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CONTESTING GUARDIANSHIP, CHALLENGING AUTHORITY:
THE GUARDIAN AND WARD RELATIONSHIP
IN GOTHIC AND DOMESTIC FICTION, 1789-93

by

DONNA ANN GESSELL-FRYE

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Adviser: Dr. William R. Siebenschuh

Department of English
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

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We hereby approve the thesis of

Donna Ann Gessell-Frye

candidate for the Ph. D.

degree.*

(signed) William R. Liebenow
(chair)

Marilyn A. Samuels
Lila Haupt
Michael J. Ross

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Conna A. Gessell-Frye

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Abstract

by

DONNA A. GESSELL-FRYE

Arguing for a rereading of women's novels previously thought contentless but now demonstrably participating in contemporary debates, I investigate the socio-cultural implications of the guardian and ward relationship in texts published in England between 1789 and 1793. In The Romance of the Forest (1791), A Simple Story (1791), and The Old Manor House (1793), Anne Radcliffe, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith use the legal relationship of guardianship to represent highly sensitive topics, such as abuses of asymmetrical power relationships and practices of patriarchal authority. I argue their writing examines the conflict between the private individual and public forms of power in ways similar to Richard Price's A Discourse on the Love of Our Country (1789), Edmund Burke's Reflections on

the Revolution in France (1790), Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man (1792), and Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). While these authors openly discuss tyranny, Radcliffe, Inchbald, and Smith indirectly use images of guardianship to examine these same issues of the uses and abuses of power.

Chapter One explores the historical context of the legal relationship of guardianship. Because of its ambiguous social status--incorporating the relationships of the private family while at the same time being mediated by public courts--guardianship allows writers to address issues concerning public institutions of power as well as those concerning private family relationships. Chapters Two through Four each explores a novel and the ways in which each author uses representations of guardianship to champion issues of self-government. Each author espouses a movement from externalized, public power to internalized, private authority. Their discussions of guardianship press the government to perform its duties as both curator and tutor, to act as a just guardian. Chapter Five concludes the discussion, commenting on the inability of law to legislate absolute authority for any segment of society. By delegitimizing guardianship, Radcliffe, Inchbald, and Smith each contest authority, forcing articulation on issues previously unchallenged.

Dedicated to my parents,
Frances Wheeler Gessell and
Lyman E. Gessell, Jr.

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Women's Fiction in an Age of Reform:
The Use of the Guardian and Ward Relationship in Gothic and
Domestic Fiction

However wide from the allotted boundaries and appointed province of Females may be all inference in public matters, even in the agitating season of general calamity; it does not thence follow that they are exempt from all public claims, or mere passive spectatresses of the moral as well as of the political economy of human life.

--Fanny Burney, Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy, 1793. (iii)

As female writers, Ann Radcliffe, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith could scarcely have written formally and explicitly about subjects such as law, history, and political philosophy.¹ In the late eighteenth century, women were still not fully accepted as professional writers. They were still overcoming ingrained social expectations as to their proper roles. As yet, only a small minority of women received educations appropriate to their entry into debates on the more "serious" subject of politics, philosophy and economics.² Even these women were

¹ In his study, Hester Thrale Piozzi: Portrait of a Literary Woman, William McCarthy designates "anecdote, philology, politics, and history" as "Serious Literature, or 'manly' literature as it was then called--with reason, for women took very little part in its production" (54).

² As Mary Wollstonecraft was to argue in her introduction to A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792):

discouraged from writing in these genres and their writing was routinely dismissed by male readers who controlled the publishing institutions. According to Cheryl Turner in Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century, women's writing was thus socially confined to private, domestic topics with which they supposedly had "a first-hand understanding." In practice, therefore, the types of "serious" writing available to women were limited to "educational theory, sermons, pamphlets, didactic novels, lessons for children, and didactic juvenile fiction" (120-21).

Hester Lynch Piozzi's literary career serves as an instructive guide to the limits of women's conventional spheres of writing. As William McCarthy explains in his

The education of women has of late been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex, and ridiculed or pitied by the writers who endeavor by satire or instruction to improve them. It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves--the only way women can rise in the world--by marriage." (12)

As Joan Kelly points out, the women who did receive appropriate educations were:

female members of a distinctively modern, literate class that served the upper reaches of a ranked society . . . [who] were the forebears of what Virginia Woolf called "the daughters of educated men"--daughters in revolt against the fathers who schooled some of them for a society that forbade all women to enter. (69)

biography on Piozzi, Hester Thrale Piozzi: Portrait of a Literary Woman, her first signed publications were in the genres of poetry, anecdotes, correspondence, and travel writing. As she continued to publish, her writing, dealing with public issues, challenged the "allotted boundaries" of acceptable genres for women, and was increasingly rejected and neglected by the publishers. Nevertheless, she published the first English book of synonyms as well as political pamphlets and the first world history by an English woman. Indeed, Piozzi in

[u]ndertaking to work in the major prose genres of her time, . . . undertook to perform in the then characteristically male role of scholar, commentator, and judge. (McCarthy 57)

Even so, publishers chose to treat her according to the old social mythology denying her a public voice, supporting

the general dogma that women cannot really be writers. According to this dogma, a success by a woman writer must be a qualified success and must be attributed to other than her own ability. (McCarthy 180)

Mary Wollstonecraft challenged these conventions and published works in the major genres available only to men. Her A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) was a highly controversial text not only because it challenged traditional hierarchies, but because a woman wrote authoritatively about public issues.³ According to Sandra

³ Wollstonecraft's strength was her non-fiction. Her Maria or The Wrongs of Woman, is considered her best fiction. According to Eva Figs in Sex and Subterfuge: Women Writers to 1850,

M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, Wollstonecraft "was attacked as a 'philosophical wanton' and a monster, while her Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) was called 'A scripture, archly fram'd for propagating w[hore]s'" (222); Horace Walpole claimed Mary Wollstonecraft was "a hyena in petticoats" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 31).⁴ Although women writers were testing the boundaries, they were confined to traditionally prescribed genres and knew the penalties of being caught out of bounds. For instance, in The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800, Janet Todd notes that Charlotte Smith

believed that women could and should comment on politics, but she wrote defensively about their intervention, knowing that the prevailing attitude . . . was against her. (226)

Much to the probable dismay of Piozzi and Wollstonecraft, who both perceived novels as enforcing

The world of the imagination did not come naturally to her, but on this occasion, by adopting a Gothic framework, she found a power and fluency which had so far been markedly absent from her fiction. (74)

⁴ The first quotation is from a review of her Memoirs in European Magazine 33 (1798): 251; the second appeared in a poem "The Vision of Liberty" in the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine 9 (1801): 518; Walpole's remark was written in a letter to Hannah More, 24 January 1795. See Ralph Wardle, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Critical Biography (Lawrence, KS: U of Kansas P, 1951) 317-22, for further discussion on these attacks.

negative stereotypes of women, "the novel was the one genre in which women writers were allowed not just toleration, but absolute preeminence" (McCarthy 65). However, the kinds of subjects and themes they could deal with were almost as prescribed as in other genres. In order to write about more "serious" subjects and receive critical acceptance, women novelists had to conceal their critical comments on the public sphere within stories superficially concerned with more permissible subjects--those of private domesticity. In fact, in Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel, Nancy Armstrong contends that

narratives which seemed to be concerned solely with matters of courtship and marriage in fact seized the authority to say what was female, and that they did so in order to contest the reigning notion of kinship relations that attached most power and privilege to certain family lines. (5)⁵

⁵ Armstrong recognizes fiction's role in empowering the domestic realm as a political force in modern culture, as well as idealizing the domestic woman as a model of desired behavior. She argues that fiction

helped to formulate the ordered space we now recognize as the household, made that space totally functional, and used it as the context for representing normal behavior. In so doing, fiction contested and finally suppressed alternative bases for human relationships. (24)

For instance, the concept of the domestic ideal weakened the value of "the intricate status system that had long dominated British thinking" and "contested a dominant political order which depended, among other things, on representing women as economic and political objects" (4, 15).

Radcliffe, Inchbald, and Smith all incorporated subjects from the "serious" prose genres into their novels, stretching the novel form in the process. Though their novels were ostensibly "safely" about family and marriage, they used more or less conventional plots as representations for conceptualizing alternative power structures. Male writers followed their lead. In his The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805, Gary Kelly explains how William Godwin used the domestic underpinning of the novel genre to generate a more conscious opposition to oppressive authority:

His potent and subtle historical imagination fused the domestic fiction with "affairs of state" by means of allusion and allegory, and the classical analogy between the family and the nation acquired new vigour from an age of Revolution. The novel, with its traditional devotion to domestic history and the "domestic affections," was therefore the logical counterpart to the pamphlets, poems, sermons and satires by which the English Jacobins mounted their attack on "things as they are." (261)

Thus the Gothic and romance novels of the late eighteenth century contributed to political and social debate. In texts like The Romance of the Forest (1791), A Simple Story (1791), and The Old Manor House (1793), Anne Radcliffe, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith used the legal relationship of guardianship to represent highly sensitive and traditionally "male" social and political topics, such as asymmetrical power relationships, abuses of patriarchal

power, and practices of authority.⁶ Their writing was part of a body of texts launched during the moment of discontinuity following the French Revolution to examine issues of self-government. Authors responded to the particularly volatile political climate of the time by introducing counterdiscourses debating the continuation of past models of patriarchal authority.

In Contesting Guardianship, Challenging Authority: The Guardian and Ward Relationship in Gothic and Domestic Fiction, 1789-1793, I compare the images of guardianship presented in these novels with the arguments found in the philosophical, historical, and legal texts. By doing so, I demonstrate that by using the guardian and ward relationship authors of these texts confront and examine important social issues involved in defining the relationship between the individual and authority. By analyzing literary texts within the historical framework of the legal relationship of guardianship and by juxtaposing them with political texts including Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man Part I (1791) and Part II (1792),

⁶ With no evidence to support their having any legal knowledge, I am making no claims for these three authors regarding any professional knowledge of the laws governing the legal relationship of guardianship. Recognizing the varying levels of legal knowledge within the British population, I am assuming the majority of people had only a diffused popular understanding of the legal relationship.

and Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), I show that the relationship itself encodes and critiques the political, ideological, and economic values of the society which created it.

The novels I examine approach the issue of guardianship in a variety of ways. For example, Radcliffe's The Romance of the Forest fictionalizes a historical account of an abusive guardian who suppressed his ward's identity in order to use her property and its capital to his advantage. Although an extreme example by eighteenth-century standards, this case illustrates the potential for abuse the legal relationship carries in actual practice. Inchbald presents another example of the depiction of legal guardianship questioning institutionalized forms of patriarchy in A Simple Story. Presenting the relationship between a man and woman first as that of guardian and ward, with its vestigial "wardship of the body," and then transforming the relationship into that of husband and wife, she invites a comparison of the legal relationships of guardianship and marriage. The novel considers a series of other asymmetrical relationships, questioning the extent of power any individual has over his wife's body, property, and dependents. Smith's The Old Manor House challenges the outmoded system of inheritance laws, including primogeniture. Smith establishes a quasi-guardianship

relationship--that is, a relationship approximating the responsibilities and duties of guardianship, though not legally prescribed--between an heiress and her nephew. Using their relationship, the novel presents a case against laws protecting family succession and keeping land holdings intact, at the expense of promoting sound estate management practices necessitated by shifting notions of property during the eighteenth century.

In all three of the texts, the legal wards are young women with limited educations. Radcliffe's Adeline is "about eighteen" (5), and has only recently escaped taking vows after completing her education at an abbey. In A Simple Story, Miss Milner is also "a young lady of eighteen" (3), the product of a boarding school where she learned "all the pursuits of personal accomplishments, [which] had left her mind without one ornament, except those which nature gave" (5). Monimia, in The Old Manor House, is fourteen and "[h]er poverty, her dependence, the necessity of her earning a subsistence by daily labour, had been the only lessons she had been taught" (47). Her lack of education signals her guardian's neglect of tutorial duties. As well as being the youngest, Monimia is also the most economically oppressed, with no title or inheritance "and the only hope held out to her [was] that of passing through life in an obscure service" (47).

The women become property to be exploited and commodified, most often through the institution of marriage, recalling the feudal discourses of the legal relationship and incorporating the new discourses of an increasingly commercialized society. Subject to patriarchal abuse, each woman is immured for part of the time. Mrs. Lennard imprisons Monimia in a tower of the old manor house, when she refuses to make a financially advantageous marriage to a "detestable" man who eventually offers to buy her (423). She has less to lose, but is nevertheless exploited by her greedy guardian, who uses her to gain favor from Mrs. Rayland, whom she serves as housekeeper. Adeline is locked away first in an abbey school and then in an abandoned abbey at the orders of her guardian, who first attempts to seduce and then to murder her. Miss Milner can only attend a party by escaping from her house against the orders of her guardian, whom she subsequently marries with disastrous results.

The use of the legal relationship of guardianship reveals and informs the larger political issues and the doctrinal uncertainties of the time as well. Adeline, Miss Milner, and Monimia must learn to circumvent their wardship--its commodification and abusive power--in order to invent their own self-government. They each must overcome "the pernicious effects of an improper education" and take on a more critical view of their relationship with

proper forms of authority (Inchbald 337). Ironically, this government includes male governors. But true to the reforms of the time, each heroine enjoys the illusion of having choices, selecting her own governor--her husband. Inappropriate authority is contested, yet legitimate authority is accepted.

Through the use of legal relations of guardianship, each of the three novels comments on the public realm and contributes to political debate attempting to reconcile feudal legal practices in the increasingly commercial eighteenth-century society. Radcliffe's use of guardianship particularly champions the continued evolution of government from church and monarchy, through aristocracy, to the democracy of individuals like that outlined by Price and supported by Paine. By contrasting models of guardianship set in sinister and decaying abbeys to those in the sublime Swiss mountains, The Romance of the Forest systematically examines and rejects the older discourses of religious and aristocratic despotic authority still present in eighteenth-century guardianship. The decayed abbey represents the corrupt powers of the Catholic church and the feudal monarchy; the Alps represent the freedom of legitimate authority. Through Adeline's experiences the metaphorical relationships suggest that the physical and religious control of feudal England and the Catholic church have been replaced by psychological,

economic, and social controls. These kinds of power may be less overtly abusive, but nevertheless merit cautious examination by individuals who are educated to recognize and negotiate forms of arbitrary authority to achieve personal justice.

Incorporating Gothic conventions within those of a sentimental, domestic novel, Radcliffe created models of guardian relations which critique changes in economic, military, and judicial power structures as they moved from the private hands of feudal aristocratic families to public governmental institutions. The Marquis, Adeline's murderous, usurping uncle, represents the nexus of possible forms of abuse involved in patriarchal practices. His judicially sanctioned control over Adeline, coupled with his military control over her lover and his economic control over her would-be but inadequate protector, indict privately held power for its potential for abuse. The novel concludes in a series of trials--the imposition of public governmental institutions--to create order, restore rightful authority, and dispense justice for each individual.

Similarly, A Simple Story and The Old Manor House use the private legal relation of guardianship to investigate the right and wisdom of locating so much power in any one individual, which, in turn, indirectly scrutinizes the public issue of royal prerogative in favor of parliamentary

power. Dorriforth, Miss Milner's guardian/lover/husband wields power in questionable ways. He seems unable to act on his own without the advice and tutelage of his friend, Sandford. Even with Sandford's guidance, he makes bad decisions which undermine his powers to govern his estate and family. Specifically, he marries his ward, confusing the roles of their relationship. Then while away four years to manage his plantation in the West Indies, he loses control of his wife, who has an affair in his absence. She has her own view of the extent of his legitimate authority in her personal life. When asked whether she will always obey his commands, she asserts her private rights within the realm of her public obligation, "'As my guardian, I certainly did obey him; and I could obey him as a husband; but as a lover, I will not'" (154). She sets boundaries to limit his tyrannical authority. Finally, Dorriforth's relationship with their daughter, Matilda, is so unlike a parent to his child it more nearly approximates that of a guardian to his ward. Refusing to see her, he charges her nurture and education to others. Matilda, though she receives an excellent education, nevertheless suffers the fate of the other wards in these novels: she is immured within her father's estate until a would-be suitor abducts her, taking advantage of her father's neglect in protecting her. Inchbald calls to question Dorriforth's ability to govern appropriately, unmoved by his self-interest.

The other guardians also govern with suspect motives. In The Old Manor House, Mrs. Lennard's selfish desire for personal advancement handicaps her decision-making abilities to provide for her ward. She objects to Monimia's learning to read and write, preferring to keep her in "precarious" dependence rather than give her "a hankering after what [she has] no right to expect" (135, 171). Of course, Mrs. Lennard has no right to expect the position she attempts to gain by marrying an unscrupulous lawyer.

On the larger, public scale, the concept of royal prerogative, long contested and severely limited after the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution, can easily be abused and result in selfish opportunism instead of consideration for the general public good of the monarch's charges. The "Royal Guardian" can also exceed or abuse his authority, and during the years England had narrowly missed being governed by a guardian-like arrangement. George III had recently recovered from his first severe illness, and had just resumed his royal functions as father-figure. During the worst part of his illness, lasting from November 1788 to February 1789, the question of regency had been seriously considered. A regent, like a guardian, would have assumed the duties of the father-figure, a situation which the country was forced to accept two decades later. Published in 1793, The Old Manor House, ruled by the

incompetent Mrs. Rayland, investigates the same issues at stake in regency. When is the guardian too incapacitated to govern effectively? What limits should be placed on the authority of the regent? Who regulates the transfer of authority?

Another feudal and debatably outmoded practice which guardianship questions symbolically is succession and hereditary rights, including primogeniture. Wardship was created to insure proper order of succession and the orderly transfer of property. However, as land lost its status as the primary means of transferring property, and stocks and securities provided alternatives for capital investment, the need to identify a single heir to consolidate property lessened. Price, Paine, and Wollstonecraft all argued that primogeniture was obsolete as does The Old Manor House, which critiques aristocratic families who were clinging to these practices. The last of "three antique heiresses" (6), Mrs. Rayland ignores traditional lines of succession and chooses Orlando as her heir, passing over his older profligate brother. Yet because of her refusal to publicly name Orlando heir, their relationship becomes one of quasi-guardianship, in which she dictates his choice of profession and marriage partner. Orlando's position is similar to that of George III's sons: the oldest brother is a spendthrift, ruining opportunities for the younger siblings; service in the army or the navy

is the only profession appropriate for him; and he must marry appropriately, first gaining permission of his father.

The last set of public relationships that extensions of the legal relationship of guardian and ward examine in these novels are those larger institutions based on asymmetrical, hierarchical relationships: among them the Catholic church, slavery, and colonialism.

Adeline's early experiences with the Catholic church, specifically the Abbess at the abbey where she was educated, shape all of her other experiences with hierarchical power structures. The negative traits she assigns the Abbess become her method of identifying other abusive patriarchal figures, who offer her guardianship. She eventually learns that the church is no refuge because it is easily controlled by the same aristocrats whom she is trying to escape.

The Catholic church also represents potential for abuse within patriarchal governments in A Simple Story. At its outset Dorriforth, Miss Milner's secular guardian, is also a Catholic priest, or spiritual guardian. He divests himself of both roles, but retains the rigidity and hierarchical outlook his training has encouraged. The Catholic church, with its own sets of guardianship-like relations, represents how the individual loses power within hierarchical structures.

Slavery and colonialism are extreme cases of institutionally-sanctioned abuse of power over individuals. Organized opposition to slavery had recently been institutionalized in England with the establishment of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. Guardian/ward images evoke these same moral and legal concerns, because of the relationship's legal basis in feudal land tenureship, which formally gave "wardship of the body" to the guardian. Smith's narrator abruptly breaks off her narrative to directly question both slavery and colonialism. She compares the conditions on board Orlando's crowded military naval convoy to fight the Revolutionary War in America to those on the vessels transporting Africans to be sold as slaves:

he saw himself in a little crowded vessel, where nothing could equal the inconvenience to which his soldiers were subjected, but that which the miserable negroes endure in their passage to slavery. (334)

Smith's footnote to this passage underscores her point and ridicules attempts to rationalize slavery:

It has lately been alleged in defence of the Slave Trade, that Negroes on board Guineamen are allowed almost as much room as a Soldier in a Transport.--Excellent reasoning! (334 emphasis in original)

Reinforcing this theme of the oppression involved in slavery, later dialogue ties slavery to colonialism and critiques a capitalist system based on other's misery:

"The merchant, who sits down in his compting-house, and writes to his correspondent at

Jamaica, that his ship, the Good Intent of Liverpool, is consigned to him at Port-Royal with a cargo of slaves from the coast of Guinea, calculates the profits of a fortunate adventure, but never considers the tears and blood with which this money is to be raised. He hears not the groans of an hundred human creatures confined together in the hold of a small merchantman." (486)

"[A]lmost ignorant" of causes, Orlando may not understand fully the motives for fighting wars or supporting governments. Nevertheless, his "reason and humanity alike recoiled" at a nationalistic ethic which determines enemies on the basis of economic factors and which wages a war,

carried on against a part of their own body, and in direct contradiction of the rights universally claimed, . . . pursued at a ruinous expence, but in absolute contradiction to the wishes of the people who were taxed to support it. (347)

No excuses remain for government to ignore individual rights.

By focusing on the guardian and ward relationship, I will show how particular novels examine the discontinuities in popular and legal perceptions of guardianship. Previous critical inquiries into the picture of the legal relationship of guardianship in literary texts have only considered parts of the guardian and ward relationship. Although critics have dealt with the treatment of children in literary texts, none has specifically focused on the treatment of the legal relationship of guardianship. Thus, to date, literary representation of guardianship as a legal

relationship has not received wide attention.⁷ Examining the treatment in novels of other legal domestic relationships, such as family or marriage, critics have added new insights into literary texts and the texts studied have afforded significant insights on the cultures they examine.⁸ Obviously, I believe the guardian/ward relationship deserves similar attention because it reveals ways in which authors use social institutions to comment on their societies and use literary discourses and their influence on political discourses to educate and generate a more conscious opposition to oppression within a society.

In the past these novels have been studied, yet devalued in different ways: (1) they have been noted for their development of uniform "setting," "atmosphere," characterization, and sensationalism, yet censured for their perceived lack of sustained substance; (2) they have been dissected for their experimentation as important in

⁷ Cheryl Nixon is writing her dissertation on the guardian/ward relationship. She presented "Legal Friendship: Guardian and Ward in A Simple Story and Emmeline" at the MLA Convention, San Diego, 29 Dec. 1994.

⁸ Three examples include Nancy Armstrong's Desire and Domestic Fiction (New York: Oxford UP, 1987); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP) 1979; and Lawrence Stone's The Family, Sex and Marriage: In England 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). A more recent study is John P. Zomchick's Family and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: The Public Conscience in the Private Sphere (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).

the development of the sentimental, Gothic, and domestic romance novel forms, yet relegated to a minor status because of their popularity primarily among women readers; and (3) they have been read for their historical interest in subjects such as education, yet judged as technically undeserving, non-canonical products of earlier women writers writing out of financial need. More recently with the advent of feminist criticism, these novels have been reexamined for their merits, taking into account the biases of former criticism. My focus will be to recognize them for their contribution to the political and social debate of the revolutionary 1790s. These fictional texts utilize guardian and ward relationships to express the complex and dialogic nature of the forces shaping English discourse in the years between 1789 and 1793. Although I do not suggest there is a unifying synthesis of those forces, I argue that the dialectic of the guardian and ward relationship is an effective way both for authors to express their ideas and for readers to access those ideas. These authors repeatedly contrast present practices with their earlier embodiments and ask how much power the past should continue to exert over the present.

In the process, they disclose what is at stake in abuses of despotic power, including misuses of patriarchal power and practices of authority. Overall, these authors champion issues of self-government, including what is lost

in the subordination of an individual to a superior's power and judgment. Finally, they espouse a rational argument for the need to move from externalized forms of public power to individual authority by insisting on the need for education for all--the tutorial duty of a legal guardian. In the process of discussing the private guardian and ward legal relationship, they press the government to perform its duties as both curator and tutor, to act as a just guardian. By delegitimizing guardianship, Radcliffe, Inchbald, and Smith contest authority, forcing articulation of previously unchallenged concepts of patriarchy.

The Context: Guardianship, Wardship,
Evolution and Revolution

'A family,' says some great philosopher, 'is but a little kingdom, and a 'kingdom is no more than a great family.'

--Hester Lynch Piozzi's Retrospection (2: 317)

The legal relationship of guardianship offered eighteenth-century authors an image rich with cultural connotations gained throughout its history originating in feudal times. The connotations were strikingly appropriate for discussing social issues pertinent to the volatile political climate of the time, such as asymmetrical power relationships, the power of the past to determine the present, and the right of individuals to select their governors. A brief overview of relevant background--including the debate regarding contemporary political events, the ongoing Gothic debate among historiographers, and the history of the legal relationship of guardianship--helps explain the appropriateness of the relationship as an image to debate the relationship of the individual to authority.

The Inevitability of Reform

Because of current political events, the period of 1789 to 1793 seemed to demand comment on political and social institutions in England. While directly

attributable to the French Revolution, the debate was a response to domestic issues as well. Inspired by the Enlightenment ideal of progress coupled with both immediate events and a new sense of evolving history, English writers critiqued what they perceived as the natural evolution of government.¹ Many envisioned that there was a progression of government, beginning with the church and monarchy, evolving through an intermediate phase of rule by the aristocracy, and culminating in government in a democracy. According to this way of thinking, social reform was a certainty and enlightenment a must--enlightenment here designating the belief that educating individuals in rational thought would improve social conditions. In this vein, Cora Kaplan in "Wild Nights: Pleasure / Sexuality / Feminism" asserts that the "message" of Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women "is urgent precisely because social and political reform seemed not just possible, but inevitable" (165). Her statement seems equally applicable to others writing during the same period.

Domestic events in England during the period also made the message seem "urgent." The year before the French

¹ R.J. Smith's The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought, 1688-1863 discusses how enlightenment's "idea of progress was used to render older political attitudes consonant with recent demonstrations of historical change" (85).

Revolution--1788--in addition to being the centenary of the Glorious Revolution, was marked by the death of the Young Pretender, Charles Edward Stuart, the grandson of James II, and the Regency Crisis. These two seemingly disconnected events--the death of Bonnie Prince Charlie and George III's bout with porphyria, with his symptoms diagnosed as insanity--together sparked public consideration of questions concerning English government, a dispute which had lain dormant since the 1714 debate over the Hanoverian succession. News of the French Revolution fanned the disagreement. Specifically, the issues which would be publicly argued until the British government's severe domestic crackdown against Jacobin forces in 1793² included: royal prerogative versus parliamentary power; succession and hereditary rights, including primogeniture; and individuals and their role in government.

