Women like Anne Grant did not avoid neoclassical rhetorical terms due to an ignorance of them, but because they seem inappropriate to a female ethos or the genre or subject being critiqued. Grant's use of traditionally rhetorical terms like declamation, harangue, and encomium is sarcastic, but she never misapplies them as if she were performing a knowledge she did not have. Likewise, Hester Thrale Piozzi, to avoid attaching masculine associations to women's rhetoric, generally preferred to use
terms like *sway* and *eloquence* to refer to feminine persuasiveness rather than the terms *rhetorick, oratory* and *persuasion*, which she elucidates in *British Synonymy*. These eighteenth-century women articulated theoretical concepts of rhetoric using the terms that seemed most appropriate to them. Thrale-Piozzi's charts comparing her peers' conversational skill and conduct clearly articulate her own rhetorical criteria that approximate the categories of invention, style, delivery, ethos, and pathos.

Rhetorical criticism was an important facet of these eighteenth-century women's rhetorical education. Criticism is modeled in treatises like Blair's *Lectures* when he quotes passages from Addison and discusses their logic, clarity, and rhythmic effect. Women's rhetorical criticism was not published in treatises, but can be discovered in their letters, diaries, and published work of other genres. It is important to remember that this century's literary criticism was largely what we consider to be rhetorical criticism, considering the means and effects of moral and religious persuasion in all genres of communication. The common practice of literary reading and discussion in conversation helped eighteenth-century women to discover the elements of discourse and to adapt their discourse to a setting and genre. Anna Letitia Barbauld learned rhetorical criticism partly by reading and conversing with Joseph Priestley, and reading and discussing works like Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, which was a work of aesthetic rhetorical criticism and theory. She engaged in her own rhetorical criticism of discourse in her prose essays, an early piece of which was an essay on Akenside's poem. Barbauld's writing also modeled rhetorical criticism to her male and female readers. In her preface
to Samuel Richardson's correspondence, she critiques the ways in which Richardson's writing and life portrayed conversation between fathers and daughters, and proposes that they "inspire a certain bashful consciousness, and shrinking reserve . . . in the intercourse between the sexes." 22 This rhetorical criticism stemmed from Barbauld's own rhetorical education and practice. She avoids Richardson's fault and practices the direct opposite by writing dialogues between father and daughter, and between male and female allegorical figures, probably with the conscious rhetorical intention of inspiring what she called "the noble simplicity of truth and nature, in the intercourse between the sexes."23

Rhetorical criticism, together with prescriptive manuals on conversation and conduct, helped eighteenth-century women rhetors to discover which aspects of rhetorical performance were or were not suitable for women's imitation and why. Which means were available for persuasion, within the limits of gender and genre, and how could one expand the available means? Mary Shackleton Leadbeater grew up learning that "regularity of conduct" and love of literature were highly prized by the leaders of her local and extended community; she learned the parameters of these for women by hearing and reading critiques and praises of women's conduct in Quaker meetings for discipline and Quaker biographies. Knowledge of an eighteenth-century woman writer's audience included a thorough familiarity with gender ideology, which was one of many social constructs that women had to navigate with their rhetorical skill. Shackleton Leadbeater's comments on the impropriety of a Quaker girl conversing freely with a

22 Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, Preface, page cl.
23 Ibid.

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soldier in uniform reveal her awareness of how she appeared to compromise the rules of gender ideology as well as the Quaker stance against what soldiers did. Eighteenth-century women understood the distinction between eloquence and rhetoric as similar to the distinction between natural and acquired virtue. It was a commonplace that education produced what was “second nature.” However, the eighteenth-century mindset was generally suspicious of acquired virtue, because such virtue might fail under stress, while natural virtue is incapable of being anything other than itself.

This study has also demonstrated the applicability of rhetorical theories of genre to women’s rhetorical education in the eighteenth century. In order to learn how to speak or write well in a certain genre, eighteenth-century women writers needed to learn how their culture viewed oral and written genres in relationship to gendered speakers, writers and audiences. Advanced rhetorical skill often shows itself in the ability to adapt arguments and ideas from one genre to another—from conversation to a letter, from letter form to narrative or dialogue or essay. It also is seen in women’s blending of styles and genres, such as the conversational history of Thrale-Piozzi’s Retrospection and the epistolary form of Macaulay-Graham’s educational treatise. Adaptability within genres is another skill—for example, the ability to write a descriptive letter as well as an advisory letter or letter of recommendation, as Elizabeth Montagu did. Successful adaptation of rhetorical skills among and within genres requires an understanding of an audience’s
generic and ideological expectations, a knowledge of how genre can select or even create certain audiences, and knowledge of some of the common historical discursive uses and linguistic limitations of genres.

Eighteenth-century women's rhetorical education involved frequent practice in discourse, both oral and written, with feedback for improvement. Rhetorical awareness helped women to translate observation into principles, and principles into their own rhetorical performance. As Anne Ruggles Gere illustrates in her book on the subject, writing groups have a long history that can be seen extending back into the literate practices of nineteenth-century American extracurricular and non-academic societies. This study has added to our understanding of the history of writing groups, showing that it was not only in nineteenth-century America that the process was useful. Eighteenth-century women's letters and corrected drafts, especially those of Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, can provide insight into mentoring relationships and revision strategies. We can be sure that rhetorical education is going on when rhetors receive correction or feedback during conversation or after writing a draft, even if this correction is often mere approval or disapproval unaccompanied by critical rhetorical vocabulary. As a musician becomes more familiar with her instrument over time and continued practice with feedback, eighteenth-century women became more familiar with the capabilities of language in its various forms through practice that received feedback. Periodical reviews of published work, pamphlets in response to their work or reputation, and oral criticism of writing and speech, were other ways in which women received instructional feedback.
Eighteenth-century women rhetoricians, therefore, thought and wrote about rhetoric often by means of using a different “metalanguage” than that of classical rhetorical theory. Rhetorical theory and criticism are essentially metalinguistic acts: they are uses of language to refer to language—persuasive arguments about why certain arguments are persuasive. By means of metalanguage, rhetors educate themselves and others about what language strategies are effective and why. The users of such metalanguage are given the metacognitive tools to praise or blame their own rhetorical practice, and ultimately to improve. One may assume that much of this metacognitive activity occurs only in the mind of a rhetor while silently reading or reflecting. 24 However, when metacognition is once again translated into a metalinguistic act and thereby externalized in conversation and writing the learner of rhetoric becomes engaged socially as an educator and self-educator in rhetoric. At this point the rhetor, and the historian of rhetoric, can begin to apply these verbalized principles to the rhetorical practices of those who express them, to judge whether they are following these principles with increasing effectiveness, and to discover if these principles themselves undergo revision as they gain rhetorical experience. Such metalinguistic activities are common features in eighteenth-century women’s letters and diaries; they are evidence of their metacognitive efforts at improving their own rhetorical practices over time.

24 Linda Flower argues that a writer’s context is mediated by a writer’s cognition, and that “At times, the mediating work of cognition is tacit, immediate, and swift; at others it is explicit, alive to alternatives, and maybe even self-conscious or reflective.” (Cognition 709)
The ways these eight women learned rhetoric can be applied to how rhetoric is taught today, and how it can be taught and learned in the future. Comparisons among pedagogical narratives demonstrate which methods have been successful in encouraging a broad range of rhetorical genres and rhetoricians, and how various social and political structures and ideologies constrain or enable such rhetorical pedagogies. Women in eighteenth-century Britain learned by means of several informal methods, many of which are now regular practice in American composition classrooms: writing groups, discussion, and the writing of multiple drafts. This similarity suggests these methods are adaptable across historical and geographical contexts.

This study also demonstrates that rhetorical education may be going on even where “rhetoric” as a term or concept is ignored, actively disowned, or ridiculed. Rhetorical theories are not only transmitted through courses, treatises and handbooks on rhetoric, but are transmitted through popular media, as they were through the periodical press and conduct books for women. Nevertheless, none of these women were utterly self-educated by means of texts and popularized theories, but had intensive pedagogical assistance in their communities through mentoring relationships, conversation, and letter writing. These communities helped the women bridge public and private worlds, and become not only consumers but crafters of messages. Without access to these types of social networks that bridge public and private selves, it is highly improbable that anyone learns how to effectively address communities larger than the ones that are local and familiar to them.
Several of these eighteenth-century women read Plutarch's rhetorical biographies and were inspired; several read the correspondence of Madame de Maintenon and what they revealed about the rhetorical choices of their authors. Rhetorical biography has the potential to inspire students to critique and selectively imitate the rhetors' paths and decisions, not just the rhetoric they produce.