Wishing to avoid the bloodshed of the French Revolution, most authors reacted by suggesting reform, rather than revolution. They argued for a re-examination of assumptions underlying the intellectual and social

² In his The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke, James T. Boulton outlines the changing political situation in 1793, mentioning

the growing likelihood of war with France, increasingly oppressive measures by the Government at home. . . . War came with France in February 1793. Henceforth, evidence of sympathy for France in any shape was proof of sedition, even of treason. (96)

institutions in England. "Behind all," Ronald Paulson says in Representations of Revolutions (1789-1820),

was a new sense of history, of what could or should happen in history, and what history was in fact about. From being about the kings, it became, in certain ways, about larger groups of subjects and their attempts to come to terms with, or create a new order from, the disorder consequent upon the overthrow of an old established order. (225)

Seminal to the debates of the period was Richard Price's sermon, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, delivered on November 4, 1789 to commemorate the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution. He consciously placed his comments into a historical framework:

I reckon this a subject particularly suitable to the services of this day, and to the Anniversary of our deliverance at the Revolution from the dangers of popery and arbitrary power; and should I, on such an occasion be led to touch more on political subjects than would at any other time be proper in the pulpit, you will, I doubt not, excuse me. (2)

His remarks were calculated to uphold the "principles of the Revolution," which included "the right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves" (34). To this end, he recounted earlier occasions which limited monarchical power, including the 1660 Restoration, the 1714 Acts of Succession, and the 1776 War in America as well as the 1688 Glorious Revolution--the anniversary of which provided the occasion for his sermon. Additionally Price comments on the king's recent illness and recovery, using it to

admonish the monarchy that they should remember they are chosen by the people, who are "enlightened manly citizens rejoicing with a beloved sovereign," rather than "a herd crawling at the feet of a master" (22).

Price consistently uses this argument of enlightenment. He refers to Montesquieu's The Spirit of Laws (1748), and asserts its place "in our endeavours to enlighten the world." He continues,

Every degree of illumination which we can communicate must do the greatest good. It helps to prepare the minds of men for the recovery of their rights, and hastens the overthrow of priestcraft and tyranny. (14)

Using Montesquieu's categories of government as well as his arguments, Price specifies the danger of any government:

Men in power (unless better disposed than is common) are always endeavouring to extend their power. They hate the doctrine, that is a TRUST derived from the people, and not a right vested in themselves. For this reason, the tendency of every government is to despotism. (28)³

He is upbeat, praising the progress made thus far. After referring to the Glorious Rebellion and asserting, "we have

³ Montesquieu's argument proceeded along similar lines:

Democratic and aristocratic states are not necessarily free. Political liberty is to be met with only in moderate governments: yet even in these it is not always met with. It is there only when there is no abuse of power: but constant experience shows us, that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it; he pushes on till he comes to the utmost limit." (200)

been made an example to other kingdoms, and became the instructors of the world" (31), he continues:

By a bloodless victory, the fetters which despotism had been long preparing for us were broken; the rights of the people were asserted, a tyrant expelled, and a Sovereign of our own choice appointed in his room Had it not been for this deliverance, the probability is, that instead of being thus distinguished, we should now have been a base people, groaning under the infamy of misery of popery and slavery (31-32).

Proceeding on the assumption of an evolving historical framework, Price argues for rational rather than despotic government and urges further progress to a government of individual "reason and conscience":

I see the ardor for liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment beginning in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience. (50)

In the four years following Price's sermon, this conflict between the private individual and public forms of authority was to dominate British literary discourse.⁴ The debate was between those who called for further reforms in government and those who felt that actions culminating in the Glorious Revolution had produced a government adequate to the needs of its citizens. The most important philosophical treatises that presented the arguments and

⁴ Boulton counts "upwards of seventy books and pamphlets [that] were written in reply to Burke's Reflections," which was written in reply to Price's sermon (135).

central issues during these four years are usually considered to be Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man Part I (1791) and Part II (1792), and Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). However, another group of texts has thus far received only limited recognition for its contribution to the debate over self-government. Literary texts using the legal relationship of guardianship employed similar dialogic forces. Novelists used guardianship within their works as a vehicle which allowed considerable freedom to examine several related and highly sensitive social topics, such as asymmetrical power relationships, abuses of patriarchal power, and outmoded practices of authority. Texts like Ann Radcliffe's The Romance of the Forest, Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story, and Charlotte Smith's The Old Manor House similarly express the intellectual, social, political, and legal debate of the period. While debate was being carried on formally in the philosophical texts, these novels dramatized the human implications of contesting authority more fully and subtly.

Surprisingly, these fictional texts employed discourses in common with the philosophical treatises. For example, both genres employed feudal history and historiography in various ways to support political

agendas.⁵ Because of its long history, one of the most important was the so-called Gothic debate. As R.J. Smith comments in The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought, 1688-1863, the medieval period and its institutions gained new significance during this period:

Indeed, among the enlightened writers, sometimes in unexpected places, their reader from time to time discovers a sensibility to the forms of the medieval past and an awareness of its power to stir the imagination which contrasts with the contemporary effort to reduce the past to former stages of society, or to a field for the operation of general laws. The medieval past began to attain major aesthetic significance.
(97)

For some time English historians had argued the issue of limited versus sovereign monarchy by valorizing either a Gothic or a Norman strand of history.⁶ Using differing interpretations of the events surrounding William's 1066 conquest of England and the Norman's subsequent rule, historians had argued for a monarchical tradition which

⁵ The term "feudal" was itself an invention of the historians. The Oxford English Dictionary lists 1665 as its first use.

⁶ For instance, R.J. Smith notes that history written in the late Seventeenth Century "had urgent contemporary importance" (1) because of its bearing on political and religious debates of the time. The slant given to medieval church history became particularly important because of the importance of defending the Church of England against the Catholic Church. Smith argues that the "Church and State controversy was the goad that drove forward historical scholarship" (2).

All parenthetical references in this section on the Gothic debate, unless otherwise specified, will be to R.J. Smith's The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought: 1688-1863 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).

best suited their political needs. Placed into the differing interpretations of historical events, the two arguments offer conflicting evidence supporting the extent of royal and parliamentary power, succession and hereditary rights, and the power of the people to determine their government. Each side had a tendency to turn "to history for political justification" (38). During the period 1789 to 1793, the political and social climate encouraged writers of both philosophy and fiction to incorporate the longstanding debate into their texts.

Gothic Convention and Historical Context

Briefly, the Norman Yoke theory, supported by the Gothic side, posited that the source of English common law was immemorial and relatively unaffected by Norman rule. These supporters felt the "monarchy and aristocracy became tainted by Normanism" (5) and that a government restored to its earlier Gothic state would justify a limited monarchy.⁷

⁷ Rev. Joseph Berington's The Rights of Dissenters from the Established Church in Relation Principally to the English Catholics (1789) works in a similar way to "distance the modern English Roman Catholic community from the medieval Church" by "reject[ing] the absolute claims of the medieval Papacy." He suggests "that even in the Middle Ages extreme subservience to Rome was the product not of the Faith, but of a particular time" (108-9).

In History of the Reign of Henry II, Berington differentiated between the Saxon and the Norman Church, claiming that the difference "was not doctrinal but the rise in the latter period of 'the monstrous theory of papal dominion'" (Smith 109).

In contrast, the Norman Conquest theory supporters felt that the Norman government, in place since William, provided "traditional verities" which in turn supported "lineal succession" and "ancestral rights" (15). At stake was the parliament's ability to determine succession. That is, "the Gothic theory survived as an historical explanation of the origin of limited monarchy" (39).

The historians supporting the Gothic theory saw Saxon rule, with private landownership, as an example of limited monarchy, while they perceived the feudal property rights of Norman rule as despotic government.⁸ The debate affected property rights in other ways as well. Whether or not feudal tenures, the basis of land ownership in England, were Gothic, and thus immemorially English, or Norman, and thus imposed by a despotic governor and therefore possibly subject to repeal by parliamentary legislation, became part of the debate. Feudal history was invoked to argue the basis of parliamentary power and thus its right to protect property. In turn, questions as to the origins of

⁸ Eighteenth-century writers adopted Montesquieu's definitions of three kinds or "species" of governments:

There are three species of government; republican, monarchical, and despotic. . . . [T]he republican government is that in which the body or only a part of the people is possessed of the supreme power: monarchy that in which a single person governs but by fixt and established laws: a despotic government, that in which a single person directs every thing by his own will and caprice." (107)

Parliament arose. The belief in progress was applied to validate feudalism as part of evolution of social institutions, including Parliament. According to Smith,

a feudal origin for the Parliament was amenable to the landed prejudices of the day [because] . . . a feudal theory for the Parliament stressed the representation of land. (50)

Feudal theory was crafted to support the popular notion "that a Balance of Property that had stayed essentially unchanged from the adventus Saxonum to the advent of Henry Tudor, or a little before" existed (51). Although these interpretations of history were argued to conserve property and power in the hands of traditional land-holding families, supporters of a feudal parliament also had to accept the notion of a limited monarchy.

Through these debates feudalism was transformed "from a system of laws to a stage of society" true for all of Europe, with universal features:

the universal bond of faith and homage an extended hierarchy in possession of public rights, land held in return for military service, and a peasantry tied to the soil. (72)

These historical interpretations fixed the nexus of traditional feudal power in economic, military, and judicial institutions.

These notions of unlimited progress in the evolution of government were compatible with other tenets of enlightenment. Influenced by the Enlightenment, scholars saw history as earlier stages of development and strove to

use "the political and social forms of an age . . . to show that the past had been unlike the present" (77). The pre-Norman Saxons were valorized. It was the "long habit of writers upon the Saxons of portraying them as examples of simple, or Natural, man" and thus, endearing them to the Natural Rights authors--among them, Paine and Price (102). Furthermore, the Gothic theory's "stress on the despotism of modern France made Gothicism the ally of those who welcomed the fall of the Bourbons" (119).

On the other hand, Burke could not support the claims of a Saxon constitution, and associated "the arrival of mature feudalism with the Norman advent" (87). However, he invoked feudalism and chivalry to support his assertions. Along with Blackstone, Burke found the popularity of the fashionable Gothic sensibility to fit his message:

Moreover [Burke and Blackstone's] sense of reverence for the past, their hallowing of continuity and the occasional phrase in the writings of both men that testified to the power of the medieval world to seize the imagination, provided a mental frame that allowed the Gothic Revival to influence political attitudes without encouraging the naivetes of a recorso." (124)

In the hands of some novelists, however, the Gothic tradition was used to question existing power structures, not to support them. In The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805, Gary Kelly traces the connection of the novel genre to feudalism and chivalry, placing Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France within the two traditions:

Ever since the novel had first been established as part of the bourgeois reaction to the chivalric and romantic national literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance it had asserted the value of individual autonomy and domestic relations against the chivalric culture of king, court, and aristocracy. Since Elizabethan times and especially since Defoe novelists had implied that there was another 'nation' than the aristocratic and feudal one, that there were other kinds of heroism and greatness than those founded in war and blood, and other kinds of relation than those based on feudal power. The decade of the French Revolution gave new relevance to these subversive tendencies in the novel, but the repudiation of chivalric culture and chivalric literature had begun long before a thousand pens had leapt from other ink-wells to rebuke Edmund Burke. (261-262)

Because of its accessibility to the public, the Gothic debate was attractive to both sides of the French Revolution debate in England. For a generation, popular texts had incorporated Gothic elements. The appeal was not only a legal historical one, but an aesthetic one as well. This movement became manifest in Richard Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), in which he explains what he considered to be the workings of chivalry in early English romances, focussing particularly on Spenser's Faerie Queene. Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) soon followed.

As the direct, literal influence of the feudal period declined, the potential of the period to fascinate became greater. Smith attributes the appeal of the Gothic Revival to

[T]he decline in the political and ecclesiastical relevance of medieval precedent [which] gave greater proportionate importance to

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the antiquarian pursuits of genealogy, balladry and local antiquities.

"[T]he stress on 'manners,' he continues,

common to the enlightened writers and to the Gothic Revivalists combined with the interest in genealogy to emphasize that institutionalized body of manners, chivalry. (112)

But the use of the Gothic was not merely a gloss on manners or an exercise in antiquarianism. Used by the novelists of the 1790s it could provide insight into the workings of contemporary English institutions of power and wealth. For instance, Hurd's text details connections between romance and economics in feudal romances:

It was of mighty consequence who should obtain the grace of a rich heiress. And tho', in the strict feudal times, she was supposed to be in the power and disposal of her superior Lord, yet this rigid state of things did not last long; and, while it did last, could not abate much of the homage that would be paid to the fair feudatory. . . . Some distressed damsel was the spring and mover of every knight's adventure. . . . And we find, he had other motives to set him on work than the mere charms and graces, tho' ever so bewitching, of the person addressed. (105)

Hurd clearly identifies the knight's "courteous and valorous" deeds to be motivated by economic as well as romantic causes.

Thus, new approaches to historical events and reaction to recent events influenced the imaginations of "serious" and fiction writers, and therefore the period of 1789 to 1793 marks an important period in British literature. Long considered to be the beginning of the Romantic Period, the

time also marked new opportunities for authors to use the domestic, sentimental, and gothic novel to articulate discourses opposing traditional patriarchy. Conscious of the past, the move to present reform inspired their writing. Joan Kelly writes that the period following the French Revolution "mark[s] unmistakable turning points in [women's rights] history" in England (71). As J.M.S. Tompkins notes, during this period there was a "quicker reaction to contemporary events, especially in those books that accompany and comment on the course of the French Revolution" (175). Although specific to Radcliffe, her remarks are relevant to the situations of many women novelists writing at that time: "by shaking the foundations of society," Tompkins says, [the French Revolution]

had engendered an atmosphere of insecurity and excitement that quickened the nerves of literature, and in this nervous quickening Mrs. Radcliffe participates deeply; but she stood scrupulously aloof from the liberal speculations that accompanied it, and found occasion, undeterred by the antique setting of her tales, to testify a disapproval of them and a loyalty to ancient values which must have conciliated many readers. (251)

Like Radcliffe, other women writers found ways to embed radical issues in the apparently conventional machinery of their tales.

Family as Microcosm

In addition to incorporating elements of the Gothic of feudal debates in their writings, writers of both

philosophical treatises and fictional texts used images of the family to examine the issues of authority and the uses and abuses of power being debated on the national scene. The comparison between the family and "state" is a traditional one. In Retrospection (1801), Piozzi comments: "'A family,' says some philosopher, 'is but a little kingdom, and a 'kingdom is no more than a great family'" (232). As Hannah Arendt suggests:

Because of its simple and elementary character, [the family] has, throughout the history of political thought, served as a model for a great variety of authoritarian forms of government. (92)

A good example can be found in Burke's Reflections. Burke employs, says Paulson, the "traditional imagery of the king as father, his subjects as his family" (62). Marilyn Butler discusses

[t]he Burkean positives [which] are family affections and loyalties, hearth and home; and hence, by extension the greater family made by the nation, a hierarchy with the king at its head; and continuity with the past, especially with the inherited creed which it is the church's business to preserve. (180)

In short, Burke enhanced the rhetorical power of his argument for retaining a monarchic government, which some felt archaic, by appealing to people's traditional, yet abiding ideal of the patriarchal family.

As a specialized instance of family relationships, the legal relationship of guardian and ward was an equally attractive image because it allowed the writer to address

issues concerning public institutions of power and authority as well as those concerning private family relationships indirectly. This was especially important for women writers because publishing conventions forced them to avoid any direct comment on the public political sphere. The guardian and ward relationship allowed women to engage "men's subjects" without openly threatening readers. And there were advantages inherent in the image itself. Rather than an over-simplification, the guardian and ward relationship shares the complexities of the larger philosophical and political extensions. The history of the wardship and guardianship has legal, military, and economic components, the same components which consolidated a private family's feudal power and then evolved into supporting contemporary public governments. (Joan Kelly 85-86). Because the legal relationship of guardianship had an ambiguous social status--incorporating the relationships of the private family while at the same time being mediated by the courts--its use enabled authors to examine problems in both the family and in society. As a legal relationship, guardianship is separate from, yet a part of both the social and political realms.

The signals sent and the allusions made by eighteenth-century authors when dramatizing the question of the responsibilities of guardians may not be as available to modern readers as it was to their contemporary audiences.

Because they incorporate even earlier discourses relating guardianship to property into their texts, the issues raised are further removed from our own culture--a culture which approaches guardianship privileging concerns of nurture rather than recalling its feudal military, economic, and judicial background. Although we are still concerned with issues connected with guardianship and the inheritance of property, they are often secondary issues. My assumption here is that we can recontextualize our reading of Radcliffe, Inchbald, and Smith's texts by discussing the basic images their texts share with their cultural and legal contexts. The opposition of private and public realms inherent within the origins of the idea of authority further strengthens the power of representation of public authority within private relationships.⁹

⁹ In her Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833, Susan Staves explains the rise of the private realm as a reaction "to the claims of monarchs and parliaments to an unrestrained power to make law." "Private law rules," she claims, are

oxymoronic since these rules are made by judges holding public office and enforced by the power of the state's courts to imprison, to set fines and civil damages, to decree specific performance, and so on.

She continues, explaining there is no "public interest" because "there is in fact no unitary public interest but rather a diverse mixture of classes and genders." However, the notion of public interest "serve[s] to mask and to legitimate the interests of a particular male private interest group" (197).

Hannah Arendt's essay, "What Is Authority?" explains how the western notion of authority evolved through the dialectical opposition of a Greek domestic authority to that of a Roman public one. According to Arendt, both "[t]he word [authority] and the concept are Roman in origin" (Between 104); Greek notions of authoritarian rule did not exist in the public sphere, but rather in the private one. In order to show instances of command and obedience, Greek philosophers were forced to use

examples of human relations drawn from Greek household and family life, where the head of the household ruled as a 'despot,' in uncontested mastery over members of his family and the slaves of the household. The despot . . . was by definition vested with the power to coerce. (105)

"Yet it was precisely this characteristic that made the despot unfit for political purposes;" Arendt continues, "his power to coerce was incompatible not only with the freedom of others but with his own freedom as well" (105).

Arendt carefully distinguishes between authority and power:

Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority itself has failed. (93)

She also distinguishes it from tyranny, citing "an older confusion of authority with tyranny, and of legitimate power with violence" (97). Ultimately:

[t]he source of authority in authoritarian government is always a force external and superior to its own power; it is always this

source, this external force which transcends the political realm, from which the authorities derive their "authority," that is, their legitimacy, and against which their power can be checked. (97)

In contrast to Greek notions of power, Roman authority was based on the individual revering the values of public politics, what Arendt describes as "the binding force of an authoritative beginning to which 'religious' bonds tied men back through tradition." This foundation produced "the Roman trinity of religion, authority, and tradition" (125). Arendt argues that it is this notion of authority which was adopted by western culture. Furthermore, she asserts the interdependency of these three elements: "wherever one of the elements of the Roman trinity, religion or authority or tradition, was doubted or eliminated, the remaining two were no longer secure" (128). She criticizes attempts to remove any of the three from a culture, citing "the error of the humanists to think it would be possible to remain within an unbroken tradition of Western civilization without religion and without authority" (128). Thus, to her, "the revolutions of the modern age [including the French Revolution] appear like gigantic attempts to repair these foundations, to renew the broken thread of tradition" (140).

Indeed, the word "revolution" was traditionally used to communicate the concept of reestablishing existing institutions. Earlier usage referred to the movement of

the planets in their paths, and the word "was used for a movement of revolving back to some pre-established point and, by implication, of swinging back into a preordained order" (Arendt, On Revolution 35-36). This older idea conflicts with ideas inspired by the Enlightenment of the possibility of progress.

Guardianship regulates patriarchal authority while conserving its ascendancy. It embodies the Roman notion of authority because the legal responsibilities of the relationship--managing property and guaranteeing hereditary rights--benefit the patriarchal public. Thus, the values inherent in the guardianship relationship are revolutionary in the traditional sense of the word: the relationship reestablishes existing institutions and maintains a preordained order. Therefore, the use of the legal relationship of guardian and ward, because of its social and legal history bridging the private and public realms, offers insights into a culture experiencing the instabilities of changing religions, traditions, and sources of authority.

The Legal Relationship of Guardian and Ward: A Specialized Instance of Family

William Blackstone classifies the legal relationship of guardian and ward as a "general private relation, . . . which bears a very near resemblance" to that of parent and

child, "and is plainly derived out of it: the guardian being only a temporary parent; that is, for so long time as the ward is an infant, or under age" (1:448).¹⁰ According to Blackstone:

The guardian with us performs the office both of the tutor and curator of the Roman laws; the former of which had the charge of the maintenance and education of the minor, the latter the care of his fortune. (1: 460)

My focus is primarily on those relationships with "guardians by statute, or testamentary guardians," that is, those appointed by

any father, under age or of full age, [who] may by deed or will dispose of the custody of his child, either born or unborn, to any person, except a popish recusant, either in possession or reversion, till such child attains the age of one and twenty years. (1: 462)

In addition to discussing these strictly legal instances of guardianship, there are quasi-guardian relationships which occur in the same novels. Quasi-guardian relationships are those involving persons who assume the prolonged parental-like responsibilities of curator and/or tutor over others. These relationships though not legally prescribed also represent the broad range of issues included within the legal relationship of guardianship.

¹⁰ I use William Blackstone's 1765 Commentaries on the Laws of England to define guardianship because of its wide circulation.

In the evolution of the legal relationship, wardship differs from guardianship. I use "wardship" to designate the legal relationship before 1660, and "guardianship" to designate it after 1660. Although the terms are often used interchangeably to signify "the office or position of guardian," feudal law used "wardship" to designate "the condition of being under guardianship as a minor," while "guardianship" legally designates "tutelage" (OED). The difference is not merely semantic. I believe that the shift in usage signifies profound psychological and political changes that occurred in the seventeenth century, which moved the relationships from the more public to a more private realm. I shall use the separate terms to underline the significance of those changes. Prior to 1660, wardship--as an incident of feudal lordship tenure and as an integral revenue-earning component of the Tudor, Stuart, and Puritan governments--favored the guardian and the custody of property over the individual ward. The statute of 1660 and subsequent judicial decisions shifted the balance in favor of the individual ward and the custody of person, rather than strictly that of property. There were several changes as a result. Wardships were no longer bought and sold by strangers. Buying a wardship was no longer an expedient strategy to avoid lengthy marriage negotiations and yet gain property. After 1660 although guardianship continued to be employed to conserve family

property, attitudes toward property had changed to value land as a commodity rather than a fixed resource. In turn, guardians were charged with managing estates as well as ensuring their wards were properly educated to assume managerial duties. During the eighteenth century, the shift continued in favor of the ward and his or her education:

The development in chancery was in the direction of modifying the guardian's power. . . . Gradually the position of the guardian as a holder of a trust in behalf of the infant became definitely established and the welfare and best interest of the child came to be the guiding principle in decisions. (Taylor 16)

A brief look at the history of guardianship offers insights into the attractiveness of the legal relationship for authors' use for commentary on social, political, and economic conditions. Guardianship as an English legal relationship has its roots in the military feudalism of Norman England, prior to the establishment of individual ownership of land. Tenantship of land was inherited and depended on the tenant's services to the lord. However, the continuity of the system was interrupted if a tenant died from disease or wars and left heirs in their minority, who were thus unable to return service to the lord until they reached adulthood. Wardship offered tenants a guarantee that their heirs would inherit their rights to tenantship and continue local alliances. As part of this mutual exchange to ensure "the stability of landholding and

descent" (Waugh 10), wardship allowed lords the power to raise their wards with their own interests of loyalty and appropriateness of service in mind. Thus, the lord "obtained the wardship of the body" at the same time the wardship of the land came to him (Hurstfield 3).

By the middle of the twelfth century, the legal relationship evolved from one which protected the rights of the wards into one which traded in the buying and selling of wardships. Instead of merely approving marriage arrangements, lords began arranging the marriages, with the wards' wishes and interests in mind, as well as their own. As the power of the legal relationship grew, the crown, as the highest in the landowning hierarchy, benefitted the most from the arrangement. The king profited in both economic and symbolic currency, using wardship to earn hard currency and distribute power among landholding families. Thus, the crown extended its authority over the aristocratic families who lived with the constant threat that they might themselves be subjected to the legal relationship of wardship:

Each family was confronted with two contrasting possibilities: on the one hand, the likelihood that its own lands and children might fall under royal lordship; on the other the opportunity of acquiring desirable wards, lands, or widows' marriages. (Waugh 10)

Wardship was only one of many forms of patronage available to the king, and it was a lucrative one. The aristocracy condoned it even though they were subjected to it; they

themselves benefitted from its practice, receiving fees from selling their tenants' wardships and aggrandizing their estates by buying wardships. Although lords occasionally raised objections to individual decisions about disposing wardships, there was "no deep-rooted objection to feudal lordship itself" (Waugh 12). Thus, the processes involved in the legal relationship "ceased to be military safeguards and had become articles of trade" (Hurstfield 5).

To take full advantage of the political and economic advantages of wardship, the Tudor kings, Henry VII and Henry VIII, formally institutionalized the Court of Wards. At a time when other feudal lordship rights were declining, the crown actually increased its patronage powers in respect to wardship. Instituting the Court of Wards enabled the crown to maximize both the Court's revenues and its centrality in the politics of the government. Because under the system of royal wardship, "the land reverted to the crown; and the king had the right both to the wardship and marriage of the heir, and to the profits of the estate during the minority," the Court of Wards became a significant source of ready capital for the crown, despite limited, but increasing opposition to it (Roebuck 69). For the aristocracy, wardship legally empowered custodians to make all decisions normally allotted to parents, including those involved in nurturing, educating, and finding

appropriate spouses for the wards, as well as those related to managing the wards' estates. Moral precepts guided the institution only superficially; economic considerations were its major reason for continuation. Among other abuses, the Court of Wards allowed financially troubled aristocratic families to buy into wealth without considering the wishes of the ward in legal and financial arrangements.

The end of the Court of Wards came during the Interregnum. Before the Civil War, the Puritans had criticized the institution; however, the Puritan government actually established its own Court of Wards to invalidate the crown's. For three years, 1643-1646, there were two courts that dealt in wardships--one associated with the exiled crown in Oxford and one established by Parliament in Westminster. The Puritans legislated the end of the Court of Wards in 1646, and the crown accepted its abolition as a condition of peace (Bell 150). In 1660, the Restoration Parliament abolished the court as well as other institutions derived from feudal tenure with the Military Tenures Abolition Act.¹¹ Custodial arrangements continued

¹¹ The economic aspect of the legal institution of wardship is underscored by the fact that the 1660 statute, in addition to abolishing the court of wards and removing the feudal institution from the crown's authority, legislated other means for the crown to raise revenue. The new taxation on alcoholic products reoriented the burden for financing government from the aristocracy to the middle and lower classes.

to exist in the legal landscape, as testamentary or statutory guardianship, but no longer generated the large amounts of income possible under the institution of the Court of Wards.