Evaluative criticism has been part of rhetorical education for centuries and still is an important part—we grade and respond to students' products because we believe this helps them to improve. A holistic evaluation of rhetoric would include more than the product's formal characteristics, but its processes of creation and reception, and the rhetor's active role in these processes. Rhetorical educators understand that evaluative criteria need to be flexible to the situation and the rhetor. We do not apply the same criteria to a letter and a technical report, nor do we expect first-year undergraduates to be as advanced as their seniors. In addition, ethos influences evaluation: a letter from a university president and a letter from a student union president clearly have very different rhetorical possibilities for content, tone, and audience. Evaluation itself is a rhetorical act because it attempts to be persuasive and authoritative. Evaluating historical rhetors' successes and failures can be part of a debate, as it was in the early eighteenth century when Middleton and Lyttelton disagreed over the evaluation of Cicero's rhetorical life. But how can we judge whether the education and rhetorical skill of one historical woman is more or less advanced or successful than another, or whether men's skills were more effective than women's? We must consider unequal education and limited access to
rhetorical forums and opportunities. There is also to be considered the degree of assistance the rhetor has had during composition: the access to information about the topic and situation, feedback on drafts, and time to compose. A rhetorical product and process ought to be evaluated not only by its formal features, nor only by its apparent success among its audience, but according to the possibilities and difficulties of the rhetorical situation and the resources, aims and decisions of the rhetor. Comparative biography usually brings up the issue of evaluation. From Plutarch’s *Lives* to our current proposals for educational reform, a central question is which process led to the better rhetorical practice—better for society and the individual. Popular success and other measures of rhetorical “quality” were not part of the criteria of inclusion for women in this study, yet these women had to have had some success or their works and reputation would not have remained in the historical record. All rhetorical training is done with the hope of success. In Cicero’s *De Oratore*, Antonius’ definition of the orator is very general, and can be adapted to eighteenth-century women: “one who can use words agreeable to hear, and thoughts adapted to prove, not only in causes that are pleaded in the forum, but in causes in general. Him I call an orator, and would have him, besides, accomplished in delivery and action, and with a certain degree of wit.”*25* Eighteenth-century culture valued women who were “agreeable” and who spoke with propriety (“thoughts adapted”), who were able to “prove” and persuade especially in general causes such as religious and moral ones. The century also focused on women’s conversational delivery and manner of deportment, and “wit” was valued in women as long as it did not

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25 De Oratore Book I section XLIX
wound or was not merely self-display. In the broadest view of success, it is enough for an eighteenth-century woman to be heard or read, or even quoted; to be admired by her contemporaries as witty, wise or knowledgeable; or to be published and read.

In the strictest terms of success, there is the praise of the fastidious minds of the arbiters of public taste, the newspaper writers, reviewers and literati, which had its own important effect on the success of the rhetorical performance. Success with reviewers and critics was difficult to achieve because it was political as well as rhetorical, and meant that the work had to be crafted with an eye to them as well as another audience that may have had different interests. Reviewers write with their own rhetorical goals in mind, and were usually not the intended audience of a woman writer’s or speaker’s efforts, although they eventually became gatekeepers of literary fame near the end of the century. A more rhetorically sound method of evaluation is to look for information about the rhetor’s intended audience and purpose (either by interpreting the rhetor’s direct statements, or discerning them based on other evidence), and to assess, as Aristotle suggests, the potential for the success of the “available means” that were employed.

Because rhetorical success was such a difficult matter for women, it is more important to evaluate the educational process. One means of doing so is to discover signs of a rhetor’s improvement within a genre or rhetorical situation over time, keeping in mind that failures can be educational, and temporary regressions are possible—especially when the task becomes more difficult. When a rhetorical situation is risky and complicated, we must be careful in crediting or blaming a woman’s rhetorical knowledge
or skill. The more complex the audience and the more unstable the rhetorical situation, the more difficult it is to achieve rhetorical success. It is a good sign of a strong rhetorical education if a woman persists in rhetorical action despite some failure. This shows a conscious dedication to her purposes and an habitual and determined hope in the process of rhetoric itself—the belief that she will make an impact eventually, if only by varying the strategy or waiting for a more opportune time for the next attempt. To discern improvement in rhetorical knowledge and skill, we must make allowances for the constraints of the situation and the often very modest aims and hopes of the rhetor.