The statute 12 Car.2 (1660) gave "the father absolute authority to dispose of the custody after his death of the person and estate of his child until the age of twenty-one or a lesser time" (Taylor 15). It also allowed guardians the right to "maintain an action of ravishment of ward or trespass, against any person or persons which shall wrongfully take away or detain such child" (Pickering 475). However, the statute did not place guardianship under the supervision of any specific governing body. Subsequent judicial decisions placed guardianships under "the equitable jurisdiction of the chancellor, 'the keeper of the king's conscience,'" and consequently "the position of Chancery was fully established by the 18th century" in England (Taylor 16).

Even though the formal institution of the Court of Wards was abolished in 1660 and an ostensibly less mercenary legal relationship grew up in its place, discourses created by its existence circulated widely in the period between 1789 and 1793. Those discourses, regarding wardship and its uses and abuses, both economic and political, continue to the present day and are used by authors in a variety of literary texts to articulate

inequities in power. Ward status quite easily came to symbolize a position of economic, social, and political vulnerability. The nature of the legal relationship, which gave far-reaching powers to the guardian and little legal recourse to the ward, was repeatedly explored by authors to raise questions about the family and society and, in some cases, their metaphoric counterparts: the courts and nation. As I suggest above, during the period of 1789-1793, writers of both philosophy and fiction used the legal relationship of guardian and ward with its vestiges of feudalism to examine issues like those of appropriate education for children and their inheritance rights. On a larger scale, they helped launch debate concerning the abuses of power in social institutions such as the Catholic church, slavery, and colonialism. Furthermore, the legal relationship was employed to question other practices of authority with feudal origins.

Literary Representations of the Legal Relationship of Guardian and Ward

In discussions of The Romance of the Forest, A Simple Story, and The Old Manor House I analyze correspondences among the instances of fictional legal guardianship, quasi-guardianship, the legal and social histories of guardianship, and the political issues being debated at the time. For novelists, the guardian and ward relationship

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had rich potential because it involved a gendered, hierarchical power structure supported by laws--which of course could be changed.¹² Although there were often male wards, and less often female guardians, the relationship, particularly before the Court of Wards was abolished, represented an asymmetrical distribution of power. In wardship, the guardian had unregulated power over the ward's property, education, and marriage. In the actual practice of legal guardianship and quasi-guardian relationships, this potential for abuse still existed in the late eighteenth century. Thus, the gendered nature of the relationship also contained the potential for psychological and/or sexual abuse as well.

However, the relationship was not uniformly negative. After the restoration, the Court of Chancery regulated guardianships and guardians became legally accountable for their administration of property and tutelage of their wards. In some documented instances, eighteenth-century guardians radically improved their wards' estates while they were in their minorities and costs were kept at a minimum.¹³ Even in these positive instances, the wards'

¹² The law and legal practice were also gendered male. Lenora P. Ledwon provides a valuable summary of criticism concerning how legal discourse constructs gender in her Legal Fictions: Constructions of the Female Legal Subject in Nineteenth-Century Law and Literature, diss., U. of Notre Dame, 1992, 1-2.

¹³ In his article "Post-Restoration Landownership: The Impact of the Abolition of Wardship," Peter Roebuck cites

powers were subordinate to their guardians' authority and judgment, which, however, were limited legally, if not in actual practice, by the 1660 statute.¹⁴

The guardian/ward relationship was especially useful to novelists because it was a legal not a blood relationship. Therefore, it stretched the limits of behavior acceptable for parent and child relationships in consanguineous families, and the expanded boundaries increased the potential for abuse of power. At the same time, it moved the relationship between guardian and ward into the public sector where it could be arbitrated by courts. Thus, for instance, neglect on the part of legal guardians became a legal issue, mediated by the public in courts of law at times when parental responsibility and neglect in a traditional family were considered private

case histories and demographic records to support his arguments that there were actually larger numbers of minorities after the abolition of wardship and that, under the new laws and the management practices accountability to those laws engendered, the time spent in minority was actually profitable to landed families because it allowed for investment and conservation of estates.

¹⁴ William Searle Holdsworth writes in his History of English Law that during the period after the statute,

The general principle seems to be that the guardian must preserve the property in statu quo, and strictly account. . . . If a guardian wished to act on behalf of the infant [read minor], he would be well advised to get the authority of the court. (649)

matters outside of the law.¹⁵ The parallels to the relationship of king, parliament, and country are obvious. As the king's prerogative was challenged, so the power of the parliament was increased; as legal, military, and economic power moved from private families to public institutions, so the control of the government to regulate these powers increased.

The number of literary texts which include guardianships involving female wards and single male guardians attests to the popularity of that specifically gendered convention. Because they represent the relative powerlessness of females in patriarchal society, the relationships involving male guardians and female wards are politically charged. Women writers of the period were quick to sense the full potential of the relationship and examine its social and ethical issues as well. They inscribe the conditions in the larger society, yet are

¹⁵ Staves explains that this separation "was justified on the ground that the great family of the public was made up of individual families." As a result, "judges also proclaimed that individual families were private and resisted scrutinizing very closely what went on in them." Thus:

Each husband and father was in important ways to be the judge of what went on in his own family, and public judges disliked interfering with his jurisdiction. . . . Indeed, judicial conduct in this period contributed to making the family a more private place, one more insulated from public scrutiny and one in which individual husbands gained more discretion in dealing with their wives and children" (228).

circumscribed within the dynamics of a specific legal relationship and thus easily discussable in apparently purely domestic terms. Therefore, authors can examine patriarchy in general by plumbing the discourses of the legal relationship of guardianship in their novels.¹⁶

The relationship between guardian and ward is more problematized than that of blood relations, and yet the moral ambiguity of guardianship allows for examination of parent/child dynamics in a situation that allows more freedom for comment than the evaluation of a blood family might. Because the relationship is one of legality and choice on the part of the guardian, the moral and economic implications are psychologically (as well as legally) more available for public inspection than those involved in parent and child relationships. For instance, although incest is taboo enough that authors must usually avoid the topic, or treat it indirectly, guardianship provides a vehicle for authors to explore the relationship that

¹⁶ Staves' definition of patriarchy is useful to this discussion. "Patriarchy," she says,

is a form of social organization in which fathers appear as political and legal actors, acting publicly for themselves and as representatives of the women and children subordinated to them and dependent upon them in families.

She continues, describing how "[i]n the property regimes of patriarchy, descent and inheritance are reckoned in the male line; women function as procreators and as transmitters of inheritance from male to male" (4).

approximates incest without actually being illegally incestuous. The guardian/ward relationship, in short, offers a model of patriarchy with its full potential for abuse.

In guardianship, though moral principles governing familial parent and child relationships weaken, legal principles do not increase correspondingly. Therefore, from a social point of view, the guardian/ward relationship allows for ambiguity in the application of standards of acceptable behavior. Although guardianship binds the custodian and ward to the strictures of traditional parent and child relationships, the artificial tie removes the relationship from the realm of strictly family dynamics. Accordingly, society will make allowances for behavior that transgresses those limits within a guardianship before it will excuse such behavior in a familial parent and child relationship. For instance, in guardianship, boundaries for acceptable behavior, while using family norms as a reference, move toward those observed by the larger society. Marriage between a guardian and ward may be considered incestuous by the family standards that govern it, but strictly speaking, the guardianship is legal custodianship and, therefore, admits marriage. However, the ethical implications of a guardian marrying a ward he has reared raise questions as to the legal relationship's potential to commodify minors by placing them in an

exploitive system. Given the uneven distribution of power within the relationship, a writer can use the relationship of guardianship not only to comment on larger legal and political issues but also to exemplify specifically patriarchal practices. Guardians assume all of the traditional patriarchal duties society usually ascribes to parents, particularly fathers.¹⁷ The word "husbanding" evokes those duties in all of the senses of the word. The patriarch "husbands" children as crops, carefully nurturing and educating them to assure their full value on the marriage market, so that by marrying they maximize their return as a calculated investment. Another way the system commodifies wards is to "husband" them by finding the most advantageous marriage partners for them to aggrandize the family and the estate. And, also relevant in guardian/ward relationships, male guardians may literally "husband" their wards. In this instance, marriage consolidates the power of the patriarch over the female ward.

Fictional depictions of legal guardianship represent asymmetrical power relationships in ways that challenge the supremacy of the older existing social institutions. They engage the historical context in the following ways: (1) by examining conflicts between existing accepted legal norms

¹⁷ According to Hasseltine Byrd Taylor in his Law of Guardian and Ward, a mother was not automatically guardian of her children, even after the death of the father, until the Guardianship of Infants Act of 1886 permitted her to make testamentary appointments (17).

and actual practice; (2) by incorporating the earlier feudal and Renaissance discourses and juxtaposing them with late eighteenth-century discourses of authority and subject; and (3) by underscoring the fact that current legal practice still privileged the protection of family succession and inheritance of property over the rights of the individual.

In the chapters which follow, I will discuss each novel individually and analyze how its author uses the guardian and ward relationship to comment on issues connected with authority. In The Romance of the Forest, Ann Radcliffe uses the legal relationship of guardianship to comment on the limitations and moral sources of authority for both the aristocracy and the monarch. Elizabeth Inchbald in A Simple Story establishes two guardian and ward relationships and two quasi-guardianship relationships involving a single dominant patriarch to challenge traditional hierarchical practices in the household and offer in their place the new authority of feminized morality. And finally, recognizing the evolving economic practices of England, Charlotte Smith in The Old Manor House uses guardianship to suggest that law and social customs have not adequately changed to meet the demands of a society redefining its sources of authority.

The Romance of the Forest: Repositioning Guardianship in a
Gothic "Struggle for Liberty and Life"

In casting our eyes over the world, it is extremely easy to distinguish the governments which have arisen out of society, or out of the social compact, from those which have not: but to place this in a clearer light than what a single glance may afford, it will be proper to take a review of the several sources from which governments have arisen, and on which they have been founded.

They may all be comprehended under three heads. First, Superstition. Secondly, Power. Thirdly, The common interest of society, and the common rights of man.

The first was a government of priestcraft, the second of conquerors, and the third of reason.

--Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man, 1791.
(69)

As a genre, eighteenth-century Gothic fiction was traditionally not considered to have significant intellectual content. Instead, it was known for its sensationalism and for its "setting" and "atmosphere"--both usually historically accurate. "Setting" in Gothic novels was thought to be an end in itself. Ann Radcliffe is most often credited as the innovator for incorporating elaborate passages of landscape scenery within the Gothic novel.¹ In

¹ For example, Walter Allen assigns Radcliffe primary responsibility for establishing this trend in his discussion of the evolution of "sense of place" in his The English Novel: A Short Critical History: ". . . and when landscape came in for its own sake, with Mrs. Radcliffe, it was there not because it was a specific landscape but because it was a romantic one" (107-8).

contrast with most of her imitators, she skillfully used descriptive detail to advance the characterization, mood, theme, and plot of her novels.²

In his The Art of Gothic: Ann Radcliffe's Major Novels, Nelson Smith shares his impatience with this area of criticism:

Much, perhaps too much, has been written about Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptions. For many critics, they represent her chief claim to importance, the essence of her pre-Romanticism. (145)

Chloe Chard, noting the link between the Gothic and travel writing genres, suggests in her introduction to the novel that the scenic descriptions in The Romance of the Forest

bear a very close resemblance to passages in works such as Smollett's Travels through France and Italy, Bourrit's Relation of a Journey to the Glaciers, in the Dutchy of Savoy (1775; translated from the original French edition of 1771) and Gray's letters from France and Savoy, as edited by Mason in The Poems of Mr. Gray, to which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings (1775). (xix)

² Labeling Radcliffe's technique "word-painting," Rhoda Flaxman in "Radcliffe's Dual Modes of Vision" comments that "when her imagination is completely aroused . . . the emotions of the narrator--if not the heroine--color the reporting of precise visual detail" (131). In The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800, Janet Todd acknowledges Radcliffe's artistic abilities, claiming "in her passages of natural description, she edged her prose towards the condition of poetry" (269). Chloe Chard discusses Radcliffe's uses of landscape in relation to techniques of characterization and plot development, explaining: "[d]escriptions of natural scenery . . . play a part in these accounts of the heroine's re-animation" and "serve to keep a reader in suspense" "[b]y delaying any resolution of a threat of impending danger" (xviii).

Critics have documented at length how Radcliffe's scenic descriptions incorporate elements of contemporary travel literature to comment on Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the

Radcliffe has often earned praise for bringing "respectability" to Gothic novels, introducing technical devices to the genre in addition to description. Her novels have been recognized for combining the Gothic elements introduced by Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve with the sentimental and domestic novel techniques popularized by Richardson and others. Critics have noted that her innovation of new Gothic techniques forged a bridge from the neoclassical, didactic to the Romantic, experiential novel because they privileged the sensibilities of her focal characters.³ In addition to providing a depth to her

Sublime and Beautiful. Daniel Cottom stresses the importance of landscape to Radcliffe's critique of contemporary tastes in his The Civilized Imagination: A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott. He argues landscape's key role:

In these novels landscape is an element of such privileged representational power that it may appear as the textual equivalent to any other element in her fiction. People, sounds, scenes, feelings, states of being may all be translated into the terms of landscape because Radcliffe--both following and helping to fashion the taste of her age--gives it a unique aesthetic status. Not only does its variety afford her with images to represent any aspect of experience, but it also is invested with a moral significance that ties aesthetic perception to the perception and dramatization of virtue. (36)

³ For instance, Robert Heilman comments in "Charlotte Brontë's 'New' Gothic" on this "aesthetic development" of the Gothic "which served to breach the 'classical' and 'rational' order of life":

In the novel it was the function of Gothic to open horizons beyond social patterns, rational decisions, and institutionally approved

characterizations,⁴ Radcliffe has been credited with tempering the sensationalism of the genre by providing rational explanations for supernatural events.⁵

These various responses to Radcliffe's work have ensured her a place in Eighteenth-Century British Literature studies, but only a peripheral one, limited especially to discussions dealing with early female authors or Gothic fiction. Mention of Radcliffe usually follows along these lines:

Gothic achieved a measure of respectability only in the 'sentimental Gothic' form popularized by Ann Radcliffe, whose plots were little more than scary versions of the didactic novel's lessons about women's proper marital choices. (Heller 327)

emotions; in a word, to enlarge the sense of reality and its impact on the human being. (131).

⁴ Several contemporary reviews note Radcliffe's skill at developing characters. Among others, the English Review remarks "the characters are drawn with a bold and vigorous pencil" (352) and the Critical Review claims that "[t]he characters are varied with skill, and often dexterously contrasted" (459).

⁵ The Critical Review (1792) praises The Romance of the Forest for this reason: "in the conclusion, every extraordinary appearance seems naturally to arise from causes not very uncommon" (459). "By explaining the ghosts away, too," Nelson Smith argues,

Mrs. Radcliffe sets a new trend in the Gothic novel. . . . [A]fter having excited the sublime emotions of terror, she explains away every ghostly appearance in the light of common sense. . . . Thus she uses the conventions of the Gothic romance, but modifies them to suit her own purposes. (61)

Radcliffe's novels offer more than scenery and simple advances in Gothic machinery. While adhering to the major Gothic conventions of her time and creating new ones, she turns The Romance of the Forest (1791) into a surprisingly sophisticated examination of the issues connected with "authority" that were being debated publicly and internationally at the time.⁶ Though full of "setting" and sensationalism to be sure, Radcliffe's text deals directly with issues such as the extent to which legal precedent binds an individual to a system of government. The novel invited contemporary readers to recognize the prevalence of vestiges of earlier forms of tyrannical laws and customs present in eighteenth-century Britain and to consider possible alternatives. Though for modern readers such issues can easily disappear into the apparently pure Gothic apparatus, the fact is that Radcliffe uses ideas from contemporary philosophical treatises to comment on current debates about the English oligarchy--both the aristocracy and the monarchy itself--its limitations and the moral sources of its power. For Radcliffe, authority remained firmly invested in the public institutions of government;

⁶ Important to this discussion is Hannah Arendt's distinction between authority and power in "What Is Authority?":

Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority itself has failed. (Between 93)

however, she joined the more radical writers of the 1790s, seeking a more enlightened, less oppressive government.

The novel relates the struggle of Adeline to come to terms with patriarchal authority--both proper and arbitrary. Rejecting the abusive practices of religious and aristocratic tyranny, she at last embraces an enlightened authority. To a surprising degree, Adeline's experience parallels debates about the nature and role of authority, current at the time, particularly those in Thomas Paine's Rights of Man (1791).⁷ Paine's philosophical treatise responds to Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), which in turn argues with Dr. Richard Price's sermon delivered on the centenary of the Glorious Revolution (1688).⁸ A

⁷ By comparing the works of Radcliffe and Paine, I am not suggesting any historical connection between the two other than that as contemporaries they both were influenced by and in turn influenced contemporary events and ideas. Because Radcliffe led a very private life, leaving no personal letters or journals, little is known about her political beliefs other than what is left in her published novels, travel book, and poetry.

⁸ In Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act, E.P. Thompson discusses the logic for Paine and other authors in the 1790s to use as a starting point the writings of John Locke and William Blackstone. Although Locke and Blackstone sympathize with the ruling oligarchy and the law which empowers them, Thompson argues that those very laws are contradictory in nature. Created to protect the rights of the aristocracy to power, in light of their sixteenth and seventeenth-century fights with the monarchy regarding royal prerogative, the laws paradoxically question the aristocracy's rights to govern. Questioning the governmental rights of the monarchy undermines their own rights to govern their subordinates.

comparison of Adeline's experience to Paine's discussion of the history and character of authority foregrounds the issues being contested in the early 1790s. An important part of Paine's argument is his support for Price's "principles of the Revolution" from his sermon "A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, 1789":⁹

First; The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.

Secondly; The right to resist power when abused. And,

Thirdly; The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.

On these three principles, and more especially the last, was the Revolution founded. Were it not true that liberty of conscience is a sacred right; the power abused justifies resistance; and that civil authority is a delegation from the people. (Price 34)

Specifically, in The Romance of the Forest, Adeline asserts her "liberty of conscience in religious matters" by choosing against taking vows; she "resist[s] power when abused" by escaping the Marquis; and she "chuse[s] her own governors" by marrying Theodore and embracing the government of La Luc.

The two main issues concerning arbitrary authority, or "despotism" in Paine's terms (127), addressed by both Radcliffe and Paine are (1) the need for individuals to assert their rights to choose their own governors and to

⁹ By "Revolution" Price refers to the acts of the 1688 Parliament, which, as in 1660, reinstituted a Protestant monarchical government, and as earlier, further limited royal prerogative.

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cashier them for misconduct--rights gained as the inevitable outcome of the logical evolution of government through three stages, including the church, the aristocracy, and the reason of individuals, and (2) the right for individuals to resist despotic authority. Both authors recognize the potential for authority to become despotic in tradition-based public institutions, due to the non-accountability of hereditary succession, a system based on chance rather than on merit. Paine believes arbitrary authority has influenced all levels of government. He explains how "Every office and department has its despotism, founded on custom and usage," locating the origins of the despotism in the hereditary, absolute monarchy:

The original hereditary despotism resident in the person of the King, divides and subdivides itself into a thousand shapes and forms, till at last the whole of it is acted by deputation. . . . It strengthens itself by assuming the appearance of duty, and tyrannizes under the pretence of obeying." (48)

He details how despotism is manifest in all other public institutions:

Between the monarchy, the parliament, and the church, there was a rivalship of despotism, besides the feudal despotism operating locally, and the ministerial despotism operating everywhere. (48)

Both Radcliffe and Paine challenge contemporary authority and suggest reform of public institutions to bring the government into "correspondence" with the actual

norms practiced throughout the society, not just those of the ruling class. "Whether the forms and maxims of Governments which are still in practice, were adapted to the condition of the world at the period they were established," Paine argues,

is not in this case in question. The older they are, the less correspondence can they have with the present state of things. Time, and change of circumstances and opinions, have the same progressive effect in rendering modes of Government obsolete, as they have upon customs and manners.--Agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and the tranquil arts, by which the prosperity of Nations is best promoted, require a different system of Government, and a different knowledge to direct its operations, than what might have been required in the former condition of the world. (146)

Juxtaposing earlier practices with current social needs, each author argues for legal changes.

In contrast with Paine, however, Radcliffe avoids a direct discussion of the subject of authority. Instead she builds these issues into the fabric of her novel's much maligned "plot" and her famous "Gothic" imagery. She criticizes contemporary and earlier forms of authority in British society indirectly and suggests alternative power structures. Specifically, Radcliffe uses her heroine Adeline's responses to various representations of the relationship of guardian and ward as an opportunity to comment on and contribute to the discourses circulating about the proper relationship among monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy in a body politic. By discussing authority

in terms of guardianship, within a Gothic structure, Radcliffe indirectly speculates on the problematic social and legal systems governing the relationship of the individual to archaic forms of arbitrary authority.

Adeline's reactions to the various guardian and ward relationships she experiences throughout the novel comment on authority in two forms--the older, feudal practices she encounters in the abbeys and in the dark forests of France and the enlightened practices she learns from the La Lucs in the heights of Switzerland. Although set outside of England, the situations embody two disparate parts of English guardianship: the earlier feudal practice of wardship from which it evolved and an idealized version of the contemporary legal relationship of guardianship. The two sets of protectors and their behaviors recall this divided history. On the one hand, Adeline's protectors in the first two parts of the novel and their selfish behavior recall the guardian and ward relationship as it existed before 1660. At that time, the relationship benefitted the guardian in a system based on feudal land tenureship which formally gave broad powers, including "wardship of the body," to the guardian. In fact wardship benefitted the entire aristocracy, not just the immediate guardian. For instance, royal prerogative insured that the interests of the crown would be protected when decisions concerning the aristocratic lines of inheritance were at issue. This

meant that the crown would sell wardships to insure politically advantageous alliances. On the other hand, La Luc's "disinterested" concern for Adeline's happiness invokes later practices. After the Restoration, when the Court of Wards was abolished, guardians became legally accountable for their administration of their wards' affairs, in response to an increasingly capitalistic economy and because they were under the jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery. The changes decreased the potential for guardians to abuse their powers and conserved the wards' estates for use when they achieved majority. This dichotomy is similar to Paine's discussion of Louis XVI and Louis XIV, whom he characterizes as despotic, yet remarks that "the dispositions of the men were as remote as tyranny and benevolence" (49). These traits characterize the extremes of authority, indicative of the same categories Adeline will establish in her experiences with patriarchal authority.

In the first scenes of The Romance of the Forest La Motte, an aristocrat fleeing arrest, is forced at gunpoint to assume responsibility for Adeline. Her supposed father has abandoned her because she has refused to take vows and submit to the despotic authority of an abbess. With La Motte and his family she takes refuge in an abandoned abbey. However, their security is jeopardized when the evil Marquis de Montalt discovers them. La Motte.

acknowledging his own relative powerlessness, realizes his inability to protect Adeline. In exchange for the Marquis' promise to withhold prosecution against him and for continued protection at the Marquis' abbey, La Motte agrees to hand Adeline over to him. She refuses the scheme and realizes the vulnerability of her situation:

She saw herself without friends, without relations, destitute, forlorn, and abandoned to the worst of evils. Betrayed by the very persons, to whose comfort she had so long administered, whom she had loved as her protectors, and revered as her parents!" (150).¹⁰

When the Marquis abducts her, she escapes aided by Theodore, an officer in the Marquis' command. Theodore's ability to protect her is cut short when he is arrested for defying military authority and wounding a soldier and the Marquis. The issue of Adeline's guardianship becomes even more problematized when the Marquis learns Adeline is his niece and legal ward, although the reader and Adeline remain unaware of this important connection until near the end of the novel. To protect his claim to her rightful property, the Marquis abuses his illegitimate authority and blackmails La Motte into a promise to kill Adeline. Her negative experiences with guardianship begin to reverse when La Motte helps her escape under the protection of his servant. Overall though, these first two sections of the

¹⁰ All parenthetical references in this chapter, unless otherwise specified, will be to Ann Radcliffe's The Romance of the Forest (New York: Oxford UP, 1991).

novel present negative models of guardianship and authority. The relationships Adeline forms illustrate the abuse of authority. The institutions and practices meant to protect her fail her, as "She remembered how often she had been deceived and betrayed where she trusted most" (168).

In the final third of the novel, Adeline finds protection in Switzerland with La Luc and his family, where she experiences enlightened authority--a model of acceptable government. Her guardianship is resolved during a series of four legal trials. She learns that the Marquis is her uncle and, therefore, her legal guardian. Although he kills himself, he first establishes Adeline as the rightful family heir. D'Aunoy--the man she believed to be her father--was hired as her guardian by the Marquis. He is condemned to death when he confesses helping the Marquis kill his brother, Adeline's father. No longer under the authority of a guardian, Adeline herself intervenes with the king, gaining a pardon for Theodore and lightening La Motte's sentence to banishment. Free to choose her future, she marries Theodore and they live in La Luc's enlightened community.

Beneath the almost obligatory elements of possible ghosts and sexual threat, the primary problem presented in the novel is Adeline's need to establish her identity by

defining her proper relationship to authority.¹¹ It is this aspect of her story that dominates and comments on larger public issues. Adeline has neither family nor a "disinterested" guardian. Continually abandoned by those who are positioned as her guardians, she must rely for protection on a series of strangers who treat her as property to be circulated from one man to the next. The temptation is to see this in the by then more or less stock terms of the novel of "marriage." But who Adeline will marry is not the focus of The Romance of the Forest. The novel delegitimizes the construct of what a guardian is, forcing articulation of what constitutes proper authority and contests contemporary practices of patriarchy.¹² Adeline is threatened by more than just a potential

¹¹ Adeline's need perhaps spoke to other women with such problems, a possible factor accounting for the novel's widespread popularity.

¹² Susan Staves' definition of patriarchy in her Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833 is useful to this discussion. "Patriarchy," she says,

is a form of social organization in which fathers appear as political and legal actors, acting publicly for themselves and as representatives of the women and children subordinated to them and dependent upon them in families.

She continues, describing how

[i]n the property regimes of patriarchy, descent and inheritance are reckoned in the male line; women function as procreators and as transmitters of inheritance from male to male.

seducer; and from start to finished her struggle is presented in terms of her relative powerlessness and legal status.

The law preserved deeper patriarchal practices, protecting property, and thus government, by guaranteeing its transmittal within the aristocratic male line. In practice as well as in theory the legal relationship of guardianship was yet another support of property law, although Blackstone classified it as a "right of persons." Guardianship's contemporary form was structured legally to protect the property rights of the ward, yet the larger intent remained focused on securing the family estate. A female ward's place within the patriarchal hereditary system was one of relative powerlessness. Adeline's struggles to attain appropriate guardianship comment on the inequities of the historical underpinnings of a legal relationship based on feudal laws. Guardianship becomes a vehicle for commenting on other institutions also based on feudal law--institutions which in the view of Paine's theoretical model of the evolution of government were no longer valid. Thus, Radcliffe's depiction of guardianship simultaneously plays off of the views of Paine and others while raising issues beyond the scope of his treatise.

Radcliffe's romance establishes a three-part history of power relationships involving Adeline, which parallels Paine's theoretical model of the historical evolution of

government. He discusses three categories of government and asserts their evolutionary order:

First, Superstition. Secondly, Power. Thirdly, The common interest of society, and the common rights of man. The first was a government of priestcraft, the second of conquerors, and the third of reason. (69)

As in Paine's text, Adeline's experiences with guardians parallel the order of "superstition," "power," and "the common rights of man." Adeline first rejects the cruel authority of the abbess and abbey, then flees from her father, La Motte, and the Marquis, and finally embraces La Luc's enlightened government.

Joan Kelly, in Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly, examines this evolution from feudal to monarchical government. She asserts that the movement entailed a systematic shifting of "military, financial, and juridical powers" from family to state (85).¹³ In The Romance of the Forest, these three powers are located in the three sets of private relationships Radcliffe illustrates. Radcliffe uses Adeline's relative powerlessness as a legal ward as a springboard to discuss other asymmetrical power relationships. The Marquis is presented as the nexus of military, financial and judicial

¹³ By making public these powers, Kelly argues, men moved into public positions of power and authority, while women were forced into male "conception[s] of ladylike behavior" (86). She further explores "the loss of power women of rank suffered as states eroded the military, juridical, and political powers of aristocratic families" (87).

powers. Within her narrative, Radcliffe's strands of discourse comment on contemporary perceptions of how aristocratic "power" is constructed. Within the struggle against aristocratic authority, the power struggle emerges in three threads of the narrative: Adeline, Theodore, and La Motte are all in custodial relationships with the Marquis, the aristocrat with power in the novel.¹⁴ All three situations discuss the relationship of the individual to an arbitrary authority. These relationships raise questions concerning the limits of contemporary aristocratic power when wielding the three areas of traditional feudal power: judicial, economic, and military. The Marquis represents aristocratic power, and his relationship with Adeline, La Motte, and Theodore, represent judicial, economic and military power respectively.

Theodore is subject to his military authority, and La Motte is subject to his economic authority. The Marquis' power over Adeline, Theodore, and La Motte comments on how the legal, military, and economic hierarchies of contemporary society depend on the earlier practices established in feudal and church forms of government.

¹⁴ All three relationships are subsumed under the ultimate authority of the king of France, to whom Adeline appeals to save Theodore and La Motte. The king's intercession disrupts the Marquis' power over Theodore and La Motte and keeps them from bearing the consequences of their challenges to authority.

These parallel relationships describe the abuses of authority and suggest that the legitimacy of these forms of historically sanctioned authority, although still accepted by society, deserves reexamination. For instance, Theodore must obey the Marquis, his commanding officer, although he knows the Marquis is morally wrong.

Paine argues against exploitation resulting from a monarchy based on hereditary rights with its inevitable political oppression and corruption. It is this support of "power, and not principles" which he attacks Burke for condoning (49). Paine also differentiates between revolting against the individual--"personal despotism"--and revolting against the system--"hereditary despotism of the established government" (47). Arguing that earlier English revolutions were against the individual, he now calls for a revolt against the hereditary system, as in France. "All hereditary government is in its nature tyranny," he insists, because it treats humans as property: "To inherit a government, is to inherit the people, as if they were flocks and herds" (172). He further compares governing people with husbanding animals, alluding to the need for guardianship laws in hereditary systems:

In all other cases [but in a monarchy], a person is a minor until the age of twenty-one years. Before this period, he is not trusted with the management of an acre of land, or with the heritable property of a flock of sheep, or an herd of swine; but wonderful to tell! he may, at the age of eighteen years, be treated with a nation. (183)

Using the same analogy, Paine concedes that the "authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living" has been lessened somewhat:

There was a time when kings disposed of their crowns by will upon their deathbeds, and consigned the people, like beasts of the field, to whatever successor they appointed. (42)

Although this monarchical power has been "exploded," the legal institution of guardianship still allows a father to consign his children "like beasts of the field" to a guardian. With its feudal vestiges, guardianship, like the monarchy, treats people as property.

The Romance of the Forest develops this tension between feudal practices of wardship and eighteenth-century practices of guardianship and suggests that many elements of feudal wardship are still present in contemporary guardianship. History not only contains traditions that embed earlier practices, but abuses of authority such as coercive power still occur. Because the ideal is not practiced, the novel suggests laws governing the legal relationship of guardianship need to evolve to protect the oppressed. Indirectly, the novel suggests that just as Adeline must redefine her conceptions of authority, the oppressed must revise their conception of proper government, removing outmoded feudal practices, such as hereditary succession, from government.

Radcliffe's adaptations of Gothic narrative techniques reinforce the images established by the legal relationship

of guardianship in interesting ways. The adaptations occur in the first two sections of the novel and underscore the close connections between eighteenth-century British social practices and their earlier counterparts.¹⁵ Radcliffe historicizes the setting to a specific time and place associated with the evolution of wardship into guardianship; prolongs suspense by delaying the revelation of the identity of Adeline's guardian; and focuses on the oppression of the heroine as victim, rather than the exploits of either the hero or villain figure. Adeline's experiences are distinguishable from those of heroines of "marriage" novels. Her dilemma is not deciding to accept or reject various eligible marriage partners; her predicament is investigating and negotiating various forms of authority, one of which is marriage, all of which are inscribed within evolving patriarchal government practices.

The Romance of the Forest is nominally set around the year 1660 in France, but the manners and mores at stake are those of the 1790s in England. Radcliffe positions the novel in the time just prior to the English Restoration, a time most readers would immediately recognize as a period in which new laws governing royal prerogative in general were instituted. To her contemporary readers, Radcliffe's

¹⁵ Although there is no specific biographical or textual evidence to attribute Radcliffe with legal knowledge, I am assuming that she had "social knowledge" of guardian and ward practices.

use of Gothic literary conventions would recall feudal times. According to Nelson Smith in The Art of Gothic: Ann Radcliffe's Major Novels, "Gothic" was synonymous with "medieval" for the eighteenth-century reader (43).¹⁶ Thus, the Gothic genre itself would have been connected in the minds of the more knowledgeable contemporary readers to feudal times, when property laws included those of "ownership of the body" as a right entitled to a feudal lord.

The Romance of the Forest takes place in the late 1650s; the numerous references to dates include 1658, 1659, and 1660. This time spans Cromwell's death (1658) through the English Restoration (1660) when wardship was legally abolished and guardianship was placed under the jurisdiction of the Chancery court. That is, at the Restoration, the guardians' control over their wards became more regulated, the legal relationship became less

¹⁶ In her dissertation, Catholicism in gothic Fiction: A Study of the Nature and Function of Catholic Materials in Gothic Fiction in England, 1762-1820, Sister Mary Muriel Tarr asserts "There is no specific historical epoch that is referred to consistently in Gothic fiction as the Middle Ages" (8). Montague Summers claims in The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel that although the word "Gothic"

now has so very definite and particular meaning (especially in relation to literature) originally conveyed the idea of barbarous, tramontane and antique, and was merely a term of reproach and contempt. . . . it came to connote almost anything medieval, and could be referred to almost any period until the middle, or even the end, of the seventeenth century. (37)

lucrative for the guardian, and the wards and their families theoretically could benefit financially from the relationship. The novel is situated at a period when feudal power was still intact before feudal tenures were dismantled.¹⁷ Radcliffe's repeated dating of the action throughout the text suggests her concern with connecting the action to earlier historical, cultural, and religious events, although the specific dates are inconsistent.¹⁸ For contemporary readers, the feudal past would signify tyrannical practices.¹⁹

¹⁷ Nelson Smith suggests that Radcliffe may have been sensitive to criticism of her earlier novels for their lack of historical context (149-50). In The Failure of the Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-Century Literary Form, Elizabeth Napier explains that Radcliffe's

anachronistic references . . . suggest that she is not so much concerned with a verifiable historical period as with an atmosphere recently made familiar to an eighteenth-century audience through the artists of the picturesque. (21)

¹⁸ References which date Radcliffe's text include when La Motte carves the dates "27th of April 1658," and "12th of July in the same year" over an abbey door (56). Also, when Adeline is first introduced, she is described "to be about eighteen" (5); later, the Marquis' accomplice and the man whom Adeline believes is her father, D'Aunoy, confesses "that in the year 1642" (341) he assassinated Henry, the Marquis' brother, "soon after the birth of a daughter" (343). These two references taken together date the action to 1660. Another date is suggested by the mention of "a cessation of hostilities between France and Spain," which, according to Chard's note, refers to 1659 (357). And, finally, there is Radcliffe's added footnote admonishing the reader "that this was said in the seventeenth century" (269).

¹⁹ For instance, Hester Thrale Piozzi writes in Retrospection (1794),

A significant reference is Radcliffe's vague claim that her source for the novel is a historical court case "during the seventeenth century" in France. Although Clara Frances McIntyre, in Ann Radcliffe in Relation to Her Time, discounts de Pitaval's Causes Célèbres as the direct source for the court case, she argues that Radcliffe would have access to de Pitaval through Charlotte Smith's The Romance of Real Life (1787), a translation and adaptation. McIntyre suggests that the account of Mademoiselle de Choiseul contains elements of Radcliffe's story. In Smith's version of the case, the maternal uncle is given guardianship rights over his niece:

" . . . but when he found that, by suppressing what he knew of her birth, he should divide considerable property as heir to that sister, he scrupled not to violate every promise he had given her, not only on the birth of her child, but again when she was dying; and now, when her daughter claimed her own property, desired to have authentic proof of what he knew better than anyone---proofs, which it was the more difficult for her to bring, as all the family papers were in the hands of the very person who demanded them, and whose interest it was to conceal every memorial of the contested fact." (136-37)

What we really see in every dungeon and drawbridge is a proof of our ancestors' fears and loathings. They had no other way to restrain hard-mouthed passion and licentious wantonness . . . while ignorance kept their vassals half unconscious of the indignities they submitted to, and the wife of a peasant was secured from the desires of his patron only by her deformity or his forbearance. (154-55)

Other details of de Choiseul's story parallel The Romance of the Forest. Her education "was entrusted to her aunt, the Abbess de Sauvoir." When evidence is produced from other sources and the case seems hopeless for the guardian, he unsuccessfully "trie[s] to prevail on the king to annihilate the whole proceeding, by an act of arbitrary power" (159). Radcliffe's suggested connection between the events of her fiction and a historical legal case, though vague, add substance to the novel.

Although these somewhat contradictory references place the novel's action just before or on the boundary separating feudal and Restoration practices, Radcliffe juxtaposes the Gothic with the manners and morals of the late Eighteenth Century. As a result, the novel creates tension between feudal patriarchal practices and their eighteenth-century counterparts.²⁰

Furthermore, although Radcliffe insists that the action takes place in the century before hers, by setting the novel in France she invokes the discourses circulating concerning self-government current in discussions of the French Revolution and the conditions leading up to it. Radcliffe's awareness that even an unintentional reference

²⁰ Rather than considering the novel anachronistic, Tarr argues that Radcliffe was successful in creating "a contemporary, continental medieval period" (9) because in addition to its physical reminders of the Middle Ages, her readers considered the government and religion of contemporary France to be those of earlier epochs.

to the French Revolution might be misconstrued is clearly evident in her felt need to footnote a comment on the French. A character remarks that when observing the French,

" . . . their wretched policy, their sparkling, but sophisticated discourse, frivolous occupations, and, withal, their gay animated air, we shall be compelled to acknowledge that happiness and folly too often dwell together." (268-69)

Radcliffe footnotes this passage, "It must be remembered that this was said in the seventeenth century" (269). Chard explains that

this footnote serves to disclaim the implication that the reference to the 'wretched policy' of the French might have some relevance to contemporary politics--in which case it might be seen as a gesture of support for the Revolution of 1789." (391)

Radcliffe distances herself from contemporary politics, never directly mentioning the French Revolution and its challenge to improper authority. The political climate and her position as a woman novelist, who is not supposed to comment directly on politics according to contemporary publishing conventions, preclude her from doing so directly. Admittedly removing herself from current politics, Radcliffe nevertheless indirectly challenges patriarchal power in the hands of the usurping individual, while supporting the authority of existing institutions, such as the courts and the monarchy. The tension caused by the juxtaposition of older practices with current ones

questions both sets of practices. Her method may be judged as cautious by our standards, but, I argue, in the context of late eighteenth-century standards, Radcliffe's treatment of authority and the individual, particularly a female individual, is significant.

Additionally, choosing French Catholicism, Radcliffe incorporates the hierarchical authority structure of the Roman Catholic Church into the novel, although it does not specifically detail Catholic practices or ceremonies. The Catholic Church was a safe target for an English author. Radcliffe, by situating the crimes of the Marquis in an old abandoned abbey, with its "half demolished walls" and "decayed" tapestries, establishes images suggesting the decay and immorality of the Church both from within and without (34, 30). Refusing religious life, Adeline rejects the government of the Catholic church.

The second Gothic convention Radcliffe adapts to her ends is suspense. Although suspense is a standard Gothic convention, Radcliffe's decision to conceal the true identity of Adeline's guardian helps the reader to explore the implications of each kind of guardian along with the heroine as she encounters them. Adeline's guardianship is repeatedly at issue in the novel; however, only one guardian and ward relationship is strictly legal. To create suspense, Radcliffe withholds the information that Adeline does have a legal guardian until very late in the

text. Although Radcliffe has obliquely mentioned him in the opening paragraphs, she conceals knowledge of his relationship to Adeline as her uncle and legal guardian. Without this information, the reader assumes that Adeline accurately understands her own situation. It is especially shocking then to learn along with Adeline that her legal guardian is also the man who has striven to seduce and then kill her. The potential for abuse of authority and the problems with the system itself are dramatically emphasized.

The third Gothic convention that Radcliffe successfully adapts is to make the embattled heroine the central character of the novel, focussing on the oppression of a female heroine, rather than the hero or villain as both Walpole and Reeves had. Oppression here constitutes the systematic discrimination and persecution of those who are relatively powerless by those who hold power in a society--not ghosts or psychotic monsters.²¹

Although guardians and wards could be of either gender, the relationship is gendered because of the power

²¹ The villains here are not giants or psychotics; instead, they are the legal system and its implications. Radcliffe employs Gothic elements, i.e. apparent ghosts, ruined abbeys, dungeons, but the most frightening aspect for Adeline to deal with is the oppression of the real life institutions. Similarly, Catherine Moreland in Northanger Abbey learns that the terror of economic and social institutions is more significant than that in Gothic fiction.

imbalance, as was the law and legal practice.²² As Nancy Armstrong suggests, using "explicitly female narrators" is "more effective in launching a political critique because their gender identifies them as having no claim to political power" (29). The same can be said to be true of a female focal character, especially in this instance. As a relatively powerless female ward, Adeline has little political power, and thus her experiences make the individual's attempts to negotiate existing power structures, including the patriarchal social organization, both more compelling and historically accurate.

Furthermore, the female heroine is of a certain kind, readily identified by eighteenth-century readers. As Nelson Smith argues, Radcliffe adapts the sentimental heroine popularized by Richardson into Gothic fiction. By combining the conventions of eighteenth-century sentimental fiction with Gothic conventions that invoke a medieval past, Radcliffe incorporates the feudal discourses of wardship within an eighteenth-century context, and the conjunction suggests that although feudal practices may have been legislated away, their effects, though altered with social practice, still remain. Therefore, Radcliffe's focus on the oppression of her heroine brings the world of

²² See Lenora P. Ledwon's Legal Fictions: Construction of the Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century Law and Literature, 1-2 for an excellent discussion of how legal discourse constructs gender.

domestic and political agendas into the world of the Gothic, and the result suggests that the patriarchal controlled institutions themselves are deserving subjects of horror.²³

The Romance of the Forest enlarges the discourses suggested by Gothic conventions by repositioning the sentimental discourses within them. Although authors had previously used the guardian and ward relationship, they had not positioned their novels within the Gothic genre, a juxtaposition foregrounding feudal wardship practices.²⁴

²³ For instance, Staves reminds readers that in the system of feudal tenures, "a woman,"

could never have been the lord's man or rendered homage to the lord. Even if she was an heiress, her position was not so much that of an owner as that of a transmitter of the inheritance from her father to her son. (83)

²⁴ For example, Samuel Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison, Eliza Haywood's The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless, and Fanny Burney's Evelina include male guardians and female wards; Henry Fielding's Tom Jones employs a male guardian and a male ward; and Tobias Smollett's The Expedition of Humphry Clinker uses a male guardian and a both a male and female ward.

Walpole's The Castle of Otranto does include Isabella, whom "had already been delivered by her guardians into the hands of Manfred" to marry his son when the "Gothic story" opens (15). Although Manfred is her uncle, he is not her guardian. Manfred defends his control of her in a conversation with the Jerome, the friar: "'I am answerable for her person to her guardians, and will not brook her being in any hands but my own'" (46). When Jerome reminds him he is not her parent, he counters with the reminder that she almost married his son and, therefore, "'I am her parent,' cried Manfred, 'and demand her'" (47). Jerome replies, "but heaven, that forbad that connexion, has for ever dissolved all ties betwixt you" (47).

Analyzing the Gothic discourses "highlights" what otherwise is "hidden." Specifically, by dramatizing Adeline's history in sentimental terms and withholding her guardian's identity in the first part of the novel, as Adeline is passed from one guardian to the next, Radcliffe demonstrates how she is treated like property as she would have been under the old laws governing wardship. Adeline's history emphasizes the contrast between feudal practices of wardship, based on securing property rights, and eighteenth-century practices of family government, also based on guaranteeing the conservation of wealth and lineage, upholding socially appropriate forms of patriarchal structures.

The Guardian and Ward Relationship

By the various representations of authority, Adeline's treatment constructs a pattern consistent throughout the novel--both within her experience and within the quasi-guardian and ward relationship experiences of Theodore and La Motte. Her experiences with authority fall into three categories: at first she is victim to the exercise and abuse of authority by those who represent the church and then the state, but at last she accepts enlightened authority and marriage. That is, she refuses to be governed by the abbey; narrowly escapes from aristocratic domination; and chooses marriage and the enlightened

government of La Luc and his family. These three experiences use a consistent set of images describing authority. They also are identical to the three-part history of power relationships Paine constructs, stages he identifies as superstition, power, and reason (69).

Adeline's rejection of the governmental authority of the Catholic church has been completed before the opening of the novel, and the reader learns of it only in retrospect. Adeline says of her time at the abbey:

"Too long I had been immured in the walls of a cloister, and too much had I seen of the sullen misery of its votaries, not to feel horror and disgust at the prospect of being added to their number. . . . Here I passed several years of miserable resistance against cruelty and superstition." (36)

She "unhinge[s herself] from the superstitious authority of antiquity" and escapes from the abbey where she was educated (Paine 102). She refuses the veil and being "condemned to perpetual imprisonment and imprisonment of the most dreadful kind" where she would be

"Excluded from the cheerful intercourse of society--from the pleasant view of nature--almost from the light of day--condemned to silence--rigid formality--abstinence and penance--condemned to forego the delights of a world, which imagination painted in the gayest and most alluring colours, and whose hues were, perhaps, not the less captivating because they were only ideal." (37)

These descriptions of abbey life reveal her understanding of the problems individuals face when confronting the coercive power of illegitimate authority.

The stratagems of the abbess reinforce her insights.

According to Adeline, the Lady Abbess is:

"a woman of rigid decorum and severe devotion; exact in the observance of every detail of form, and [who] never forgave an offence against ceremony. It was her method, when she wanted to make converts to her order, to denounce and terrify rather than to persuade and allure. Her's were the arts of cunning practised upon fear, not those of sophistication upon reason. She employed numberless stratagems to gain me to her purpose, and they all wore the complexion of her character. But in the life to which she would have devoted me, I saw too many forms of real terror, to be overcome by the influence of her ideal host, and was resolute in rejecting the veil." (36)

Repudiating the tyrannical authority of the abbess, Adeline rejects the practices of the Catholic church. Furthermore, these statements she makes concerning arbitrary authority parallel those she later uses to discuss her position as subject to the despotic government of La Motte and the Marquis. She reverses the statements to discuss her position in relation to the enlightened government of La Luc.

No longer "completely under the government of superstition," Adeline faces Paine's next form of government--that of the "power" of the aristocracy, molded from the feudal practices of conquering powers (Paine 69). Her rejection of aristocratic forms of government constitutes the major portion of the novel before she can embrace enlightened forms of authority. She must overcome

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the uncertainties raised by individual agency after she rejects the unregulated and abusive authority of wardship.

Negative Examples of Guardian and Ward Relationships

Adeline's relationship with aristocratic guardian figures, whose authority is defined by feudal practices, is problematized in the first two parts of the novel. The three men who act as guardians are her supposed father, La Motte, and the Marquis. The man whom she believes is her father, D'Aunoy, establishes the pattern of inadequate protection; La Motte is well-meaning but relatively powerless, himself a victim of abusive authority; and the Marquis combines the worst abuses of aristocratic authority possible. Adeline must reject the protection of each of these men, denying her position as subject to their authority. This authority, or "hereditary despotism," Paine asserts, "strengthens itself by assuming the appearance of duty, and tyrannizes under the pretence of obeying" (48). Such a combination of duty and obedience would be difficult for an eighteenth-century female educated to discipline to ignore. Rather than an individual act of rejection of authority by a subordinate, Adeline's actions are emblematic of the contemporary cultural forces contesting authority. She represents the oppressed, who must renegotiate the patriarchal authority invested in the ruling aristocracy.

At first, Adeline seems well beyond the limits of aristocratic authority. She has been abandoned by D'Aunoy whom she believes to be her father. Believing his protection is a given, she doesn't understand his sudden abandonment of her, although her recollections of him provide little indication of any real commitment. Her own statements about him indict him for his "disinterested" behavior. Although she says he is the "only person to whom I could look up to for protection and love," she explains he "at length denounced vengeance on my head if I persisted in disobedience" in leaving the abbey--a choice which becomes no choice (36). In her terms, she is subject either to "imprisonment of the most dreadful kind, or to the vengeance of a father, from who I had no appeal" (37). He embodies all of her worst fears about authority and inspires new ones. She admits: "my father's cruelty subdued tenderness, and roused indignation" (37); he speaks to her "in a harsh accent" (38); and "his feelings seemed so very dissonant to the joy and gratitude" she felt and tried to express, but "his looks forbade" her (39). She describes the experience of her father's improper authority in terms similar to those she used to describe the illegitimate authority of the abbess: cruel, harsh, and dissonant.

Even though Adeline acknowledges her father's responsibility for her imprisonment in the farmhouse and

casts his behavior in terms she used to describe that of the abbe, she is slow to reject him. Because she still believes him protective, she has difficulty rationalizing his treatment of her because she cannot recognize it as inappropriate.²⁵ Although she admits her father's responsibility for her mistreatment, she categorizes his behavior as paternal duty, excusing it as "'a punishment for my former disobedience,'" implying that inappropriate authority and punishment are inextricably linked (42). She is unwilling to admit that he is no longer her protector, imploring,

"But why abandon me to the power of strangers, to men, whose countenances bore the stamp of villany so strongly as to impress even my inexperienced mind with terror!" (42)

The doubt expressed in the free indirect discourse of the narrator confirms Adeline's conflicted thoughts regarding her father: she "thought, or said she thought, he was innocent of any intention against her life" (43-44). Madame La Motte, hearing Adeline's account of her life, hits closest to the reality of his illegitimate authority when she asks, "'Yet what motive . . . could there be for a degree of cruelty so apparently unprofitable?'" (44). Her question assumes that abuses of authority are motivated by profit. Adeline's personal history ends with the

²⁵ Radcliffe concentrates on the human implications of laws governing the relationship of parent and child, rather than examining it as a lawyer or philosopher would--that is concentrating on the letter of the law.

narrator's emphasis on Adeline's inability to make sense of her relationship with her father: "Adeline confessed she had pursued it, till her mind shrunk from all further research" (44).

The fact is, though, that Adeline spends the entire novel trying to come to terms with her father and all who act in his place. She is not looking for autonomy, but rather for proper authority within the patriarchal structure of society. Instead of being released by his abandonment of her, she becomes obsessed with it. Throughout the novel, she fears that he will find her because she believes he will murder her. Although he never pursues her, her dread that he will find her continually influences her decision making. For instance, her insistence that no one else but he is able to injure her blinds her to the fact La Motte is plotting to offer her physically to the Marquis (107). In turn, the Marquis effectively uses this fear of her father to manipulate her. Overhearing him discuss the tactic with La Motte, "Adeline shuddered at the mention of her father, a new terror seized her, . . . It was her father only of whom she thought" (117). Indeed, the act of trying to reason through how her father has discovered her whereabouts and why La Motte has not told her of the plot keeps her from discovering the truth that the Marquis is out to possess her. Her obsession with her father and the extent of his abusive

authority over her cause her to miscalculate the powers of La Motte and the Marquis--the other representatives of feudal aristocratic authority. Both Radcliffe and Paine seem to view abuses of patriarchal power as continuous threats. Paine cautions his readers "how necessary it is at all times to watch against the attempted encroachment of power, and to prevent its running to excess" (43).

Though circumspect, Adeline still wrongly believes the danger is her father, even when La Motte's servant Peter explains that the threat of her father was used only as a ruse. As with Madame La Motte's explanation of her father's motivation, Peter has a more realistic reading about authority than Adeline does. He informs her, "'your father, nor nobody else has ever sent after you; I dare say, he knows no more of you than the Pope does--not he'" (145). The reference to the Pope works to remind the reader of the paternalistic aristocratic authority aligned with Adeline's earlier negative experience with the church. When she rebukes him, he apologizes with a remark that further strengthens and unites the negative characteristics of authority: "'you can't deny that your father is cruel'" (145).