Feminist rhetorical histories like mine aim to restore to women the name of rhetorician and with it the honor of what they practiced and knew. In a similar way, one of Cicero’s purposes in writing the dialogue De Oratore is to vindicate the reputation of his mentors as rhetoricians. Cicero wishes to eradicate the popular notion that Antonius “was wholly unlearned” and Crassus “had no great learning”; to reconstruct and preserve as literature the opinions they had concerning eloquence, and thus rescue their declining fame.26 Their fame was in decline for the same reasons eighteenth-century women are rather unknown to modern rhetoricians: Antonius and Crassus had published little which was still extant, and it was their unpublished texts (their lives and conversation, which were known to persons still alive when Cicero wrote) which contained the largest body of evidence of their vast liberal and rhetorical knowledge. The biographical evidence

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26 De Oratore Book II section II
discussed in the previous chapters points to the existence of eighteenth-century women writers' rhetorical knowledge and training behind their eloquent speech and published texts.

These biographical portraits hold out the hope that women rhetors of history can receive the honor that was denied them as rhetors once their reputation and texts were discarded by canon-makers. What made Demosthenes a great orator was not merely the power of his public performances, but the knowledge that he roared back at the ocean to increase his vocal powers, that he struggled against a speech impediment and practiced with pebbles in his mouth. Rhetoricians are not merely judged excellent by the eloquence they express in performance, but by how they attain eloquence against the odds, or how they consciously and diligently strive to polish natural gifts by careful theorizing and practice. Such narratives of training and effort not only have historical value, but offer pedagogical and rhetorical insight. If linguistic power was attained by gifts of nature, the audience goes away awed, but the audience is also discouraged about the possibility of ever attaining such eminence themselves. Natural eloquence has persuasive charm, but little pedagogical usefulness in terms of inspiring imitation in future rhetors.

If these women's texts were disseminated in anthologies, and if other rhetorical biographies of women were written, these examples ought to be encouraging to present and future men and women who find the former "rhetorical tradition" too narrow in scope and definition. It was, and is, liberating to many women students of rhetoric to understand that there are indeed rhetorical precedents and traditions represented by
members of their sex, a variety of precedents who offer many possibilities. Currently we have a highly-developed tradition of men’s rhetorical theory and practice, and a separate, smaller tradition of women’s rhetorical practice without much in the way of theory, although scholars are working to ameliorate this situation. Springing from studies like mine, I would like to see the development of a more complete and egalitarian rhetorical history covering varieties of genre and gender, theory and practice. Rhetorical traditions are malleable, and these women’s historical efforts in learning and using rhetoric despite the constraints related to gender, economic situation, geography, and religious and political communities, demonstrate that it is not impossible to discover rhetorical resources for change even within seemingly prohibitive situations.


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APPENDIX A

ORATORY, ELOQUENCE, RHETORICK

BY HESTER THRALE PIOZZI

To cursory readers these words may possibly seem to approach nearer to synonymy than they will be found to do on closer inspection and severer scrutiny. Each term looks back perpetually to its derivation; and the first of them is even in our common talk naturally applied to him who solicits, requests, beseeches, pleading some cause of the helpless or distressed, with eloquence of address and skill in rhetorick. The original sense, as used in our courts of chancery, when the person supplicating is styled your orator or oratrix, lies still concealed under our colloquial language, and we yield the palm of oratory to him who best knows the arts of persuasion. For Warwick is a subtle orator, says one who fears his powers of entreaty, in Shakespeare's Henry the Sixth; whilst eloquence implies more properly a plenitude of words, and adroitness in arranging them, with a sweet voice and pleasing volubility of utterance. Without all these 'tis difficult to shine as a perfect rhetorician; though I have seen silent oratory more capable of touching our hearts than any tropes or figures—aye, or than all the graces of neat articulation, added to all the science of rhetorick. As proof of this, who would not

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rather choose Mrs. Siddons to plead a cause for immediate pardon from one's sovereign than Sheridan or Fox? Phraseology [sic] is confounded and invention frozen before the genuine expression of a throbbing heart; and Quintilian said truly, that to speak well we must feel sincerely. This was in cases of oratory, however. Eloquence is shewn in description chiefly; and though it does not set the place described before your eyes more exactly than less ornamented discourse would have done, it gives a momentary exaltation and delight to the mind, calls round a pleasing train of imagery, and furnishes elegant ideas for future combination.