The second man to act as Adeline's guardian is La Motte. Adeline believes she is making progress when she forms a close relationship with the La Motte family. However, Adeline fails to comprehend the irony of her

situation: she has left one abbey and the cruel authority of the Abbess for the abandoned abbey and the uncertain protection of La Motte. She is now a victim of La Motte's deceitful and inadequate authority.²⁶

His obligations and rights to her as guardian are tenuous at best due to the circumstances in which he "acquired" her. Nevertheless, pressured by the Marquis, La Motte attempts to convert her into an article of trade, offering her to the Marquis in exchange for dropping charges against him. La Motte's assumptions rely upon earlier historical definitions of wardship under which the

²⁶ Nelson C. Smith comments that "the vacillating characters--the 'varied men'--become the most human, and the villains become heroic" (75). He credits the term "varied men" to Radcliffe, taken from a poem of hers in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Smith recognizes her ingenuity:

It remained for Mrs. Radcliffe to give human qualities to the forces of evil, and thus make them more dangerous and more powerful. In attempting to portray the possible range of evil, she introduced into Gothic novel a new type: the vacillating character, neither totally virtuous, nor totally evil. Among the best of these characters, recognizable not as good or evil but only as human, [is] the weak-willed La Motte in Romance of the Forest (97)

This "new kind of villain" (100), Smith argues, shows how Radcliffe's

interest in human nature, moreover, led her to reject the easy answer to the problem of the conflict of good and evil. . . . The capacity for good resides in the worst of villains: La Motte, Montoni and Schedoni all save the heroines at some point in the novel, an act generally not accomplished by the hero." (114-15)

guardian had control over his ward's body, allowing him to determine her marriage partner, a position with no legal basis in eighteenth-century law. Abusing his authority, La Motte threatens Adeline into obeying his wishes with the lie that D'Aunoy, whom she still believes is her father, will soon retrieve her. Describing the situation, La Motte dishonestly asserts D'Aunoy's power, yet honestly admits his own relative powerlessness to protect her and accurately describes the complexity of the power relations holding him:

'What protection I can afford is your's' said La Motte, 'but you know how destitute I am both of the right and the means of resisting [your father], and also how much I require protection myself. Since he has discovered your retreat, he is probably not ignorant of the circumstances which detain me here, and if I oppose him, he may betray me to the officers of the law, as the surest method of obtaining possession of you. We are encompassed with danger,' continued La Motte; 'would I could see any method of extricating ourselves!' (125)

Ironically, although La Motte knows he is lying about Adeline's father, his statements accurately apply to Adeline's legal father-figure--her guardian, the Marquis. When La Motte suggests Adeline's marriage to the Marquis might provide safety for them both, Adeline acknowledges her debt to La Motte, but asserts that "the peace of one's whole life is too much to sacrifice even to gratitude" (126).²⁷ His attempt to control her fails. Her words

²⁷ This quotation offers a good example of the collision of two different discourses: medieval/legal and eighteenth-century sentimental/enlightened.

discount the feudal practice of using marriage to strengthen family alliances for protection. At the same time, her words question the notion of the contemporary companionate marriage as one of choice, suggesting that marriage is determined by social and economic equality, as well as the wishes of the parents (Family 101).²⁸ La Motte ignores the larger moral issues and instead chides her for being unable to "bring [her words] to the test of action" (126). His control over her as guardian is limited as he lacks the necessary currency--both real and symbolic--to protect her. Instead, he embodies the statements describing authority as severe, unsophisticated, deceitful, and cruel.

The real threat to Adeline is not a "disinterested" father-figure nor a powerless guardian, but one who is overly selfishly interested in her. The Marquis embodies the worst traits of feudal wardship: he first tries to possess her as a sexual object and then tries to murder her when her legal rights of inheritance threaten his wealth. His actions repeatedly attempt to define Adeline as a

²⁸ Commenting on choice of marriage partners, Staves argues that

In reality, an eighteenth-century woman hardly made her choice 'out of all the Species'; yet the rhetoric of free choice was apt to give her an added sense of personal responsibility for the consequences, and to make her more psychologically dependent on her relationship with her husband. (224)

possession to be given up under "terms" (146). Throughout the novel, he is responsible for Adeline's mistreatment, at his hands and those of her other aristocratic guardians. Specifically, the Marquis governs using the power Paine attributes to aristocratic forms of government which "govern mankind by force and fraud" (70). The Marquis has positioned himself by acting within the archetypal role of usurping uncle and evil guardian, murdering Adeline's father to take advantage of laws guaranteeing legal succession and inheritance of property. He has used guardianship to gain personal power and maintain it. In the process, he has deprived Adeline of her identity and the protection she merits, both actions embodying the abuses of contemporary patriarchal practices designed to retain male control of property. The point here is that instead of dramatically emphasizing the sexual threat (a la Pamela) Radcliffe unobtrusively but consistently keeps the focus on the legal/moral relationship of guardian and ward.

The Marquis' behavior demonstrates that guardianship is subject to abuse by authority for personal gain--both sexual and financial. Although he does not know who she really is, the Marquis is powerfully attracted to Adeline. At his first meeting "he seemed attentive only to the condition of Adeline" and "Upon Adeline, who was yet insensible, he gazed with an eager admiration, which seemed to absorb all the faculties of his mind" (87). The Marquis

heightens the irony of this initial introduction when he asks the degree of relation between Madame La Motte and Adeline; in fact, he is Adeline's uncle and guardian.

Knowing Adeline's fear of her father, the Marquis attempts to use her resistance to dealing with those who unfairly gain power over her. After he has her abducted, the Marquis tries to downplay his obvious position of power. While trying to seduce her, he insists on his love for her by showing his reluctance to take advantage of the uneven power relationship between them: "'Are you not now in my power, and do I not forbear to take advantage of your situation?'" When she carries his argument to its extreme and asks for her freedom, he counters, "'Why will you exact so severe a proof of my disinterestedness, a disinterestedness which is not consistent with love?'"

(159). Her response demonstrates how she seeks to untangle love from authority, a problem she has had with improper authority throughout the novel:

"Deserve my esteem, Sir, and then you will obtain it: as a first step towards which, liberate me from a confinement that obliges me to look on you only with terror and aversion. How can I believe your professions of love, while you shew that you have no interest in my happiness?" (160, emphasis in original)²⁹

Adeline successfully wards off his attack, but she is

²⁹ Here Radcliffe seems to be arguing enlightened, moral reasons for rethinking the old, coldly legal relationship of guardian and ward.

Conscious of a superiority, which he was ashamed to acknowledge, and endeavouring to despise the influence which he could not resist, he stood for a moment the slave of virtue, though the votary of vice. (163)

The incorporation of images of slavery and religion, both extreme examples of asymmetrical power in hierarchical institutions, reinforces the grotesqueness of his power over her.

The Marquis is not "disinterested," nor does he forbear exercising his power over Adeline. After she escapes, his control of his emotions becomes more difficult. He pursues her "after exhausting the paroxysms of this rage upon his domestics" (200). When he recaptures her, Theodore excites him to "emotions of rage," which he tries to overcome so that he can "address her with his usual expressions of admiration" (195). However, her pleading for Theodore and her attempts to escape cause him to handle her roughly. When he is wounded, she realizes that he is "irritated by delay, contempt, and opposition" (199), unable to execute his plan with her, and exert his superiority over her.

His attempts to dominate her sexually are cut short when he recognizes Adeline's seal as her mother's (344).³⁰

³⁰ Ironically, the seal which will ultimately undo the greed of the Marquis has become Adeline's possession through greed. In the trial, the reader is told D'Aunoy stole the seal from the Marquis, his wife "kept it as a pretty trinket," and it "went with Adeline among her clothes to the convent" (345).

Realizing her identity, he changes his relationship with her drastically, having narrowly avoided an incestuous relationship with his niece (213). The reader, less knowledgeable than the narrator, does not understand his motivation; however, the consequences of his behavior are extreme. His interest in her does not dissipate; she becomes an even more valuable possession for him because her existence determines whether he keeps his other possessions, illegally gained. Before, he has seen her as powerless, but now he realizes how powerful she is. She may be his property legally, as ward, but when she has reached her majority, she will have legal rights to the property he has called his own.³¹

The Marquis returns Adeline to the abandoned abbey where La Motte is her keeper. The Marquis exerts a new twist to his control over her--Adeline is in his possession, but he no longer wishes to see her. By incarcerating her, he cuts her off from his gaze as well as that of the outside world. The description of the abbey,

³¹ As Ronald Paulson suggests in Representations of Revolution (1789-1820),

the reality beneath . . . gothic villains [is] a man concerned with property, heirs, and wealth, a man who tries unscrupulously to preserve his family and fortune against the incursions of a penniless outsider, who in fact does disrupt it. (217)

Paulson is speaking of Austen's General Tilney, but the Marquis fits the mold.

filtered through her consciousness, underscores her relative powerlessness under the Marquis:

From the Abbey she saw no possibility of escaping. She was a prisoner in a chamber inclosed at every avenue: she had no opportunity of conversing with any person who could afford her even a chance of relief; and she saw herself condemned to await in passive silence the impending destiny, infinitely more dreadful to her imagination than death itself. (228)

Her words recall her earlier description of the abbess' abbey, but her fears have become more focused and her fate more precarious now that she is subject to aristocratic rather than religious authority.

She realizes she must escape the domination of her aristocratic guardians, and, ironically, almost chooses to submit to the government of the abbey. Twice she contemplates returning to the protection of the cloister, when she sees no refuge among protectors. Instead of being left "destitute of friends and protection," she proposes to go to a convent when Theodore is about to be arrested (192). He reminds her how powerless she would be within its hierarchy and how vulnerable the religious institution is against the power of the Marquis:

"Do you know the persecutions you would be liable to; and that if the Marquis should discover you, there is little probability the superior would resist his authority, or at least, his bribes?" (192)

He acknowledges that the Marquis' illegitimate authority is stronger than that of the Church.

And, when La Motte enables her to escape the abbey, her thoughts about her future include seeking refuge in another abbey. This time, even she realizes how inappropriate such thoughts are:

Her thoughts then wandered to the plan she should adopt after reaching Savoy; and much as her experience had prejudiced her against the manners of a convent, she saw no place more likely to afford her a proper asylum. (236)

When the trial episodes late in the novel identify the Marquis as her legal guardian, the extent of his treachery against Adeline is fully revealed. Because he has murdered her father and vindictively punished those who try to protect her, the conventional image of the legal guardian is discredited and the reader must consciously reappraise the extent of her legal guardian's abuses of authority throughout the novel. Paine discredits the aristocracy for this savagery he attributes to the practices of primogeniture and hereditary rights. He sees the aristocracy as antithetical to family:

Establish family justice, and aristocracy falls. By the aristocratical law of primogenitureship, in a family of six children, five are exposed. Aristocracy has never more than one child. The rest are begotten to be devoured. They are thrown to the cannibal for prey, and the natural parent prepares the unnatural repast. (82)

Paine emphasizes his point: "aristocracy is kept up by family tyranny and injustice" (83). He decries their ability to govern because of their selection by primogeniture:

Their ideas of distributive justice are corrupted at the very source. They begin life by trampling on all their youngest brothers and sisters, and relations of every kind, and are taught and educated so to do. With what ideas of justice or honour can that man enter a house of legislation, who absorbs in his own person the inheritance of a whole family of children, or doles out to them some pitiful portion with the insolence of a gift? (83)

The ruthlessness of the Marquis classifies him in the same category Paine establishes, especially because he has defied the natural birth order and "devoured" and "trampled" his older brother.

When the Marquis' identity as her guardian is revealed, the reader realizes how intimately sexual desire and abduction have been conflated with guardianship and legal responsibility. The Marquis ignores the code of ethics implied in guardianship, and has no qualms about plotting to kill his charge. Indeed, because of the old-style guardian and ward relationship, he actually has incentives to do so. The legal relationship of guardian and ward between the Marquis and Adeline raises issues of the degree to which older legal institutions should influence a person's legal powers over another. Should a corrupted power determine a person's education, marriage, and life or death? Although an example of an individual's failure to uphold the duties of his office as guardian, the delegitimizing of the construct of what a guardian is places in jeopardy the entire hierarchical patriarchal structure, including government by the aristocracy.

Contesting guardianship challenges the authority of the governing oligarchy because it accesses the doctrinal uncertainty embedded in the contemporary culture. By changing laws in the sixteenth and seventeenth century to delegate the monarchy, the aristocracy undermined the authority of the monarchy and left vulnerable their own authority to govern. Paine recognizes the weakened position of the aristocracy and hopes "the age of aristocracy" will fall "like that of chivalry" and that "The ragged relic and the antiquated precedent, the monk and the monarch, will moulder together" (50, 196).

In her search for appropriate authority, the closest Adeline ever comes to her father is at the ruined abbey. At the abbey, Adeline finds a rusty knife and manuscript, which, unknown to her or the reader, are associated with her father's imprisonment and murder. When she reads the manuscript, the victim's abuse by authority terrifies her.³² She recognizes how similar her own position is and the reality of her danger: "I am like thee abandoned to dangers, from which I have no friends to succour me. Too surely I guess the author of my miseries!" (140). Here, words are an inadequate defense against an arbitrary

³² Jane Austen parodies this scene in Northanger Abbey in the episodes culminating with Catherine Moreland finding the laundry list in the unlocked cabinet. Catherine's tendency to allow superstitious fear to control her thoughts is ridiculed by Henry Tilney. Austen, like Radcliffe, seems to suggest the real danger to be feared is the abuse of authority in English society.

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authority who abuses the law. As in other forms of patriarchal control, the evolution of society, with its changing economic and political climate, necessitates continual changes in the law to balance competing powers. Price contends that the usurpation of power is a perennial one:

Men in power (unless better disposed than is common) are always endeavouring to extend their power. They hate the doctrine, that it is a TRUST derived from the people, and not a right vested in themselves. For this reason, the tendency of every government is to despotism. (28)

An Exemplary Guardian and Ward Relationship

Because of her negative experiences with religious and aristocratic authority in the first two sections of the novel, when Adeline encounters a positive example of a custodial relationship she initially does not know how to respond to the authority of La Luc and his daughter Clara:³³

She contemplated the past, and viewed the present, and, when she compared them, the contrast struck her with astonishment. The whole appeared like one of those sudden transitions so frequent in dreams, in which we pass from grief and despair, we know not how, to comfort and delight. (244)

³³ La Luc's name, from the Latin lux, "light of hope," and Clara's name, from the Latin clara, "make clear, illustrate," suggest the extent to which Radcliffe intended a didact in her novel.

Nowhere in the novel are her truths more systematically challenged. La Luc's benign approach forces her to reconstruct her earlier model of authority. Before, she only experienced the tyrannical elements of wardship; now under the sentimentalized character of La Luc she experiences the positive aspects of guardianship. Her experiences reconfirm the widely held eighteenth-century notion that legitimate authority is necessary in society, particularly authority over women.³⁴

Initially, La Luc is identified by his government over his native village, which

was an exception to the general character of the country, and to the usual effects of an arbitrary government; it was flourishing, healthy, and happy; and these advantages it chiefly owed to the activity and attention of the benevolent clergyman whose cure it was. (240)³⁵

In contrast to the statements established earlier concerning authority, the narrator describes the curatorial

³⁴ Staves explains that patriarchal codes

justified the dominance and privilege of men by reference to their superior abilities to create good order in families and their duty to provide protection and support for subordinated women and children in their families. (25-6)

³⁵ This is contrasted with a later description of Nice:

the effects of an arbitrary government, where the bounties of nature, which were designed for all, are monopolized by a few, and the many are suffered to starve tantalized by surrounding plenty. (281)

government of La Luc as "benevolent." He himself is described as "one of those rare characters to whom misfortune seldom looks in vain, and whose native goodness, confirmed by principle, is uniform and unassuming in its acts" (244). In the new model authority becomes uniform and enlightened. "[E]ver sensible to the sufferings of others," La Luc hears Adeline's story and adopts her as his daughter (258). She enjoys "the parental kindness of La Luc, the sisterly affection of Clara, and the steady and uniform regard of Madame"--in obvious contrast to the vacillations of Madame La Motte (259). Authority, now exercised properly, is kind and steady, although still rooted in deep patriarchal structures, as evidenced by La Luc's tight control over his family and village.

However, because Adeline still lives by the beliefs engendered by the earlier relationships, she initially believes that all authority is deceitful. She, therefore, is unable to trust the family with the secret of her lover, Theodore, who turns out to be La Luc's son. Withholding this information complicates and extends the plot, but it also shows how difficult it is for an individual to change perceptions and assumptions once they are in place. Although she recognizes that it is "through a false delicacy," "yet the misery that preyed upon her heart was of a nature too delicate to be spoken of, and she never mentioned Theodore even to her friend" Clara (258, 259).

Instead of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, however, Adeline redefines her conception of guardianship. In the process, she recreates her conception of authority. She turns her habitual images of oppression into those of self-government under a benign authority, a late eighteenth century ideal.

Developing in detail images of benign authority, Radcliffe describes examples of enlightened individuals. She comments on La Luc's "love of rational conversation" and "amusement in the cultivation of a mind eager for knowledge" (260). Monsieur Verneuil, a stranger who is befriended by the family and later marries La Luc's daughter, is introduced displaying "a mind enriched with taste, enlightened by science, and enlarged by observation" (272). The contrast with the Marquis is obvious. When faced with the execution of his son, La Luc's "conversation was pious, rational and consolatory." Unlike the Marquis,

"he spoke not from the cold dictates of the head, but from the feelings of a heart which had long loved and practised the pure precepts of christianity [sic], and which now drew from them a comfort such as nothing earthly could bestow."
(327)

Through her experiences Adeline has learned, and therefore the reader learns, that La Luc best demonstrates the proper role of guardian: he is a protective authority figure. This new role of an appropriate guardian is necessary for Adeline, who previously has been abandoned to strangers by those who neglect their responsibility to

protect her. Instead of abandoning her, La Luc insures her security by making possible a marriage for her with his son. Radcliffe resigns the heroine to male authority, but the authority is benevolent and the female has actively authorized that authority, suggesting a new model of proper gender relations.³⁶ The novel recognizes that females in eighteenth-century England are subject to male authority. However, because La Luc is an idealized "man of sentiment," the novel never fully resolves if such a solution is possible. Radcliffe seems to suggest that justice and law are two separate issues.

Radcliffe's fictional alternative to a despotic aristocratic government differs from Paine's, therefore. She suggests a benevolent and just patriarchy located within existing public institutions. Like Paine she positions despotism as an intermediate stage in an individual's search for government. However, for Paine the natural, logical evolution of government results in a "real

³⁶ There are obvious limits to the degree to which Radcliffe challenges the existing order. She works within it, as Janet Todd observes:

The open community of La Luc contrasts with aristocratic power in the shadowy forest and with the debased society of Nice where arbitrary government has rendered the peasants discontented. It is a sentimental replacement, not by force or forceful revolution but by providential means through the established institutions of the law . . . or through the activities of individual benevolent men and women." (Sign 260)

republic . . . ingrafting representation upon democracy" (178, 180). He would classify La Luc's government of benign authority as still potentially despotic because it locates power within a single individual,

Other Asymmetrical Relationships

The problem of dealing with arbitrary authority in asymmetrical relationships is not just specific to Adeline, although her experience establishes the pattern related to authority and individual relationships. The Marquis usurps the rights of others by tyrannically asserting his powers over them. The relationships between the Marquis and Theodore and between the Marquis and La Motte add to and reinforce the pattern of despotism. In each instance he oppresses the individual to become his dependent. The relationships become quasi-guardianship relations, or institutionalized, custodial relationships concentrating power on the individual of higher traditional rank. These relationships together with that of the Marquis and Adeline represent the three forms of power held by feudal families and assumed into public institutions: economic, military, and judicial.

The custodial relationship involving Theodore and the Marquis comments on military government. Paine considers the military a part of despotic rule. He claims: "All the monarchical governments are military. War is their trade,

plunder and revenue their objects" (161). The Marquis is Theodore's commanding officer and, therefore, Theodore is subject to his authority. From the onset of their relationship Theodore is wary of the power the Marquis wields:

Theodore, indeed, very well knew the character of the Marquis, and had accepted his invitation [to his villa] rather from an unwillingness to shew any disrespect of his Colonel by a refusal, than from a sanguine expectation of pleasure.
(200-01)

Leaving his army regiment without permission, Theodore rescues Adeline from the Marquis' property. When pursued, Theodore directly defies authority twice, first striking a king's officer and then wounding the Marquis himself.³⁷ These incidents bear closer examination because of the implications of Theodore's actions--that is, the challenge of the individual to a despotic authority. The Marquis' abuse of authority, like his guardian relationship with Adeline, perverts justice for personal gain. The incidents underscore the hopelessness of an individual standing up to a military government.

Although the men who arrest Theodore are his inferiors in rank, Theodore is subject to their military authority because they represent the king through a metonymical

³⁷ Herman Melville refers to Ann Radcliffe in "Billy Budd." Like Theodore, Billy is accused of striking his superior officer. Theodore is pardoned after Adeline appeals to the king on his behalf. Billy, however, does not have this legal recourse available and is executed for his supposed challenge to authority.

extension of the king's power. The soldiers have become his superiors. Instead of obeying them, Theodore openly challenges what he regards as improper authority, swearing "no power on earth should force him away" (176). Theodore invokes the power behind the hierarchy of authority, but the soldiers respond according to the letter of the law, not its spirit. The men spell out the danger of his actions by exclaiming "'Do you oppose the King's orders?'" (176). When Theodore wounds one man, his fate is clear to everyone: "'Why he must die at any rate,' said the serjeant, 'for quitting his post, and drawing upon me in the execution of the King's orders'" (177). The men enforce the military rules, without questioning the justice of the particular situation.

As difficult as his situation is, Theodore makes it worse. In addition to striking the enlisted man, Theodore strikes the Marquis, his superior officer. Paine would justify Theodore's defiance of abusive authority. In Rights of Man he asks, "When men are sore with the sense of oppressions, and menaced with the prospect of new ones, is the calmness of philosophy, or the palsy of insensibility to be looked for?" (57).³⁸ Theodore wounds the Marquis,

³⁸ Under feudal law, Theodore would have been justified in defending himself:

According to an edict of Charlemagne, a vassal is justified in deserting his lord for any one of the following reasons: if the lord plots against his life, if the lord commits adultery with his wife, if the lord attacks him with

but is himself wounded. The physician describes Theodore's position as "desperate," recognizing Theodore's relative powerlessness in the face of misused authority: "The character of the Marquis is too well known to suffer him either to be loved or respected; from such a man you have nothing to hope, for he has scarcely any thing to fear'" (202). When the physician petitions the Marquis not to move Theodore,

The Marquis uttered a dreadful oath, and, cursing Theodore for having brought him to his present condition said, he should depart with the guard that very night. Against the cruelty of this sentence, the physician ventured to expostulate; and endeavouring to awaken the Marquis to a sense of humanity, pleaded earnestly for Theodore. But these entreaties and arguments seemed, by displaying to the Marquis a part of his own character, to rouse his resentment, and re-kindle all the violence of his passions. (203-04)

Here, the description of the Marquis' behavior invokes Adeline's earlier statements about arbitrary authority: he is cruel, vengeful, and punishing, without regard to Theodore's humanity. Theodore understands the hopelessness of his situation: "his destruction was certain, for should he even be acquitted of the intention of deserting, he would be condemned for having assaulted his superior officer" (204).

Indeed, the controls the Marquis places on Theodore suggest other elements of a military government. Theodore

drawn sword, or if the lord fails to protect him when able to do so. (Stephenson 20)

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is under the Marquis' surveillance. The Marquis knows the contents of Theodore's private conversation with Adeline "by some inexplicable means" and Theodore knows he is under "the scrutinizing eye of the Marquis" (169, 170).

Theodore's movements are regulated by the Marquis, who "commanded [him] to prepare to attend to [his] regiment" and makes "it impossible to obtain a leave of absence" (169, 170).

Both Theodore and the Marquis are part of a larger hierarchy, ultimately answerable to the king. After Theodore strikes the sergeant, he encounters the military bureaucracy in "the persons employed to prosecute military criminals" (190). And, as in any relationship of oppression, the oppressor is also victim to his actions:

Theodore, indeed, did suffer all that a virtuous mind, labouring under oppression so severe, could feel; but he was, at least, free from those inveterate and malignant passions which tore the bosom of the Marquis, and which inflict upon the possessor a punishment more severe than any they can prompt him to imagine for another.
(201)

However, as in his custodial role with Adeline, the Marquis' position of military authority over Theodore protects him and helps him to maintain power, even though he is corrupt. The laws support the Marquis' position. Theodore is all too aware of "the heinous light in which the law regards an assault upon a superior officer" (295).

The military relationship between the Marquis and Theodore seems to ask whether organizations based on

traditional hierarchical structures wrongly elevate the corrupt over those whose morals would merit higher position. Theodore's challenge to the Marquis, his military commanding officer, suggests that military authority be subject to scrutiny. Paine recognizes the close connection between a military government and one of aristocracy when he says:

That, then, which is called aristocracy in some countries, and nobility in others, arose out of the the governments founded upon conquest. It was originally a military order, for the purpose of supporting military government, (for such were all governments founded in conquest). (82)

The issue for Theodore is not deciding between what he feels and what he thinks. In each of the novel's asymmetrical relationships the focus is on how the relationship depends on archaic assumptions about power. Radcliffe modifies the by-then-standard head and heart dichotomy of the standard sentimental novel, to the same purpose she modifies the conventions of the Gothic. She clearly keeps the emphasis on the issue of models of authority.

The final relationship Radcliffe incorporates uses economic discourses and involves the Marquis and his financial hold on La Motte. This hierarchical relationship is the strongest of the three because La Motte is the most vulnerable: not only because of his economic situation, but also because he himself is without principles. The

Marquis, an aristocratic landowner, is able to dictate La Motte's actions because of the fallen nobleman's financial problems and inability to deal with them.³⁹ Radcliffe emphasizes La Motte's desperate situation, opening the novel with his flight from Paris, his creditors, and the courts. The narrator describes his weakness: although he "descended from an ancient house of France," "he was a man whose passions overcame his reason," and "his conduct was suggested by feeling, rather than by principle; and his virtue, such as it was, could not stand the pressure of occasion" (2). However, his sentimentalism offers no governing guidance for him because it is unprincipled. Unlike La Luc, being "a man of feeling" handicaps La Motte. In short, he is not a good manager of people or of resources, making him an easy target for the Marquis.

La Motte's inability to manage his affairs is evident in his treatment of his wife and servants. When their carriage overturns, La Motte does not act on his own feelings or reason; instead he re-acts against his wife. "[H]e resolved not to yield to those [feelings] of his wife," forcing himself into an action contrary to his own wishes (17). He is able to make his servant Peter obey him only by repeating orders "in a tone of somewhat more

³⁹ See Staves for an analysis of the changes in property law and practice to maintain patriarchal structures within the diversifying economic structure of the period.

authority" or "in a tone more authoritative" (26, 56). Furthermore, La Motte selfishly protects himself before considering the safety of his family. The reader learns that his "selfish prudence was more conspicuous than tender anxiety for his wife" and that he is "regardless of the terrors of Madame La Motte and Adeline" (55, 86).

His inability to manage money guarantees that he will remain in the Marquis' power. Indulging in "dissipated pleasure," La Motte had gambled his fortune away and was forced to leave Paris after involvement in a "swindling transaction" (220, 221). After finding refuge in the abbey, his funds are depleted and so he resorts to robbery. Not only does he rob the Marquis, believing that he has killed him, but when the Marquis later confronts him, La Motte discovers he has been hiding out in the abbey that the Marquis owns.

After Adeline is abducted from the abbey, rescued from the Marquis, recaptured, sent back to the abbey, and placed under his protection, La Motte admits his relative powerlessness to her: "'I am not master of myself, or my conduct'" (207). Subject to the Marquis' authority, La Motte understands his position all too well:

La Motte, mean while, experienced all the terrors that could be inflicted by a conscience not wholly hardened to guilt. He had been led on by passion to dissipation--and from dissipation to vice; but having once touched the borders of infamy, the progressive steps followed each other fast, and he now saw himself the pander of a villain, and the betrayer of an

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innocent girl, whom every plea of justice and humanity called upon him to protect. . . . He knew himself to be in the power of the Marquis, and he dreaded that power more than the sure, though distant punishment that awaits upon guilt. (208-09)

Although both the French government and the Marquis control La Motte's actions through the threat of violence, the Marquis' power is stronger because of his immediacy. La Motte obeys neither.

La Motte's situation becomes a crisis when the Marquis, learning Adeline's identity as his niece, uses his power to pressure La Motte into killing her. Under the threat of blackmail and the promise of intervention, La Motte confesses his earlier crimes to the Marquis, solidifying the Marquis' control over him. Perhaps the best insight into the Marquis' character and his view of human nature and society is evident the argument he uses to ask La Motte to kill Adeline:

'There are certain prejudices attached to the human mind . . . which it requires all our wisdom to keep from interfering with our happiness; certain set notions, acquired in infancy, and cherished involuntarily by age, which grow up and assume a gloss so plausible, that few minds, in what is called a civilized country, can afterwards overcome them.' (222)

The "prejudices" to be overcome are, of course, the moral and ethical scruples that might prevent La Motte from killing Adeline. With his philosophy, the Marquis attempts to establish a standard of evaluation and impose it on La Motte. He discounts European society for instilling the

"prejudices" and "notions" with "a gloss so plausible" which he claims threatens "truth": "'Truth is often perverted by education'" (222). He continues,

'While the refined Europeans boast a standard of honour, and a sublimity of virtue, which often leads them from pleasure to misery, and from nature to error, the simple, uninformed American follows the impulse of his heart, and obeys the inspiration of wisdom. Nature, uncontaminated by false refinement every where acts alike in the great occurrences of life.' (222)⁴⁰

Giving examples from around the world of humans who murder with justification, he rounds out his argument with examples from the animal world: "'when a reptile hurts us, or an animal of prey threatens us, we think no farther, but endeavor to annihilate it'" (222). To refrain from killing when threatened, the Marquis asserts, "'I should be a madman to hesitate'" (222). He insists on self-preservation as "the great law of nature" (222). The Marquis plays with La Motte, arguing from his superior position that there are

"Kind services that--in short there are services, which excite all our gratitude, and which we can never think repaid. It is in your power to place me in such a situation." (223)

⁴⁰ While the Marquis perverts Rousseau's notion of the goodness of inherent instincts, he uses many of the Marquis de Sade's arguments. Not only does de Sade argue the self-centered and self-indulgent nature of natural instincts, he also uses examples of customs accepted in other societies to question European moral values. For further discussion, see Chard's introduction to The Romance of the Forest and her notes, particularly page 382.

Enforcing evil as good, his power has become truly arbitrary, fitting Paine's definition: "That government is governed by no principle whatever; that it can make evil good, or good evil, just as it pleases. In short, that government is arbitrary power" (117 emphasis in the original).

Horrified that he is subject to such outrageous authority, La Motte weighs his position:

He saw himself entangled in the web which his own crimes had woven. Being in the power of the Marquis, he knew he must either consent to the commission a deed, from the enormity of which, depraved as he was, he shrunk in horror, or sacrifice fortune, freedom, probably life itself, to the refusal. He had been led on by slow gradations from folly to vice, till he now saw before him an abyss of guilt which startled even the conscience that so long had slumbered. The means of retreating were desperate--to proceed was equally so. (226)

At this point, La Motte understands all too well that his power, limited by his subordinate position to the Marquis, will only continue to wane. Carrying out the wishes of the Marquis will only dissipate the small amount of power he has, leaving him in an even more helpless and dependent position.

La Motte reverses his earlier self-centered actions and protects Adeline's life. He consciously chooses to defy the Marquis and helps Adeline escape, asking her to "remember, when you think of me, that I am not quite so bad as I have been tempted to be" (232). He recognizes that the Marquis' illegitimate authority has limits in

controlling his own actions.⁴¹ Ironically, the hierarchical power relationship has pitted La Motte against himself. Morally he comes up the victor, although he must stand trial for his crimes against the state and the Marquis.

The economic relationship between the Marquis and La Motte examines whether an individual is accountable for past wrongs brought about by unjust systems of power if he then vindicates himself through new behaviors. The relationship, with its tendency to brutality, associates aristocratic models of government with force, as well as with economic ties. La Motte's financial difficulties and his moral inability to deal ethically with them offer insights into how economics and political power are intertwined. Within such a system of power, La Motte is not successful because for most of the novel he only reacts to inappropriate authority. Unable to enter into the traditional system of power, La Motte learns too late to avoid legal punishment that he can act on his individual principles. La Motte, Radcliffe's "varied" character, recognized as one of her most interesting and best developed, illustrates an individual struggling to cope

⁴¹ La Motte's action demonstrates his compassion for her; in contrast to reacting in detached pity, he knowingly commits himself to actions which will implicate him. La Motte provides a scale by which the reader can estimate the full extent of the Marquis' depravity.

with changing paradigms of authority within a society. The character of La Motte suggests that while it is possible to escape the economic domination of aristocratic government and embrace a more enlightened disinterested government, it is at the cost of personal sacrifice. After all, La Motte is banished from France by the king as a consequence of his decision.

As a landowner, an officer, and an aristocrat the Marquis abuses the systems that empower him. The Marquis succeeds until he exercises his arbitrary authority too recklessly. Trying to assert his authority over Adeline, he destroys his authority over Theodore and La Motte. His attempt to seduce Adeline causes Theodore to confront him, and his command to murder Adeline galvanizes La Motte to disobey him. Finally, he is defeated when he attempts to punish Theodore and La Motte using the legal system. "He, however, severely repented that he indulged the hasty spirit of revenge which had urged him to the prosecution of La Motte," although "reflection and repentance [for his earlier crimes] formed as yet no part of his disposition" (338).

The feelings of the Marquis, who, in a prosecution stimulated by revenge, had thus unexpectedly exposed his crimes to the public eye, and betrayed himself to justice, can only be imagined. (342)

Motivated by the "passions" of ambition, and the love of pleasure" and "for magnificence and dissipation," he

embodies the negative example of arbitrary authority at its worst (342, 343).

The Trials

The inclusion of the four trials suggests the seriousness with which Radcliffe engaged the intellectual and philosophical substance of The Romance of the Forest within the limitations imposed upon her by publishers. The trials further the plot of the novel by recovering and highlighting information through testimony. The legal rhetoric uses already established patterns. The defendants are Theodore, La Motte, the Marquis, and D'Aunoy, each one a protector of Adeline as well as representing elements of the individual's relationship to aristocratic government. Although the trial section uses Gothic conventions to a lesser degree than they were used earlier in the novel, nevertheless, an element of horror remains. This horror is even more terrifying for Adeline because it is real and not imagined.

Theodore's trial is a fait accompli when Adeline hears of it: "'His judgment is already fixed--he is condemned to die'" (303). Indeed, the Marquis

"with passions still more exasperated by his late disappointment, . . . had brought witnesses to prove that his life had been endangered by the circumstance; and who having pursued the prosecution with the most bitter rancour, had at length obtained the sentence which the law could not withhold, but which every other officer in the regiment deplored." (306-7)

Instead of going for terror or simply emphasizing the sentiment, Radcliffe emphasizes the injustice of the legal decision. The Marquis

procured the condemnation of Theodore. The sentence was universally lamented, for Theodore was much beloved in his regiment; and the occasion of the Marquis's personal resentment towards him being known, every heart was interested in the cause. (307)

Not only do the officers know its injustice, but so do the men in the regiment. Furthermore, although "the warrant for his execution had already received the king's signature," Theodore's letters are intercepted and destroyed by the Marquis who continues to exert authority over his actions (308). Nor does his influence stop there. When La Luc petitions the king to ask for his son's pardon, the king may have honored his request

had it not happened that the Marquis de Montalt was present at court when the paper was presented . . . and the king was convinced that Theodore was not a proper object of mercy. (324-25)

Although the military establishment understands the unjust plight of Theodore, the existing power structure the Marquis exploits renders the military an unjust and corruptible form of government.

La Motte's trial is central to the trial scenes in that it brings to light Adeline's history and indicts the Marquis and D'Aunoy. Just as the Marquis has traveled out of his way to prosecute Theodore, he follows La Motte to Paris to seek his vengeance through legal proceedings. And,

like Theodore, La Motte knows that he is in double jeopardy: even if he beats the charges the Marquis has brought against him, he must stand trial for the crimes he was running away from at the novel's beginning. The narrator, to underscore this point, personifies justice:

he was now in the scene of his former crimes,
and the moment that should liberate him from the
walls of his prison would probably deliver him
again into the hands of offended justice. (316)

Ironically, an act of vengeance helps La Motte's case. One of the Marquis' hired men, Du Bosse, comes forward from debtor's prison to testify against him, spurred on because the Marquis has not relieved his debts. Like La Motte, Du Bosse has economic ties with the Marquis. The Marquis has held him in control, through D'Aunoy, by promising him he would "change all his poverty to riches" and "grudge him no money" (332). During La Motte's trial, Du Bosse admits his part in the Marquis' attempt to kill Adeline after she refused to take her vows. He believes Adeline is the Marquis' daughter because D'Aunoy had convinced him with the story that she was born to a nun. The council of the Marquis tries to suppress his testimony, contending "that the circumstances alleged tending to criminate the client, the proceeding was both irrelevant and illegal" (333). It is allowed, however, as "not irrelevant, and therefore not illegal, for that the circumstances which threw light upon the character of the Marquis, affected his evidence against La Motte" (333). Du Bosse goes on to testify that

the Marquis had never seen his child, and that therefore it could not be supposed he felt much kindness towards it, and still less that he could love it better than he loved its mother. (333)

Hearing the testimony "in astonishment," La Motte is "thrilled with horror" when he remembers that he almost committed Adeline to an incestuous relationship with the Marquis (334). La Motte testifies that the Marquis tried to exert economic authority over him to kill Adeline, but that he resisted. He concludes by suggesting that the Marquis may have succeeded. When the Marquis' counsel objects, he is overruled and the case is suspended until Adeline can come forward. Although "The uncommon degree of emotion which [the Marquis'] countenance betrayed during the narrations of Du Bosse, and De la Motte, was generally observed" by the court, La Motte realizes Adeline must be found "since the evidence against him would lose much of its validity from the confirmation she would give of the bad character of his prosecutor" (334, 338). Adeline's voice, so ineffective against her would-be protectors, suddenly has strength in a more enlightened court of law.

Although Adeline's guardianship has been problematized throughout the text, she cannot "bear to consider" the Marquis her father. She regards him with "horror" and "an emotion entirely new to her, and which was strongly tinged with horror" (339, 340). When she hears D'Aunoy's confession that the Marquis directed him to kill

her father, her "every nerve thrilled with horror" (341). Indeed, Adeline is gripped by an emotion which, according to Radcliffe, "contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates [the soul and faculties]" ("Supernatural" 145).

D'Aunoy's appearance, like Du Bosse's, is motivated by revenge against the Marquis for "an imaginary neglect" (341). He was "ordered to confess all he knew concerning this mysterious affair, or to undergo the torture" (341). His testimony goes further than anyone suspects and he indicts both the Marquis and himself for the murder of Adeline's father. He reveals that the Marquis is her uncle and thus her legal guardian. Reexamining the Marquis' actions in the context that he is her guardian makes his actions even less attractive than they appeared while reading the novel. The reader realizes that even before the novel opens, Adeline's legal guardian has killed her father, has blackmailed the man she thought was her father to raise her, has demanded that she accept the veil and the authority of the Catholic church, and has ordered her killed when she does not. After she escapes, he falls in love with her, not realizing her identity, and nearly commits incest by seducing her, but again orders her killed when he discovers his mistake. His actions force her to flee France to seek protection. In the process, both the man who loves her and the man who intervenes to save her life are condemned to death for crimes they have committed

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because of her guardian's vengefulness. Also, D'Aunoy confesses that "he brought her up as his own child, receiving from the present Marquis a considerable annuity for his secrecy" (342). He admits that the Marquis ordered him to mislead Du Bosse "with a false story of her birth" (342).

The Marquis' trial is prefaced by Adeline's ambiguous feelings about her role in testifying against him. Although she has the opportunity to avenge her father's death, "in punishing the destroyer of her parent doom her uncle to death" (346). For Adeline, who has never had a family, having the Marquis as a relative has its merits. Her "distress and agitation" over the matter increase as the trial date nears:

Though justice demanded the life of the murderer, and though the tenderness and pity which the idea of her father called forth urged her to avenge his death, she could not, without horror, consider herself as the instrument of dispensing that justice which would deprive a fellow being of existence; and there were times when she wished the secret of her birth had never been revealed. (347)

The trial is by the Marquis' suicide. Before he dies, however, he "establishes Adeline beyond dispute in the rights of her birth; and also bequeathed her a considerable legacy" (351).

The Marquis de Montalt has forced Adeline to seek others as guardians for protection from him. Although the old form of guardianship arose out of the feudal system of

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knight's service in return for protection, the Marquis offered no protection for Adeline. Because of his selfish greed for wealth and power, he rejects his responsibilities and terribly abuses his authority.

Paine's description of the early history of the British monarchy raises similar images to those of the Marquis. Paine questions the rights of

. . . a banditti of ruffians to overrun a country, and lay it under contributions. Their power being thus established, the chief of the band contrived to lose the name of Robber in that of Monarch; and hence the origin of Monarchy and Kings. . . . The conqueror considered the conquered, not as his prisoner, but his property. He led him in triumph rattling in chains, and doomed him, at pleasure, to slavery or death. As time obliterated the history of their beginning, their successors assumed new appearances, to cut off the entail of their disgrace, but their principles and objects remained the same. What at first was plunder, assumed the foster name of revenue; and the power originally usurped, they affected to inherit. (168-69)

The actions of Paine's ruffians parallel those of the Marquis. He wrongfully seizes power, condemning his brother to imprisonment and death, to go on to plunder Adeline's wealth which he attempts to inherit.

However, because society intercedes, the Marquis' claims to authority are invalidated because of his recklessness. Radcliffe seems to suggest, therefore, that society must assume responsibility for the individual. Radcliffe's novel warns that some individuals abuse authority because they use it selfishly for their own

personal gain, regardless of whom they destroy in the process. Outmoded patriarchal practices prove ineffective within the context of contemporary society's standards.

Finally, D'Aunoy's trial is straightforward compared to the other three. He is guilty, condemned by his own confession. And, unlike La Motte, has no redeeming characteristics. He is "tried, condemned, and hanged, for the murder" (354).

As soon as Adeline is "formally acknowledged as the daughter and heiress of Henry Marquis de Montalt, she uses her aristocratic privilege, derived from her hereditary rights, throwing "herself at the feet of the king in behalf of Theodore and of La Motte" (353).⁴² As the ultimate authority in France, he is also her ultimate protector. Although she obtains an "ample pardon" for Theodore, La Motte's "sentence was softened from death to banishment" "in consideration of the service he had finally rendered her" (353). Furthermore, "the noble generosity of Adeline silenced other prosecutions that were preparing against him" and she provides him money for his banishment (353). Radcliffe's narrator explains the justice of the outcome and La Motte's rehabilitation:

⁴² Janet Todd points out that when Adeline "is ennobled she acquires economic and social power to such an extent that she can herself determine the time of her marriage" (Sign 268). The vestiges of feudal family power structures can have positive implications as well as negative ones, but are inscribed within the boundaries of the patriarchal family.

This kindness operated so powerfully upon his heart, which had been betrayed through weakness rather than natural depravity, and awakened so keen a remorse for the injuries he had once mediated against a benefactress so noble, that his former habits became odious to him, and his character gradually recovered the hue which it would probably always have worn had he never been exposed to the tempting dissipation of Paris. (354)

Adeline's role in the dispensing of justice highlights the extent of her newfound authority within the patriarchal institutions. If not for her intervention, however, both Theodore and La Motte would have been subject to the law, though their actions merited otherwise. The novel invokes the old theme of law versus justice and suggests that the two are not interchangeable. Law in the eighteenth-century was meant to preserve property, "and incidentally, the lives and liberties, of the propertied" (Thompson 21).

In The Romance of the Forest law is capable of controlling arbitrary power only to a degree. Even with the legal trial system, proper authority, because it demands obedience, depends on enlightened disinterest. Because insuring the limits of power is not necessarily a function of the law, the novel suggests that eighteenth-century law is adequate only in an enlightened society with enlightened individuals. A system based on heredity is too vulnerable to corruption by the greedy.

Adeline realizes just how vulnerable her own family has been under "the property regimes of patriarchy" (Staves 54):

The late Marquis de Montalt, the father of Adeline received from his ancestors a patrimony very inadequate to support the splendour of his rank; but he had married the heiress of an illustrious family, whose fortune amply supplied the deficiency of his own. He had the misfortune to lose her, for she was amiable and beautiful, soon after the birth of a daughter, and it was then that the present Marquis formed the diabolical design of destroying his brother. . . . His brother and his infant daughter only stood between him and his wishes. (343)

She realizes that had her mother lived, her father would have been spared (350). Consequently, Adeline speculates she would also have avoided her terrors.

Radcliffe several times describes the differences between the good and the greedy. Once again she compares the two Marquises--Adeline's father Henry and her legal guardian Phillipe:

The contrast of their characters prevented that cordial regard between them which their near relationship seemed to demand. Henry was benevolent, mild, and contemplative. In his heart reigned the love of virtue; in his manners the strictness of justice was tempered, not weakened, by mercy; his mind was enlarged by science, and adorned by elegant literature. The character of Phillipe has been already delineated in his actions; its nicer shades were blended with some shining tints; but these served only to render more striking by contrast the general darkness of the portrait. (343)

The statements made about Phillipe's authority are that it is benevolent, mild, contemplative, merciful, rational, sophisticated. These contrast with the statements made

about the abbess, reinforced by the example of the aristocrats whose concept of authority is rigid, severe, unforgiving, unsophisticated, deceitful, cruel, and superstitious.

Patriarchal structures survive, though altered to suit Radcliffe's sensibilities. The novel closes with La Luc and "his children and people thus assembled round him in one grand compact of harmony and joy" (362). The narrator explains that

Their former lives afforded an example of trials well endured--and their present, of virtues greatly rewarded; and was their happiness contracted, but diffused to all who came within the sphere of their influence. the indigent and unhappy rejoiced in their benevolence, the virtuous and enlightened in their friendship, and their children in parents whose example impressed upon their hearts the precepts offered to their understandings. (363)

These statements, implying that authority is benevolent, virtuous, enlightened, friendly, and based on uniform precepts, mark the relationship between the individual and the idealized authority Radcliffe imposes.

Repositioning Guardianship

The Romance of the Forest does not reject hierarchical government, nor does it reject patriarchy. Adeline uses the court system, the king, and her aristocratic standing--her individual agency--to achieve her ends.⁴³ Radcliffe's

⁴³ Critics have faulted the novel specifically for its lack of direct critique of authority. For example, J.M.S. Tompkins in The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 claims

novel suggests that properly utilizing the available public institutions, including the legal system, will maintain orderly lines of descent and inheritance and protect individuals. However, unlike Paine's Rights of Man, Radcliffe's novel deals only with the power relationships within the aristocratic class of society.

Radcliffe problematizes a woman's place in an aristocratic society governed by hereditary rights. The lines of power, control, and authority are clear for the men.⁴⁴ For women, though, the lines are unclear. Adeline's problematic status diminishes her power to control her own destiny. The text seems to argue that women in particular need more equitable law, maintained with justice and updated regularly to protect against those seeking to

Radcliffe "was a conservative, staunchly clinging to old ideals in the turbulent flood of new ones" (250). Chloe Chard judges the novel as "particularly cautious in the forms of authority which it attacks" (xxiv). Her argument continues:

The portrayal of France under the ancien régime in this novel carefully avoids any suggestion that the recent events of the French Revolution might be seen as a response to various forms of injustice: both the French monarch and the French courts are presented as, on the whole, just and benevolent (although accounts of the less politically sensitive areas of Savoy and Nice freely criticize the baneful effects of 'an arbitrary government'). (xxiv)

⁴⁴ The exception is Theodore, whose identity as La Luc's son is not immediately evident because he has "taken the name of Peyrou, with an estate which had been left him about a year before by a relation of his mother's upon that condition" (305). Radcliffe evidently forgets this point, naming him Theodore La Luc later in the text (355).

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circumvent it. Radcliffe seems to recognize that the existing legal system can only arbitrate the existing laws adequately if individuals cooperate--a situation she seems to suggest, by using La Luc to represent the cooperative individual, is a sentimentalized ideal. Without cooperation, contemporary social institutions, dominated by the greed of those in power, will continue to oppress the less powerful.

Radcliffe's novel appears to champion the English evolution of government. Like Paine, Radcliffe seems to applaud the dismissal of the institutionalized government of the Catholic Church. Both highlight the problems of an aristocratic government dependent on a feudally-based system of laws.

Radcliffe does not go as far as Paine to urge a government based on "the common rights of man." Instead, she contests abuses of the present system, particularly those who usurp power by brutal forcefulness. Indeed The Romance of the Forest opens with the speech of La Motte's lawyer calling for justice, rather than individual greed:

When once sordid interest seizes on the heart,
it freezes up the source of every warm and
liberal feeling; it is an enemy alike to virtue
and to taste--this it perverts, and that it
annihilates. The time may come, my friend, when
death shall dissolve the sinews of avarice, and
justice be permitted to resume her rights. (1)

Radcliffe establishes her argument--the existence of "sordid interest" and "avarice" disrupts private and public

life. Not only are "warm and liberal feeling," "virtue," and "taste" precluded, but legal justice is hindered. Radcliffe's novel suggests that the power of usurping individuals must be suppressed and only delegated authority be honored.

Similarly, Paine claims the parliament of 1688 had the right to delegate a king, but should not have assumed the right "of binding and controlling posterity to the end of time" (41). He does not contest the use of delegated rights, but protests the "usurped" rights (45). Both ask similar questions: what are the limits of government over an individual? when can a government be cashiered for misconduct? what kind of government should be framed?

Juxtaposing the discourses of Paine's Rights of Man with those of Radcliffe foregrounds the surprisingly radical message of her novel. Radcliffe's The Romance of the Forest, therefore, is obviously more than just Gothic titillation. It is an important gloss on major events in the intellectual history of the time, and an example of a forum available to women writers.

A Simple Story: A Proper [Re]Education for Guardians

A man has been termed a microcosm; and every family might also be called a state. States, it is true, have mostly been governed by arts that disgrace the character of man; and the want of a just constitution, and equal laws, have so perplexed the notions of the worldly wise, that they more than question the reasonableness of contending for the rights of humanity. Thus morality, polluted in the national reservoir, sends off streams of vice to corrupt the constituent part of the body politic; but should more noble, or rather more just principles regulate the laws, which ought to be the government of society, and not those who execute them, duty might become the rule of private conduct.

--Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1792. (188-89)

Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791) has always had its share of readers and has enjoyed an unbroken publication history.¹ Critics have attributed its appeal to Inchbald's artistry in realistically depicting characters, particularly those of Miss Milner and her daughter, Matilda.² They consider Inchbald's narration of the dramatic actions of her characters, subtly portrayed

¹ For a history of the various editions, see the select bibliography in Jane Spencer, ed., A Simple Story by Elizabeth Inchbald (New York: Oxford UP, 1988) xxviii-xxix. All parenthetical references in this chapter, unless otherwise specified, will be to Spencer's edition of A Simple Story.

² In 1810, Inchbald reaffirmed the words of Maria Edgeworth "that it all seemed like reality" in a letter to her. Inchbald was commenting on A Simple Story when rereading it fifteen years after she wrote it (Sigl 223).

yet highly suggestive of underlying motivation and emotions, as her contribution to the novel genre. Critics attribute her sense of characterization to her theatrical experience as both actress and playwright. One contemporary critic writing in the Analytical Review comments that the "constellation of splendid characters . . . [is] marked with a discriminating outline, and little individual traits are skillfully brought forward" (101).³ Recent critics agree. For instance Terry Castle in Masquerade and Civilization calls A Simple Story

a tour de force--a small masterpiece neglected for too long. . . . The emotional exactitude, the subtlety of imaginative statement, make it one of the finest novels of any period. (290-91).⁴

Perhaps because of Inchbald's artistry in depicting the characters of Miss Milner and her daughter, Matilda, critical readings have for the most part focused on those two characters and only cursorily considered the hero, Dorriforth.⁵ Consequently, they have ignored Inchbald's

³ A critic for the Critical Review (1791) remarked "Character is accurately delineated and faithfully preserved, with few exceptions: the most delicate feelings are continually excited: the incidents are natural" (207).

⁴ Another recent critic Gary Kelly notes in his The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805 "Her characters' gestures are a 'language of signs' which, like their speech, is both idiosyncratic and intelligible" (86). Kelly feels the novel achieves "psychological realism" through "an unusually detailed and consistent account of character and of feeling" (79, 67).

⁵ Although the reviewer for the Critical Review (1791) recognizes Dorriforth as important to the "particular

critique of public patriarchal institutions and those they empower. My reading of the novel argues that rather than benignly fostering social order, hierarchical institutions--such as the patriarchal family, the Catholic church, the land-owning aristocracy, and the public educational systems--as well as those like Dorriforth they empower enforced outdated practices oppressive to individuals.