I have a friend particularly eminent in such powers of charming her audience; who, although they leave her society more dazzled perhaps than instructed, find perpetual sources of entertainment by reflecting on the scenes so sweetly brought before their view, in words so choice and well adapted, yet poured forth with fluency which knows not, and copiousness which needs not hesitation. When she reads this, however, Mrs. P—will acknowledge that the very rules and terms of rhétoric are unknown to her, so great is the distance between our candidates for synonymy. 'Tis in the House of Commons we must seek inversion and prolepsis, every figure of the art, employed with all the skill of those who seek to baffle where they scarcely mean to convince—or where, convinced already, they mean to maintain the side they have chosen to support, in defiance of the champions opposite, to whose triumph they wish not to bear witness. Here oratory has no place, according to Dr. Johnson; who said no man was ever persuaded to give a vote contrary to what he intended in the morning, by any arguments, or any eloquence heard with in those walls. He said too that no preacher, however popular, ever prevailed on one
of the congregation to give more at a charity sermon than he had resolved on at leaving home. These positions *may* be true; yet is ORATORY a charming thing, ELOQUENCE a fine thing, and RHETORICK a great thing—for it comprises them both.
APPENDIX B

A SELECTION FROM SAMUEL JOHNSON’S DICTIONARY (1755)

Conduct. n.s. [conduit, Fr. con and ductus, Latin.]
1. Management; economy.
   Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions, embrace more than they can hold,
   stir more than they can quiet, and fly to the end without consideration of the
   means. Bacon.

   How void of reason are our hopes and fears!
   What in the conduct of our life appears
   So well design’d, so luckily begun,
   But when we have our wish, we wish undone? Dryd. Juv.

2. The act of leading troops; the duty of a general.
   Conduct of armies is a prince’s art. Waller.

3. Convoy; escorte; guard. [. . . ]
4. The act of convoying or guarding. [. . . ]
5. A warrant by which a convoy is appointed, or safety is assured. [. . . ]
   Though all regard for reputation is not quite laid aside, it is so low, that very few think
   virtue and conduct of absolute necessity for preserving it. Swift.

Conversation. n. s. [conversatio, Latin.]
1. Familiar discourse; chat; easy talk: opposed to a formal conference.
   She went to Pamela’s chamber, meaning to joy her thoughts with the sweet
   conversation of her sister. Sidney b. ii.

   What I mentioned some time ago in conversation, was not a new thought, just then
   started by accident or occasion. Swift.

2. A particular act of discoursing upon any subject; as, we had a long conversation on
   that question.

3. Commerce; intercourse; familiarity.
   The knowledge of men and manners, the freedom of habitudes, and conversation with
   the best company of both sexes. Dryden.

   His apparent, open guilt;
   I mean his conversation with Shore’s wife. Shakes. Rich. III

4. Behaviour; manner of acting in common life.

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Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles. 1 Pet.

To Declaim. v.n. [declamo, Latin.] To harangue; to speak to the passions; to rhetoricate; to speak set orations.

What are his mischiefs, consul? you declaim
Against his manners, and corrupt your own. — B. Johns. Cat.
The splendid declaimings of novices and men of heat. — South.
It is usual for masters to make their boys declaim on both sides of an argument. — Swift
Dress up all the virtues in the beauties of oratory, and declaim aloud on the praise of goodness. — Watts’s Improvement

Declamation. n. s. [declamatio, Latin.] A discourse addressed to the passions; an harangue; a set speech; a piece of rhetorick.
The cause why declaimations prevail so greatly, is, for that men suffer themselves to be deluded. — Hooker, b. i. s. 8.
Thou mayst forgive his anger, while thou makest use of the plainness of his declamation. — Taylor’s Rule of living holy

Elocution. n.s. [elocutio, Latin]
1. The power of fluent speech.
   A travelled doctor of physic, of bold, and of able elocution. Wotton.
2. Eloquence; flow of language.
   Whose taste, too long forborne, at first essay
   Gave elocution to the mute, and taught
   The tongue not made for speech to speak thy praise. — Milton.
   As I have endeavoured to adorn it with noble thoughts, so much more to express those thoughts with elocution. Dryden.
3. The power of expression or diction.
   The third happiness of this poet’s imagination is elocation, or the art of cloathing [sic] or adorning that thought so sound, and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words. Dryden.