Situated primarily in a domestic setting, that of two generations of an English family, Inchbald's novel directly challenges traditional patriarchal systems and offers in their place the new authority of feminized morality. Among

unity" of the novel, he focuses on "the still more intimate link of connection," which he identifies as "the unremitting attention which the fable and principal characters command," by which he means the mother and daughter (107). Spencer argues Dorriforth's centrality, but with qualification: "In some respects he is the centrepiece: the story begins with him and traces the effect on him of his relationship to the two successive heroines" (xviii). She admits that "It is male behaviour, not female, which appears fascinating, wayward, and contradictory in this novel" (xix). Nevertheless, her criticism focuses on "the disruptive potential of female desire" embodied in Miss Milner and restorative femininity exhibited by Matilda (xv). Gary Kelly does remind his reader that "It is worth remembering that Dorriforth's education forms an important aspect of the novel's treatment of the theme," but he devotes only two paragraphs to the topic, which also argue real-life models for him in Godwin or the actor Kemble (91). He insists that "The priest-like austerity of Dorriforth leads him to judge severely, but also to deny the forgiveness which God himself would deny to his repentant creatures. The very education of a priest, Mrs. Inchbald implies, renders him unfit to communicate God's mercy to his spiritual wards" (91). In Castle's reading of the novel as a "carnivalized fictional landscape," she discusses Dorriforth's "gradual transformation of sensibility--a kind of sentimental education--that one might take as the psychological equivalent of carnivalesque transformation" (293, 305).

other virtues, the characteristics of feminized morality included modesty, humility, and honesty (Armstrong 66). Although these traits were originally deemed desirable for women, they became universalized as desirable for everyone. In Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel, Nancy Armstrong explores the political dimensions of the emerging feminized ideal. According to Armstrong, the domestic novel helped separate the political realm into male and female realms. The division "was understood in terms of their respective qualities of minds" (4). That is, the masculine was associated with "economics and political qualities," and the feminine with "emotional qualities" (15). As a result, the public realms of marketplace and government were identified as male, and the realm of the private household was identified as female.⁶ Within her domain, the domestic woman had

authority over the household, leisure time, courtship procedures, and kinship relations, and under her jurisdiction the most basic qualities of human identity were supposed to develop. (3)

Some of these "most basic qualities" exercised in A Simple Story include: dismissing traditional hierarchical ranking

⁶ Even on the national level, the private and the public realms were for the first time being disentangled. As John Brooke relates in King George III, the king himself differentiated the two:

King George was the first British monarch to make a distinction between his court and his home, between his public and his private life. St. James's became the King's place of business: his London home was the Queen's House. (282)

in favor of determining individual worth by moral actions; educating individuals to reason and to value emotions; and promoting good parenting practices in the belief that private virtues and affections make good citizens.

With its focus on the private realm, Inchbald's novel problematizes late eighteenth-century domestic relationships, questioning long accepted practices of patriarchal authority in the household, and demonstrates the changing power structure of domestic life. Specifically, A Simple Story provides an account of Dorriforth's progression from the patriarchal institutions of the Catholic Church and the aristocratic, hierarchical family to a higher set of values--those of the domestic circle. Inchbald contests standard notions about proper domestic roles for men and women, suggesting that traditional patriarchal roles of authority also be challenged and replaced by a domestic ideal which promotes private virtue and affections. According to Armstrong, the common ideal for the individual--at first strictly for females, but then adopted by males as well--became possessing a "psychological depth" of emotional and moral values (20).

A Simple Story chronicles Dorriforth's progress to achieve the feminized ideal as he undergoes a three-part transformation: from Catholic priest to patriarchal guardian, and then to a loving father. Dorriforth's formal

education under Sandford and at St. Omer's promotes patriarchal, hierarchical power structures. As a guardian and landowner, however, he adopts a patriarchal style of government over his dependents, reflecting his view of the proper patriarchal role. Finally, his experiences with the domestic circle in his household cause him to realize the value of their feminized morality. At the novel's end, Dorriforth is moving toward embracing the feminine ideal, but has not done so completely; his behavior occasionally slips into the patriarchal behavior he has long practiced.

Inchbald focuses on the middle part of Dorriforth's transformation. By showing his inadequacies when he assumes the role of tyrannical patriarch, Inchbald emphasizes the danger in empowering individuals who lack a feminized morality to govern others and indirectly suggests that the social, political, and legal institutions that have empowered them no longer have authority and must be reevaluated and reformed to meet society's changing needs. Because she inserts these ideas into a story about private family relationships, her strategy partly conceals the revolutionary message of the novel.⁷ In fact, she explores ideas circulating in major philosophical treatises, particularly Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the

⁷ Inchbald, like other "women authors, in contrast with their male counterparts, had to manage the different task of simultaneously subverting and conforming to patriarchal standards" (Armstrong 9).

Rights of Women (1792), and comments on current debates questioning the existing institutionalized power.⁸

Challenging Dorriforth's actions as a patriarchal guardian and a father, she also contests his fitness to function as a landed and titled aristocrat. Although he is the nexus of these powers, their authority is limited because of the Catholic situation in England.⁹ Although

⁸ Vindication was published a year after A Simple Story, yet both treat similar ideas. Although both Inchbald and Wollstonecraft were associated with the radical English Jacobin movement in London in the early 1790s, there is no evidence of any direct connection between the two women until the beginning of Wollstonecraft's association with Godwin in 1796.

However, Spencer attributes the review of A Simple Story in the Analytical Review to Wollstonecraft, and argues that Wollstonecraft was disappointed that there "was not enough contrast between mother and daughter" and that she "wanted a feminist moral which Inchbald failed to provide" (xiv).

⁹ As a Catholic herself, Inchbald had first-hand knowledge of Catholic practices, as well as anti-Papist sentiments. Although for the most part she treats Catholic issues indirectly, the novel capitalizes on the contemporary interest in the subject matter. The Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791 was passed the same year the novel was published and Inchbald's version of domestic life in a Catholic household a topical subject.

According to M.D.R. Leys in Catholics in England 1559-1829: A Social History, the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778 repealed the act of 1699, which had made Catholic priests and schoolmasters subject to life imprisonment and had complicated land inheritance and purchase. However, the new freedoms applied only to those who swore an oath of allegiance to the king (133). The Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791 gave even more rights to Catholics, permitting the saying and hearing of Mass, no longer prohibited under penalty of death. The act also abolished double land taxation, the special enrollment of deeds and wills, and specific oaths for Catholic lawyers (140).

However, there were still impediments for English Catholics. The Marriage Act of 1753 meant that Catholics had to marry in two ceremonies or break the laws of England

the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778 and 1791 granted more personal freedom to Catholics, their public political lives were still restricted. His adoption of patriarchal practices and his resulting failure to control his tyrannical arrogance further negate his authority. Repeatedly his past training--to control others through wielding tyrannical power and maintaining hierarchical relationships--influences his actions, though inappropriate to his present positions.

In each of his relationships, Dorriforth demonstrates his inability to govern others. Specifically, Inchbald comments on instances of his tyranny in three ways: (1) she uses Dorriforth's failure as guardian to his two wards, Miss Milner and Rushbrook; (2) she shows his inadequacy as a father to his daughter Matilda, in a relationship that in many ways resembles guardianship; (3) she includes other less than successful asymmetrical relationships--his private friendship with Sandford and his public position as titled and landed aristocrat. He fails to carry out his duties responsibly, yet demands obedience to his authority.

A Simple Story opens as Mr. Milner lies dying and designates a "sole guardian" for his eighteen-year-old daughter. Her father names his friend, Dorriforth, a Catholic priest "about thirty," as her guardian (3). Miss

or of their church. Also, Catholics could not hold public office or serve in the armed forces.

Milner goes to live with her guardian in accordance with her father's directions--that is, "under the same roof" until she marries.¹⁰ As her guardian, Dorriforth has two projects. According to his notions of a moral education, he tries to reform her, and, according to his patriarchal notions of marriage, he tries to find her a husband of suitable moral qualities. But for the most part he is unable to deal with her willfulness which defies his own.

Miss Milner befriends Miss Woodley, who lives in the same house as a companion to her aunt, Mrs. Horton. Although pursued by numerous suitors offering marriage, Miss Milner falls in love with Dorriforth. Conscious of the inappropriateness of the relationship, she keeps her desire a secret to all except Miss Woodley, who is shocked and tries to separate the two. However, when Dorriforth's titled cousin Lord Elmwood dies, the Catholic church excuses him from his vows so that he may assume the earldom and continue the aristocratic title within a Catholic family. At first, the new Lord Elmwood plans to marry his late cousin's fiancée, but when he discovers Miss Milner's love for him, he quietly becomes engaged to her, despite objections from Sandford, his friend and confessor, who was previously his tutor, and is now his dependant.

¹⁰ Miss Milner's first name is never given. Instead, she is defined by her family relationships within the patriarchal structure--first as daughter of her father and then as Lady Elmwood, wife of her husband.

Establishing a hierarchical relationship, Elmwood and Miss Milner repeatedly challenge one another, each stubbornly trying to will the other into submission. One of the trials Miss Milner imposes reunites Elmwood with his orphaned nephew, Rushbrook, his legal ward, whom he had previously sworn never to acknowledge. Finally, Elmwood threatens to leave; but at the last moment before his departure he marries Miss Milner at Sandford's insistence. Sandford himself has changed, becoming more aware of the emotional needs of others.

Lord and Lady Elmwood have a daughter, Matilda, before their marriage falls apart. While he is in the West Indies "in order to save from the depredation of his steward, a very large estate" (196), Lady Elmwood has an affair. On his return, he expels her and her child from his household. Seventeen years pass, and Lady Elmwood dies, leaving as her dying request for Elmwood "at least to provide [Matilda] a guardian, if he did not choose to take that tender title upon himself" (202). Although he forbids anyone to speak the names of his late wife or daughter, he allows Matilda and Miss Woodley to live in one of his residences, provided he never sees his daughter. During the times he resides in the same house, Matilda lives behind a locked door protected by a servant to insure "lest by any accident he might chance to come near" her (223).

In fact, Elmwood has turned into a tyrant. He continues an ambiguous relationship with his former tutor and now dependant, Sandford. Their relationship is complicated because Sandford champions Matilda's cause, but yet remains Elmwood's friend and confessor. Elmwood has named Rushbrook his heir, and dominates that relationship. He attempts to arrange a financially advantageous marriage for Rushbrook and refuses to hear his plea for Matilda, whom he loves. Eventually, when Matilda and her father meet accidentally, Elmwood stubbornly expels her from his household. Left vulnerable, Matilda is abducted by an unprincipled suitor. Elmwood rescues her, at long last accepting his duty as her father and guardian. The novel closes with Matilda in the act of deciding whether to marry Rushbrook, with her father's blessing. Between first cousins, the marriage would close the domestic circle.

Restricting the novel to the domestic realm, Inchbald does not deal directly with public issues such as national politics, economics, property, or law.¹¹ Furthermore, because Dorriforth is Catholic, her choice of a focus character narrows the scope of the novel because anti-Papist law limits his actions in the public realm. In fact, according to J.M.S. Tompkins in her introduction to

¹¹ A Simple Story fits the phenomenon Armstrong describes: "[l]iterature devoted to producing the domestic woman thus appeared to ignore the political world run by men" (4).

the novel, A Simple Story "counts as the first Catholic novel" since "most of its characters belong to the Catholic minority in England, and the situations of its first half depend upon Catholic practice" (xi). Despite its unusual subject matter for a country emphatically non-Catholic, the novel was well-received; critics accepted the character of Dorriforth, a Catholic priest, as "perfectly new" (Gentleman's Magazine 255).¹² The acceptability of the novel may be due as much to the timing of its publication, coinciding with the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791, as to Inchbald's careful treatment of Catholicism. This treatment Tompkins correctly points out,

is not propaganda, and does not deal in depth with the part of the Faith in life. . . . [She] writes with an easy familiarity about the Catholic background, as far as it is necessary to her subject. She does not go a step beyond. (xi)

Inchbald includes only the elements of Dorriforth's Catholicism that affect the domestic realm, carefully avoiding other, more public issues. For instance,

¹² Tompkins elaborates:

New modes of experience were annexed to the novel, and authors, even when eschewing the highly colored, are not afraid to build on exceptional circumstances. Mrs. Inchbald's Dorriforth, a Roman Catholic priest who inherits a peerage, is released from his vows and marries his ward, is a very special case indeed in Protestant England, but critics by now were prepared to welcome special cases as new sources of interest, and Dorriforth, who is a sufficiently imposing figure, was much admired. (180)

Dorriforth refuses to discuss religion with Miss Milner after she inappropriately remarks about Roman Catholics and their systems of belief. He insists:

"we will talk upon some other topic, and never resume this again--we differ in opinion, I dare say, on one subject only, and this difference I hope will never extend itself to any other.-- Therefore, let not religion be named between us; for I have resolved never to persecute you, in pity be grateful, and do not persecute me." (16-17).

However, Catholicism is a very important element in understanding Dorriforth's authority. Before he becomes a titled aristocratic landowner, Dorriforth's power as a priest is diminished. Specifically, he is assigned to a curatorial role by the Church and relegated to a minor role by English law;¹³ personally, he is constrained by his vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience; and, because of his position, he embodies traits that, according to Armstrong, would be viewed as female, such as moral rather than material value and "constant vigilance and tireless concern for the well-being of others" (20).

After his titled cousin's death, however, Dorriforth's celibacy conflicts with the need to continue his hereditary lineage "'for the general good of religion . . . that this earldom should continue in a catholic [sic] family'" (101). The Church needs priests, but even more so it needs to

¹³ Of course, a Catholic priest's curatorial duty would be to his parish. Curatorial here is not to be confused with the curatorial duty of a guardian: to take care of his ward's fortune (Blackstone 1:460).

conserve as many Catholic aristocratic lines as possible.

Mrs. Woodley voices the problem:

"That could Mr. Dorriforth have foreseen the early death of the late Lord Elmwood, it had been for the greater honour of his religion (considering that ancient title would now after him become extinct), had he preferred marriage vows, to those of celibacy." (99)

In short, Dorriforth is "enjoined to marry" (103).

Although he designates Rushbrook as his heir, his title will die with him because he has no son (214). Ultimately then, his dispensation from his vows of celibacy have not brought about the results desired by the Catholic church--continuing the line of a Catholic titled aristocrat in Protestant England. Elmwood fails. Denying Elmwood a male heir, Inchbald's novel focuses on his responsibilities to his female heir. The plot of the novel valorizes the domestic ideal and dismisses the significance of patriarchal ideals such as continuing family lines of inheritance.

Absolved from his vows but now in control of a large estate including overseas holdings, he is still, however, in a position of diminished power because of his religion. English law excluded Catholics from holding public office.¹⁴ As a Catholic aristocrat, Elmwood is allowed to

¹⁴ In addition to narrowing the sphere of influence of the Catholic aristocracy, the exclusion from public office eliminated that opportunity to increase wealth and estate holdings. As a result of the persecution, the number of English Catholics diminished, particularly among the aristocracy. The Reverend William Deane outlines the problems in a 1767 letter to the Bishop of Salisbury:

govern in a very limited way: he has control only over his family and his estate.¹⁵ Anti-Papist laws relegate him to the private domestic realm, mostly cut off from the public political and economic realm. Instead of continuing to practice the feminized emotional qualities he exercised as priest, he shifts to behavior he believes as appropriate to a patriarchal aristocrat. Thus, switching from a Catholic priest to a lord, Dorriforth exercises inappropriate patriarchal practices. He uses the new position to exercise his tyranny in the household--the extent of his kingdom.

Using Dorriforth's position as guardian, Inchbald illustrates how inappropriately his masculine style of

As the Papists are, by our Laws, wisely excluded from all lucrative Office in ye State, & from all high Posts in the Civil, Military or Ecclesiastical Establishments in ye Kingdom (whereby good Estates are often raised) . . . They are generally Poor, and their Estates are daily wasting, & consequently their Power decreasing. Sometimes they spend and run out of their Estates; & sometimes Families being extinct, their Estates devolve to Protestants. And when that happens to be ye case, we see all ye Popish dependants soon fall off and disappear. Many such instances, within memory, may be produc'd in this county. (qtd. in Leys 200. The original is in the Salisbury Diocesan Archives, Return of Papists, Box 1.)

¹⁵ In An Open Elite? England 1540-1880, Lawrence Stone and Jeanne Fawtier Stone explain that until 1825 Catholic families were "semi-permanently excluded from public office, and their activities confined to hunting, the managing of their families and estates, and entrepreneurial activities. They were an inward turned and inbred coterie of internal exiles for their faith" (50).

government is in the domestic realm. The legal relationship of guardian and ward is her vehicle for showing the inappropriate use of hierarchical power within the household.¹⁶ The force of the novel to critique Dorriforth's inappropriate exercise of authority rests in his misuse and neglect of institutionalized power. Dorriforth's duties as a guardian are publicly and legally prescribed. And as a priest, a curatorial position, he should be appropriate for the role. As a matter of fact, in the first scene of the novel when Dorriforth is named guardian, Mr. Milner justifies his choice citing Dorriforth qualities as a priest:

¹⁶ Wollstonecraft suggests that the legal relationship of guardianship offers a patriarch more opportunity to dominate a child than the traditional parent and child relationship. She offers the example of

a sagacious man who, having a daughter and niece under his care, pursued a very different plan with each.

The niece, who had considerable abilities, had, before she was left to his guardianship, been indulged in desultory reading. Here he endeavoured to lead, and did lead to history and moral essays; but his daughter, whom a fond weak mother had indulged, and who consequently was averse to everything like application, he allowed to read novels; and used to justify his conduct by saying, that if she ever attained a relish for reading them, he should have some foundation to work upon; and that erroneous opinions were better than none at all. (197)

Inchbald suggests that his differing senses of duty to his two charges led him to "justify his conduct" with his own daughter, but with his ward he "endeavored to lead." The results are that his ward reads "serious" literature while his daughter forms "erroneous opinions."

"Dorriforth is the only person I know, who, uniting every moral virtue to those of religion, and native honour to pious faith; will protect without controlling, instruct without tyrannizing, comfort without flattering, and perhaps in time make good by choice rather than by constraint, the dear object of his dying friend's sole care." (5)¹⁷

The principle problem in the novel, however, is that Dorriforth does not live up to his friend's assessment. Regardless of whether he practices these ideals as a priest, as a guardian he does not "protect without controlling" or "instruct without tyrannizing." Instead, he assumes the demeanor and values of the patriarch--a father-figure who commands absolute authority within a family--asserting tyrannical authority and coercive power over Miss Milner and eventually over all his dependents. As a result, though readers may accept his legal rights, they must question his "moral virtue."

He inappropriately enforces masculine patriarchal practices of guardianship--including arranging his wards' marriages and threatening them with abandonment or

¹⁷ Mr. Milner does have the choice of appointing a relative as guardian, rather than a friend. When Miss Milner goes to live with her guardian, she is accompanied by

a gentleman and a lady, distant relations of her mother's, who thought it but a proper testimony of their civility to attend her part of the way, but who so much envied her guardian the trust Mr. Milner had reposed in him, that as soon as they had delivered her safe into his care they returned. (13)

disinheritance for disobedience. Dorriforth usurps authority over the domestic realm: he tries to control Miss Milner's leisure time, her courtship, and the development of her identity--functions assigned to the domestic woman. Eventually, his improper behavior leaves him confused as to his proper role and relationship with everyone in the household, including both of his wards, his own daughter, and his closest friend, Sandford.

A Simple Story uses a two-part dramatic structure to reinforce the images established by the legal relationship of guardianship.¹⁸ At the beginning of the third volume

¹⁸ In its two-part construction A Simple Story is strikingly like Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale. In his Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald (1833), James Boaden was the first critic to suggest The Winter's Tale as Inchbald's model. He writes that she "sinks the same interval in her novel that the poet has done in his play, with a graceful ease of expression quite peculiar to herself" (277). For other critical interpretations of the two-part construction, see Janet Todd's The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, Gary Kelly's The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805, Ronald Paulson's Representations of Revolutions (1789-1820), and Jane Spencer's Introduction, among others.

Like Shakespeare's drama with its sixteen year lapse, the novel traces the history of an arrogant husband's jealousy of his wife and depends upon their banished daughter's life for its final outcome. Also like Shakespeare, Inchbald does not employ "ramshackle plotting," but rather the technique "convinces us that [the story] encompasses the entire drama of [the characters'] lives even though its plot skips" enough time for the next generation to emerge as young adults (Ornstein 213-14). And finally, like Shakespeare, Inchbald "does not suddenly change course and begin again . . . with a new cast of characters"; instead, the narrator asks the reader to recall the characters and "follow the sequel of their history" (194). The novel, like the play, is unified in its two parts by its characterizations. Unlike the play though, Miss Milner does not live through the second part. Unlike Hermione, she is guilty of adultery, falls sick for

the narrator wishes the "reflective reader . . . to imagine seventeen years elapsed, since he has seen or heard of any of these persons" (194). Inchbald directs the reader's attention to closely observe the characters:

Throughout life, there cannot happen an event to arrest the reflection of a thoughtful mind more powerfully, or to leave so lasting an impression, as that of returning to a place after a few years absence, and observing an entire alteration in respect to all the persons who once formed the neighborhood. (195)

Inchbald separates the two parts "to arrest the reflection of a thoughtful mind more powerfully" to consider how little has changed.¹⁹ Instead of "observing an entire alteration" in the situation, the reader is struck by the similarities of the second part to the first. Matilda takes her mother's place as her father's problematic charge, and the story of ill-managed tyrannical authority continues. Only Elmwood has changed; he has become even more of a tyrant. He has solidified the power that he has over others. Because they are even more dependent on him,

a "ten years decline," and dies from her despair (234). The characterization left dominating the two parts, therefore, is Dorriforth's. What unites the novel and provides continuity is Inchbald's portrayal of his character--his motivation, emotional responses, and actions, as well as his guardianship first literally of Miss Milner, then of Rushbrook, and figuratively of Matilda.

¹⁹ Spencer calls Dorriforth's behavior "an extreme of patriarchal tyranny," claiming he "has not so much altered as become a heightened version of the tyrant he always was. External restraints to his power have disappeared and his is an isolated and terrible figure" (xix).

he now regulates the ways in which social institutions control the other characters and his moral character dominates them.

Everyone including Elmwood realizes his increased tyranny. After the seventeen year gap Elmwood "is become a hard-hearted tyrant. The compassionate, the feeling, the just Lord Elmwood, an example of implacable rigour and injustice" (195).²⁰ Sandford admits to Matilda that he is "'grown afraid of [her] father.'" He explains:

"His temper is a great deal altered from what it once was--he exalts his voice, and uses harsh expressions upon the least provocation--his eyes flash lightning, and his face is distorted with anger on the slightest motives--he turns away his old servants at a moment's warning, and no concession can make their peace.--In a word, I am more at ease when I am away from him--and I really believe, . . . I am more afraid of him in my age, than he was of me when he was a boy." (223).

Sandford's description of Elmwood's actions are summed up in Wollstonecraft's observation that "It is easier, I grant, to command than reason" (166). Miss Woodley's reaction is similar: "he was no longer the considerate, the forbearing character he formerly was; but haughty, impatient, imperious, and more than ever, implacable"

²⁰ There is cause to doubt his being compassionate, feeling, or just. In the first half of the novel, he is described as having "an obstinacy; such as he himself, and his friends termed firmness of mind; but had not religion and some opposite virtues weighed heavy in the balance, it would frequently have degenerated into implacable stubbornness" (34). Once he becomes a titled aristocrat and is no longer a priest, there are no longer checks on his temper.

(230). Even Elmwood recognizes that he himself has changed, announcing to Sandford:

"my temper is changed of late; changed to what it was originally; till your scholastic and religious rules reformed it. You may remember, how troublesome it was, to conquer my stubborn disposition in my youth; then, indeed, you did; but in my manhood you will find the task more difficult." (215)

He irrationally demands obedience from all his dependents, including Sandford, his friend. His behavior fits Wollstonecraft's assessment of tyrants:

Obedience, unconditional obedience, is the catchword of tyrants of every description, and to render 'assurance doubly sure,' one kind of despotism supports another. Tyrants would have cause to tremble if reason were to become the rule of duty in any of the relations of life, for the light might spread till perfect day appeared. (159)

As long as he is able to suppress reason he will be able to control others. Moral problems will result, for "tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality" (Wollstonecraft 17). In Inchbald's novel, however, feminized morality overcomes even the most patriarchal.

The two-part construction of the novel also highlights the change in the family structure between the two generations from the older, patriarchal family to the modern, domestic circle. The first generation is organized hierarchically, concerned with preserving patrilineal descent. The opening scene in which the patriarch Mr. Milner names Miss Milner's guardian establishes the

patriarchal theme, continued in Dorriforth's determination to husband Miss Milner and their subsequent struggles for power. On the other hand, the second part depicts the domestic circle. Its opening scene includes Lady Elmwood dying surrounded by her loving friends and daughter. Although Elmwood tries to immure the entire circle behind locked and guarded doors at his estate, the novel ends with him included in the domestic circle around Matilda, awaiting her decision about her marriage partner. In A Simple Story, as in Armstrong's analysis, the domestic ideal supersedes the hereditary hierarchy and its "intricate status system that had long dominated British thinking" as the governing power (Armstrong 4).

The behavior of Dorriforth/Elmwood embodies the characteristics of the social change. His three-part transformation from his diminished role as Catholic priest to hard-nosed aristocratic patriarch to domesticated individual is evident in his encounters with the unscrupulous suitors of Miss Milner and Matilda. In the first duel with Lord Frederick, Dorriforth refuses to return his fire, defending his honor and protecting his status as a priest (87). Then, as a dishonored but patriarchal husband, he quickly retaliates, forcing Lord Frederick to a second duel. This time Elmwood leaves Lord Frederick "upon the spot where they met, so maimed, and defaced with scars, as never again to endanger the honour

of a husband" (198). And finally, as a father embracing the values of feminized morality, in his rescue of Matilda he fires only a shot of warning, relying on the legal process to punish Margrave for abducting his daughter (328-329).

Indeed, in A Simple Story Inchbald problematizes Dorriforth's interpretation of how he ought to play his role as guardian. Acting this role, he assumes the negative and tyrannical elements of guardianship, vestigial from the older institution of wardship. As in wardship, he assumes the right of guardian to commodify his ward. He "husbands" Miss Milner in all senses of the word. He "husbands" her as a farmer would a crop, trying to reeducate her morally to assure her best value on the marriage market; he tries to "husband" her by arranging her marriage, selecting suitors who would most aggrandize her status and property; and, finally, he literally "husbands" his ward, marrying her himself. His actions suggest the underlying belief that, as in feudal wardship of her body, she is his property.

However, Inchbald's treatment of Dorriforth's guardianship mentions nothing regarding his management of Miss Milner's real property. She omits the curatorial aspects of guardianship--the guardian's management of the ward's fortune and property. Instead, she maintains her focus on the feminine, private realm of the legal

relationship of guardianship, rather than on the masculine, public realm. Her novel concentrates on the tutorial aspects of guardianship--that is, the guardian's responsibility for education, or moral development, of the ward.

The Guardian and Ward Relationship

There are two legal guardian and ward relationships in the novel and Inchbald develops each fully. Dorriforth is guardian to his late friend's daughter Miss Milner and to his late sister's son, Rushbrook. Additionally there are two other relationships Inchbald develops. Elmwood conditionally assumes responsibility for his daughter Matilda, and the relationship between Dorriforth and Sandford changes its power structure as the novel progresses. Both of these are quasi-guardianship relationships, concentrating power in a custodial relationship on the individual of higher rank. Each of the four relationships questions Dorriforth's ability to govern; in each he neglects his tutorial duties and is confused about his proper moral behavior.

Dorriforth's failure as guardian of Miss Milner is entangled in the confused roles of their relationship. The confused roles Inchbald includes are those of father, curator, tutor, protector, lover, moral arbitrator, and friend. Intertwining the public and private realms, these

roles are a part of the history of the guardian/ward relationship. In the other three relationships Elmwood controls, Inchbald untangles these roles and examines them. The conclusion remains the same in each of the relationships.