Eloquence. n. s. [eloquentia, Latin.]
1. The power of speaking with fluency and elegance; oratory.
   Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th’ ignorant more learned than the ears. — Shakesp. Coriolanus.
2. Elegant language uttered with fluency.
   Say she be mute, and will not speak a word;
   Then I’ll commend her volubility,
   And say she uttereth piercing eloquence. — Shakespeare.
   Fit words attended on his weighty sense,
   And mild persuasion flow’d in eloquence. — Pope’s Odyssey, b.vii.
**Eloquent, adj.** [eloquens, Latin.] Having the power of oratory; having the power of fluent and elegant speech.

The Lord of hosts doth take away the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the *eloquent* orator. *Isaiah* iii.3

O death! all *eloquent*, you only prove
What dust we dote on, when 'tis man we love. *Pope.*

**Essay, n.s.**
1. Attempt; endeavour.
   Fruitless our hopes though pious our essays;
   Your’s to preserve a friend, and mine to praise. *Smith*
2. A loose sally of the mind; an irregular indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition.
   My essays, of all my other works, have been most current. *Bac.*
   Yet modestly he does his work survey,
   And calls his finish’d poem an essay. *Poem to Roscommon.*
3. A trial; an experiment.
   He wrote this but as an essay, or taste of my virtue. *Shak.*
   Repetitions wear us into a liking of what possibly, in the first essay, displeased us.
4. First taste of any thing; first experiment.
   Translating the first of Homer’s Iliads, I intended as an essay to the whole work. *Dryden’s Fables, Preface.*

**Letter, n.s.** [*lettre, French; litera, Latin.*]
1. One of the elements of syllables.
2. A written message; an epistle.
   They use to write it on top of letters. *Shakespeare.*
   [I have a letter from her]
   Of such contents as you will wonder at. *Shakespeare.*
   When a Spaniard would write a letter by him, the Indian would marvel how it should be possible, that he, to whom he came, should be able to know all things. *Abbot.*
   The asses will do very well for trumpeters, and the hares will make excellent letter carriers. *L’Estrange’s Fables*
   The stile of letters ought to be free, easy, and natural; as near approaching to familiar conversation as possible; the two best qualities in conversation are, good humour and good breeding; those letters are therefore certainly the best that share the most of these two qualities. *Walsh.*
   Mrs. P. B. has wrote to me, and is one of the best letter writers I know; very good sense, civility, and friendship, without any stiffness or constraint. *Swift.*
Rhetorick. n.s. [(Greek word); rhetorique, Fr.)
1. The act of speaking not merely with propriety, but with art and elegance.
   We could not allow him an orator, who had the best thoughts, and who knew all the
   rules of rhetorique, if he had not acquired the art of using them. -- Dryden's Dufresnoy.
   Of the passions, and how they are moved, Aristotle, in his second book of rhetorick,
   hath admirably discoursed in a little compass. -- Locke's Thoughts on Reading.
   Grammar teacheth us to speak properly, rhetorick instructs to speak elegantly. --
2. The power of persuasion; oratory.
   The heart's still rhetorick, disclos'd with eyes. -- Shakesp.
   His sober lips then did he softly part,
   Whence of pure rhetorick whole streams outflow. -- Fairfax
   Enjoy your dear with and gay rhetorick,
   That hath so well been taught her dazling sence. --Milton.

Rhetorical. adj. [rhetoricus, Lat. from rhetorick.] Pertaining to rhetorick; oratorial;
figurative.
   The apprehension is so deeply riveted into my mind, that rhetorical flourishes cannot
   at all loosen it. -- More.
   Because Brutus and Cassius met a blackmore, and Pompey had on a dark garment at
   Parsalia, these were presages of their overthrow, which notwithstanding are scarce
   rhetorical sequels; concluding metaphors from realities, and from conceptions
   metaphorical inferring realities again. -- Brown.
   The subject moral, logical, or rhetorical, which does not come under our senses. --
   Watts's Improvement of the Mind.

Rhetorically. adv. [from rhetorical.] Like an orator; figuratively; with intent to move the
passions.

to Rhetoricate. v. n. [rhetoricor, low Lat. from rhetorick.] To play the orator; to attack
the passions.
   'Twill be much more seasonable to reform, than apologize or rhetoricate; not to
   suffer themselves to perish in the midst of such solicitations to be saved. --
   Decay of Piety.

Rhetorician. n.s. [rhetoricien, Fr. rhetor, Lat.] One who teaches the science of rhetorick.
   The ancient sophists and rhetoricians, which ever had young auditors, lived till they
   were an hundred years old. -- Bacon.
   'Tis the business of rhetoricians to treat the characters of the passions. -- Dryden's
   Dictionary.
   A man may be a very good rhetorician, and yet at the same time a mean orator. --
Rhetorician. adj. Suiting a master of rhetorick.

Boldly presum’d with *rhetorician* pride,
To hold of any question either side. — *Blackmore*. 
APPENDIX C

AN OUTLINE OF CATHARINE MACAULAY'S PLAN
OF "LITERARY EDUCATION"²

Before Age 12
Without the use of books:
  Latin grammar
  Geography
  Physics
  Writing
  Arithmetic
  French language
Books for entertainment
  Easy Latin authors

At age 10 if extraordinary "vigor of intellect"
  Fables in English, Latin, and French

Age 12
Readings, with selections to be committed to memory:
  Plutarch's Lives, a selection in English
  Addison's Spectators (passages to be written and parsed)
  Guthrie's Geographical Grammar
  Mentelle's Geographie Comparee
Study of English grammar
  Ash's Introduction to Lowth
  Lowth's Introduction

Age 14
"Themes written in Latin and English . . . with a proper attention to Dr. Samuel
  Johnson's practical precepts"
  Rollin's Ancient History, in French
  One of the best of the English Histories in English
  Livy's history in the original
  Pursue the chronology of Roman history through Latin and English works:


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Livy
Dion. Cassius,
Sallust
Tacitus
Ferguson
Gibbon
Greek History
The History of Modern Europe

Age 15
Greek language

Age 16
Moral Lectures:
Cicero’s Offices
Cicero
Plutarch
Epictetus
Seneca
For pupils of taste:
Fenelon’s Telemachus
Rollin’s Belles Lettres
English poetry (accompanied by tutor’s observations)
Shakespeare, selected plays
Addison’s Cato
Steele’s Conscious Lovers
Milton
Pope (except for Abelard and Eloisa and imitations of Chaucer)
French poetry (accompanied by tutor’s observations)
Boileau
Plays selected from
Corneille
Racine
Moliere
Voltaire
Other Latin lectures:
Terence, selected plays
Martial, selected epigrams
Virgil’s Aenid and Georgics
Translate poetry into “plain prose” to illustrate “the potent power of numbers” and
“the delusive power of sound”
Recitation of poetic passages (but acting of plays is forbidden for “The stage
actors are of all persons the worst models for oratory”)
Ancient geography
Cellarius
Use of the globes
Ferguson's astronomy
Attend lectures on experimental philosophy
Natural history
Pliny
Buffon

Age 18
Read in Greek:
Plato (only dialogues at this point)
Demosthenes
Homer
Euripides
Sophocles
Read in Latin:
Caesar's Commentaries
Cicero's Orations (with tutorial observations "where Cicero shews himself
more the lawyer, than the man of strict integrity")
Home Tooke's Epateitepoenta
Mr. Harris' Hermes
Lord Monboddo on language
Course of Logic
Harris's Philosophical Arrangements
Aristotle

Age 19
Study of Politics
Harrington
Sydney
Locke
Hobbes

Age 20
Ancient Mythology
Spencees Polymetis
Hesiod
Ovid
Blackwell
Baniere
Bryant
Ancient metaphysics
Plato
Cudworth

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Monboddo

Age 21

Biblical studies with commentaries
Ecclesiastical histories
Lardner
Mosheim
Controversial writers “for and against the system of revelation”

Age 23

Mathematics
The Light of Nature Pursued (modern metaphysics)

The Tour of Europe and Marriage are to be delayed

Novels in general to be avoided
Novelists recommended:
   - Cervantes
   - Le Sage (however, Gil Blas not for youth)
   - Fielding

Novelists to be delayed until education is complete:
   - Richardson
   - Burney