Ultimately, Dorriforth/Elmwood fails as a guardian in the domestic realm. Miss Milner rejects the tyrannical elements of guardianship Dorriforth imposes on her by her, insisting on following her own emotions and reasoning based on a feminized morality, rather than externally-determined patriarchal codes of behavior. Rushbrook resists Elmwood's coercive power to enact outmoded patriarchal marriage practices and instead internalizes the values of the domestic circle. Dorriforth fails in his quasi-guardianship relationships as well. His emotional and moral values have no worth in the domestic realm. Matilda, the product of that circle, embodies its affective values. And Sandford grows morally, no longer acting as a judgmental authority, but embodying the feminized morality and nurturing those forming the domestic circle. Elmwood fails in his patriarchal responsibilities because he cannot fulfill the demands of the feminized morality, the new authority in eighteenth-century society embodied in the domestic circle.

Although each of these relationships is asymmetrical in nature--with Dorriforth, the aristocratic patriarch,

dominant--each discounts his authority while embracing the values of the new feminized morality. Suggesting a revolution in manners which, in turn, would affect the larger society, these relationships deserve careful examination.

Dorriforth and Miss Milner

Dorriforth is legally restricted as a Catholic priest and landowner from the masculine public realm of marketplace and government. Nevertheless, as a guardian he attempts to govern as he imagines a traditional patriarch should.²¹ However, he confuses elements of the feminized morality and emotion he has learned as priest into his patriarchal practices as guardian. As a result of these mixed motives, he is "frequently perplexed in the management of his ward" (42).

In his initial attempts to "husband" Miss Milner, he follows his patriarchal notions of marriage market practices, planning to find her the most financially advantageous marriage partner. First, however, he carefully takes stock of her potential, but instead of using standard economic considerations to value her, he

²¹ Castle concurs,
He comports himself toward her at first as though he too were a character in a novel--the personification of the good paternal guardian. He sees his own role in purely conventional terms: to arrange a marriage for her with some suitable person. (301)

measures her morally. This priestly idealism is contrary to patriarchal practice.²² It confuses Miss Milner who has been educated to accept the social practices of patriarchal society, even though she preserves some emotional, feminized elements of morality.

In fact, Miss Milner herself vacillates between two categories of behavior. At times she exhibits the emotional and moral depth Armstrong identifies with the domestic woman. At other times though, Miss Milner is more "the aristocratic woman," whom Armstrong explains

represented surface instead of depth, embodied material instead of moral value, and displayed idle sensuality instead of constant vigilance and tireless concern for the well-being of others. Such a woman was not truly female.
(20)

Because of this vacillation and because Dorriforth is "a stranger not only to the real propensities of [Miss Milner's] mind, but even to her person," he encounters difficulties attempting to evaluate her propriety before meeting her (8). Nevertheless, he pursues his plans

²² Wollstonecraft compares the domestic situation of men and women to that of the wealthy:

But, till hereditary possessions are spread abroad, how can we expect men to be proud of virtue? And, till they are, women will govern them by the most direct means, neglecting their dull domestic duties to catch the pleasure that sits lightly on the wing of time. (73)

The system as it is adversely affects the domestic realm because it offers no reward for labor. The forces behind the contemporary marriage market are hereditary wealth and pleasure, not virtue.

doggedly. He believes rumors that she is a "'a young, idle, indiscreet, giddy girl, with half a dozen lovers in her suite; some coxcombs, some men of gallantry, some single, and some married'" (9-10). As a result, he doubts her morality, remarking, "'For the first time of my life . . . I wish I had never known her father'" (10). However, Dorriforth's opinion is changed to having "his eyes moistened with joy" (11) and he has "some confidence in the principles and character of his ward" (12) when he hears that she has helped the wife of a merchant who owed Mr. Milner money. The merchant's wife explains, Miss Milner

"procured us time in order to discharge the debt; and when she found that time was insufficient, and her father no longer to be dissuaded from his intention, she secretly sold some of her most valuable ornaments to satisfy his demand and screen us from its consequences" (12).

Wanting to believe in her virtue and in the process reinforce his own feminized sense of morality, Dorriforth ignores the challenge to her father's authority inherent in her act.²³

At other times Dorriforth is able to keep separate his duties as guardian and his role as priest. For instance, Mrs. Horton believes that Dorriforth "will soon convert her from all her evil ways," suggesting religious conversion.

²³ Spencer emphasizes that Miss Milner's "generosity always appears in opposition to masculine tyranny, from the secret financial aid to her father's debtors . . . to the befriending of Harry Rushbrook" (xix).

However, Dorriforth the priest does not attempt to control Miss Milner's spiritual beliefs.²⁴ Instead, Dorriforth the guardian does try to influence her secular life, curbing her socializing, "to warn her of her danger" and

pressed the necessity of "time not always passed in society; of reflection; of reading; of thoughts for a future state; and of virtues acquired to make old age supportable." (18)

In short, he tries to shape her moral character into the image of woman he believes is most marriageable. But that image is questionable because it is based on aristocratic notions of the ideal woman. Dorriforth's "most perfect model" is Miss Fenton, his cousin's fiancée, described as having "elegant manners, gentle position, and discreet conduct." Although she possesses a "superior soul," she is "placid," showing no "variety" of emotion (37).

"Represent[ing] the surface instead of depth," and lacking emotion, she is Armstrong's "aristocratic woman" who "was not truly female" in domestic ideology (20). Dorriforth's

²⁴ Giving Dorriforth "his injunctions" as guardian, Mr. Milner charges him to honor her religion:

he still restrained him from all authority to direct his ward in one religious opinion contrary to those her mother had professed, and in which she herself had been educated. (5)

Miss Milner's father was a Catholic and her mother a Protestant, but "they mutually agreed their sons should be educated in the religious opinion of their father, and their daughters in that of their mother" (4). This practice "was recognized usage among English Catholics until about the middle of the nineteenth century that daughters should follow their mother's religion" (Spencer 339).

motives for influencing Miss Milner's morals are as ambiguous as the rest of his relationship with her.

Indeed, Dorriforth the guardian does not trust Miss Milner's moral judgment and worries that she will marry someone "without one moral excellence" (19). Repeatedly Dorriforth asserts his authority as guardian to control Miss Milner's choice of a marriage partner in his attempts to "husband" her suitably. He "trembled more lest her heart should be purloined, without even the authority of matrimonial views" (19). His fears are realized when Lord Frederick becomes her suitor. Dorriforth believes him unsuitable because of his lack of morals.

Dorriforth reacts by enforcing his dictates with increasingly coercive power. Exercising his authority as her guardian, he repeatedly warns her--at times "in a manner that savoured of authority" (20). However, his oppression is ineffective, and she acts rebelliously. Eventually her social life "rouzed her guardian from that mildness with which he had been accustomed to treat her" (27). He commands her to stay at home with a "raised" voice "and in a tone of authority" (29). Although Miss Milner first acts as though she would disobey him, she follows his orders with "unexpected obedience" (32). As a result, his patriarchal authority is undermined by his feminized emotion. Her compliance weakens his grasp, and he asks her for forgiveness, blaming "the duty of my

office." When she cries, he is further disarmed, submits to her will, and asks her to "Once more shew your submission by obeying me a second time to day" and keep her appointment. Finally, when she "sunk underneath his kindness, . . . [H]e was charmed to find her disposition so little untractable" and believes her submission "foreboded the future prosperity of his guardianship" (33). In fact, rather than promising "future prosperity," his actions, though meant to exercise power over her moral judgment, have demonstrated his confusion between his "respective qualities of mind" as priest and as guardian (Armstrong 4).

Dorriforth's actions while protecting her from Lord Frederick become even more ambiguous. Even though he is a priest, he begins to fall in love with his ward.²⁵ His emotions and his sense of duty become even more disordered. The confusion is evident when Dorriforth insults Lord Frederick, causing a duel.

Because Dorriforth believes Lord Frederick's suit has transgressed societal norms of behavior, he strikes him. The action occurs before Miss Milner. Although Dorriforth has acted within his role as her guardian, protecting her honor as his ward, his personal feelings toward her are so

²⁵ It is Lord Frederick who sees the situation the clearest. He is the one who first suggests "the sacrilegious idea" that Dorriforth loves Miss Milner. After they discuss the idea, Miss Milner dismisses it assuring him that her guardian's wishes "'Are never less pure . . . than those which dwell in the bosom of my celestial guardian'" (21).

ambiguous that he focuses only on the insult he believes he has caused her, ignoring his insult to Lord Frederick. His behavior, like Lord Frederick's, disregards boundaries of propriety established by patriarchal society because he has retaliated by brute force and because he used the force in front of a woman. It also ignores his morality as a priest.

Dorriforth's first action, however, is to apologize on his knees to Miss Milner, to ask "'her forgiveness for the indelicacy he had been guilty of in her presence'" (61). That action further disrupts the norms and confuses her. She feels

the indecorum of the posture he had condescended to take, and was shocked--to see her guardian at her feet, struck her with the same impropriety as if she had beheld a parent there. (62)

The act of kneeling emphasizes Dorriforth's inconsistency in his treatment of Miss Milner and reveals the conflict between his roles as lover and guardian. Although Miss Milner has attempted to establish him as authority in place of her father, his contradictory behavior disrupts the process. When they first meet, she placed herself in submission: she "knelt down to him for a moment, and promised ever to obey him as her father" (13). However, the roles have reversed. Dorriforth's kneeling to her causes her to reexamine her assumptions about his relationship with her.

For his part Dorriforth realizes that by striking Lord Frederick, he has "departed" from his "sacred character, and dignity" of his profession to become a "ruffian" (62); nevertheless, he is more upset that he has "offended, and filled with horror a beautiful young lady, whom it was my duty to have protected from the brutal manners, to which I myself have exposed her" (63). The brutal manners are his own, morally inappropriate to his position as guardian, priest, and lover.

The resulting duel causes more public and private moral problems for Dorriforth. Not only is his character as guardian jeopardized, but so is his standing as priest. Sandford puts "cruel emphasis" on the word "guardian" when Dorriforth visits Miss Milner before the duel. However, Dorriforth refuses to return Lord Frederick's fire, and so remains within the tenets of the Catholic church, which forbid dueling at the risk of excommunication (87). Dorriforth recovers from the situation relatively unharmed physically and with his reputation, if not his morals, intact.

Miss Milner does not recover unscathed. Not only Dorriforth's kneeling to her, but also his "contradictions in character" confuse her. Repeatedly, he admonishes her "with the most poignant language, and austere looks," but then "divest[s] himself in great measure of his austerity" (70). Miss Milner admits to Miss Woodley she has fallen in

love with him "with all the passion of a mistress, and with all the tenderness of a wife'" (72).²⁶ Her confession shows the oppositions in her feelings toward him, loving him as both a mistress and a wife while still his ward.

Dorriforth tries to straighten out the situation by asserting the patriarchal solution that she should be "under the protection of a husband," but Miss Milner insists that her father "thought [Dorriforth's] protection sufficient." Dorriforth makes it clear that his "protection was rather to direct [her] choice, than to be the cause of [her] not choosing at all" (84). He insists that marriage is a duty, but she refuses the aristocratic notion of marriage, insisting that she will never marry "from obedience" (85). She asserts her emotional needs above her duty in a patriarchal system.

Miss Milner's conduct becomes wilder than ever. Dorriforth, however, has softened once again:

for his manners, not from design, but unknowingly, were softened since his guardianship, by that tender respect he had never ceased to pay to the object of his protection. (91)

He reacts emotionally. When she leaves for Bath, he gives his permission "with indifference," but feels "a

²⁶ Marriage between a guardian and ward may be considered incestuous by the family standards governing it, but strictly speaking the legal relationship of guardianship is legal custodianship and, therefore, admits marriage. The worse shock here, of course, is that Dorriforth is a Catholic priest.

reluctance--He had been angry with her, he had shewn her he was so, and he now began to wish he had not" (91-92). He has proven unable to act consistently.

However, their relationship changes quickly when he is absolved from his vows by the Catholic church to assume his deceased cousin's title and estate. During the early stages of their romance, he assumes characteristics of the "man of sentiment," and at times values his emotions over his intellect. Their first meeting when he is no longer priest is electrified on both sides: "the sight of him seemed to be too much for her" and for him,

it was possible to look what he felt, and his looks expressed his feelings.--In the zeal of those sensations, he laid hold of her hand, and held it between his--this he himself did not know--but she did. (98)

However, they are not yet lovers, and Elmwood, still her patriarchally minded that he is her guardian, actively looks for a suitable marriage partner for Miss Milner, while he himself is interested in Miss Fenton.

Repeatedly, however, he identifies the source of his happiness with his ward, and he displays the feminized ideal of constant vigilance of her feelings. He says on two separate occasions: "for it is my earnest desire to have you with me--your welfare is dear to me as my own; and were we apart, continual apprehensions would prey upon my mind" and "my interest is so nearly connected with the

interest, and my happiness with the happiness of my ward" (111, 128).

Dorriforth's vacillation between the patriarchal and feminized qualities of mind ends when he realizes that Miss Milner is in love with him. He becomes increasingly more invested in patriarchal practices as her fiancée. Again, he acts the role he imagines he should. For example, he treats her like a child when she doesn't eat:

he watched her as he would a child; and when he saw by her struggles she could not eat, he took her plate from her; gave her something else; and all with a care and watchfulness in his looks, as if he had been a tender-hearted boy, and she his darling bird, the loss of which, would embitter all the joy of his holidays. (134)

He assumes ownership of her, announcing that "her health and happiness" are in his care (135).

In response to his patriarchal practices, Miss Milner tries to control him by outmaneuvering his power by exerting her own and "display[ing] idle sensuality," a quality of Armstrong's "aristocratic woman" (20). Miss Milner believes:

"Dorriforth, the grave, the sanctified, the anchorite Dorriforth, by [her charm's] force is animated to all the ardour of the most impassioned lover--while the proud priest, the austere guardian, is humbled, if I but frown, into the veriest slave of love." (138)

But Dorriforth is not "the veriest slave of love." Rather he is the slave of his notions of proper behavior for an aristocratic landowner. Refusing to accept his new

identity as Elmwood the patriarch, she has ignored Dorriforth's mixed qualities of mind. She incorrectly believes "the suspicions of her guardian [are] now changed to the liberal confidence of a doating lover" (139). Her conduct becomes increasingly more inappropriate:

But she, who as his ward, had been ever gentle,
and (when he strenuously opposed always
obedient; he now found as a mistress, sometimes
haughty; and to opposition, always insolent.
(139)

As a result of this confrontational struggle for power, both Elmwood and Miss Milner put one another on trial. Elmwood and Miss Milner's relationship becomes one of domination and subordination. It is hierarchical and no longer based on the domestic ideal of friendship, which Wollstonecraft claims is "The most holy band of society" and should be the basis of any relationship between husband and wife in a domestic household (39).

Elmwood's actions become tyrannical, although his overt explanation for the trials is to keep Sandford from continuing his "'unkind treatment'" of her. He promises to "'watch her closely'" himself, forbidding Sandford to further prejudice him "'before the trial'" (141, 142). He promises, "'I will meet no one--I will consult no one--my own judgment shall be the judge, and in a few months, marry, or--banish me from her for ever'" (142 emphasis in original). He is motivated by "the horror of domestic wrangles--a family without subordination--a house without

economy--in a word, a wife without discretion"--the epitome of what threatens his patriarchal notions of a hierarchical family (142). In other words, he is putting her moral character on trial, and he becomes the sole judge.

Likewise, Miss Milner forces a "trial upon the temper of her guardian" (169). However, she wants to prove her power over him. One of the first demands she makes and wins is that Elmwood take Rushbrook into his home. Consequently, however, Miss Milner miscalculates her strength in "the various, though delicate, struggles for power" between them (151). The final mistake she makes is attending a masquerade against his wishes.²⁷

At last decisively moving to claim his position as patriarch, Elmwood aggressively asserts his power. Miss Woodley accurately describes the real issues involved:

"He may love you too well to spoil you-- consider, he is your guardian as well as your lover, he means also to become your husband; and he is a man of such nice honour, he will not give you a specimen of that power before marriage, which he does not intend to submit to hereafter." (166)

Once again, Miss Milner vacillates between the patriarchal and feminized ideals of woman. She refuses to admit his need to assert power, invoking his "friendship and tenderness'" (167). She insists to Miss Woodley that "we

²⁷ See Castle for an analysis of Miss Milner's "transgression against patriarchal dictate" by attending the masquerade dressed in an ambiguously gendered costume (323).

not only love, but we love equally'" (172). She wants to see the relationship as one of equals, unable to allow that Elmwood is incapable of treating her as an equal. But she still is invested in a hierarchy of power. Recalling his earlier act of submissive kneeling, she now believes that "'instead of stooping to him, I wait in the certain expectation of his submission to me'" (173).

She is wrong. He clings to his patriarchy and stubbornly keeps the promise he made to Sandford, by ending his engagement. In a letter to Miss Milner, he attempts to disentangle their relationship into its component parts.

First he explains its evolution:

"While I considered you only as my ward, my friendship for you was unbounded--when I looked upon you as a woman formed to grace a fashionable circle, my admiration equalled my friendship--and when fate permitted me to behold you in the tender light of my betrothed wife, my soaring love left those humbler passions at a distance.

"That you have still my friendship, my admiration, and even my love, I will not attempt to deceive either myself or you, by disavowing; but still, with a firm assurance, I declare Prudence outweighs them all, and I have not, from henceforward, a wish to be regarded by you in any other respect, than as one 'who wishes you well.'" (174)

His analysis reflects his confusion. His "humbler passions" have considered her moral suitability in a domestic circle, but his patriarchal notions of a suitable wife have won out. He makes the break complete, planning to stay in England only long enough to transfer "'all those writings, which have invested me with the power of my

guardianship'" to a friend who will then turn them over to Miss Milner, in a manner that "'even [her] father, could he behold the resignation, would concur in its propriety'" (175). Conscious of his promise to her father, he realizes his inadequacy to manage her moral conduct as well as his feelings toward her. Instead of confronting his inabilities, however, he plans to escape them.

Realizing her mistake in struggling for power, Miss Milner at last claims her feminized morality and assumes the qualities of the ideal domestic woman. She remembers his affective qualities, "his friendship, his anxious tenderness, and his love," in their relationship (181). She regrets how much of her behavior toward him has been an act: "'The part I undertook to perform . . . is over; I will now, for my whole life, appear in my own character, and give a loose to the anguish I endure'" (186).

Recognizing the sincerity of her change and valuing her emotions, as well as those Elmwood tries to conceal, Sandford recognizes the inevitability of their love. Admitting he tried to save them "from the worst of misfortunes, conjugal strife," caused by their power struggles, he "can submit to think [he has] been in error" (191). He marries them in an impromptu Roman Catholic service.

Manipulating the plot and skipping sixteen years, Inchbald avoids exploring the legal relationship of

marriage and only indirectly invites a comparison between the two asymmetrical relationships. Instead, she examines Elmwood's consequent changes as he embraces even more tightly his patriarchal role over his family and estate, only to loosen it and accept the morality of the domestic circle housed there.

On his deathbed, when Mr. Milner carefully reasoned his choice of Dorriforth as guardian to his daughter, he justified it by saying:

"these earthly affections that bind me to her by custom, sympathy, or what I fondly call parental love, would direct me to study her present happiness, and leave her to the care of some of those she styles her dearest friends; but they are friends only in the sunshine of fortune; in the cold nipping frost of disappointment, sickness, or connubial strife, they will forsake the house of care, although the house which they themselves may have built." (4)

Rather than selecting one of his daughter's friends, he chose Dorriforth. Ironically, Elmwood in "connubial strife . . . will forsake the house of care." Although he has built it, the "house of care" proves faulty because he disregards his own morality and assumes the inappropriate patriarchal practices of guardian, lover, and father. His relationship with Miss Milner is built on the false foundation of patriarchy rather than the domestic ideals of feminized friendship and morality.

The ultimate test of Dorriforth's morality involves Matilda. On Lady Elmwood's death bed, doomed to repeat her father's fate, she must ask Elmwood--in her case indirectly

through Sandford--to take charge "of the future happiness of her only child" (195). She believes Dorriforth's moral authority must remind him of his patriarchal duty to assume his proper role if not fully as father then at least partially as guardian.²⁸ Recognizing her relative powerlessness, she leaves no will, saying that "she would wholly submit to Lord Elmwood's; and, if it were even his will, her child should live in poverty, as well as banishment, it should be so" (203). However, she hopes that "the necessitous situation of his daughter might plead more forcibly than his parental love" (203). She can expect nothing from Elmwood because of his tyrannical abuses of patriarchal power. Although he at first only conditionally accepts responsibility for Matilda, he eventually embraces the higher standards of morality identified in Armstrong's domestic ideal, which Lady Elmwood has come to embody fully.

Dorriforth and Rushbrook

Because of his adoption of patriarchal notions of responsibility, Dorriforth fails as a guardian to Miss

²⁸ William Blackstone in his Commentaries on the Laws of England reports that "it is enacted, that if any popish parent shall refuse to allow his protestant child a fitting maintenance, with a view to compel him to change his religion, the lord chancellor shall by order of court constrain him to do what is just and reasonable." In addition to maintenance, a parent is responsible for protection and education of his children. (I, 437-438).

Milner. In his defense, a reader might argue that the confusion is due to the eroticized nature of their relationship incurred by Miss Milner's inappropriate behavior. However, Inchbald includes Dorriforth in another guardian/ward relationship with his nephew Rushbrook, and by adding a second instance of a legal relationship of guardianship, she clarifies issues concerning the inappropriateness of Dorriforth's behavior. Because the roles between Dorriforth, now Elmwood, and Rushbrook are more straightforward than those between Dorriforth and Miss Milner, his failure as a guardian becomes clearer.

The initial problem in Elmwood's guardianship of Rushbrook is his resistance to acknowledge his ward. He denies his patriarchal responsibility. "The child of a once beloved sister, who married a young officer against her brother's consent," Rushbrook is orphaned at the age of three, "destitute of every support from his uncle's generosity" (34). Because of his sister's challenge to his authority, Elmwood stubbornly refuses to see the child, although he does maintain him. In Blackstone's categories, he practices the maintenance part of his tutorial role, but not the education part. Asserting a feminized morality and wishing he "should have some warmer interest in his care than duty," Miss Milner brings the child to Elmwood's house (34). When Elmwood realizes the child's identity, he leaves the house, his usual way of dealing with such

situations. Elmwood only agrees to provide guardianship fully after Miss Milner forces him as part of her test of his love for her. Elmwood consents to having Rushbrook live in his house, designating Miss Milner as "a mother" and himself as "a father" to him--a situation more like "playing house" than a legal arrangement (151). Elmwood acts kindly toward Rushbrook "to shew a kindness to Miss Milner, without directing it immediately to her" (151).

The consequent problems in the relationship between Elmwood and Rushbrook revolve around two issues: marriage and descent.²⁹ These areas are patriarchal in their concern to conserve a family of blood relations in orderly lineal descent, rather than to create a nurturing domestic circle. Within their hierarchical relationship, Elmwood treats Rushbrook "with all the affectionate warmth due to the man he thought worthy to make his heir" and "with the same respect and attention as if he had been his lordship's son" (230, 231). For example, Elmwood throws him a large party when he comes of age, and when Elmwood leaves the estate, "Rushbrook was for that time master of the house" (236). However, his kindness is not motivated by emotion but by the need to have an heir. Being an heir also has its cost: in return for future property, Rushbrook must obey Elmwood's plans for his marriage, at the expense of

²⁹ Curiously, in her novel with its moral tag concerning proper education, Inchbald says nothing about Rushbrook's education.

his wishes. Wollstonecraft describes such a phenomenon exactly:

But respect for parents is, generally speaking, a much more debasing principle; it is only a selfish respect for property. The father who is blindly obeyed is obeyed from sheer weakness, or from motives that degrade the human character. (164)

Elmwood believes he can determine his ward and heir's marriage. When Rushbrook balks, Elmwood threatens him with disinheritance, the most extreme financial punishment in a patriarchal system of hereditary succession and inheritance. Elmwood intimidates him, allowing

a week to call his thoughts together, to weigh every circumstance, and to determine whether implicitly to submit to his lordship's recommendation for a wife, or revolt from it, and see some other more subservient to his will appointed his heir. (254)

Their relationship is one of dominance and submission. Rushbrook becomes "even afraid to look his kind, but awful relation in the face" (255).

At this point, however, Rushbrook adopts the morality of the domestic circle within Elmwood's house. He realizes how his position as Elmwood's heir compromises Matilda's: she has become "a dependant stranger in that house, where in reality he was the dependant, and she the lawful heir" (258). Rushbrook has fallen in love with her, and he realizes how his status as heir has placed the two of them in a hierarchical position: "his stay placed in a subordinate state the object of his adoration" (258).

However, he is in no position to ask Elmwood to show mercy to her. As Sandford reminds him, "'Do you forget, young man, how short a time it is, since you were entreated for?'" (263). Nevertheless, Rushbrook's emotions force him to mention Matilda to Elmwood, who orders him to "Leave my house instantly, and seek some other home" (291).

Sandford, long used to Elmwood's behavior of expelling those who challenge his authority, intervenes for him.

In Elmwood's reconciliation with his daughter, Rushbrook's rights as heir remain intact:

never for a moment did [Elmwood] indulge--for perhaps it had been an indulgence--the idea of replacing her exactly in that situation to which she was born, to the disappointment of all his nephew's expectations. (334)

However, the reader is left questioning the basis of his emotional relationship with Rushbrook. He may be "[M]ilder now in his temper than he had been for years before," but when Rushbrook renews his request for Matilda, Elmwood leaves the room suddenly without explanation. Rushbrook, "all terror for his approaching fate," misinterprets Elmwood's reactions for anger (335). Theirs remains a relationship of arbitrary power and inequity, even though the two issues of marriage and inheritance are resolved within the domestic circle.

Other Asymmetrical Relationships

Elmwood's inappropriate behavior as a patriarchal governor extends to others under his care. His tyrannical temper causes him to either leave a situation or banish the person who has challenged him. Despite his coercive actions, his dependents practice a higher morality. Accordingly, they recognize the obligations of their dependence on him.

Elmwood and Matilda

Just as he refuses to acknowledge Rushbrook as his ward, Elmwood refuses to acknowledge Matilda as his daughter. His neglect of her leaves her vulnerable-- particularly his refusal to insure her future by making her position within his family secure. His inappropriate parenting raises questions about her obligations to him as her parent, the same issues that writers such as Wollstonecraft were exploring. In Vindication, she challenges the customary practices and beliefs supporting patriarchy in families:

They [Parents] demand blind obedience, because they do not merit a reasonable service: and to render these demands of weakness and ignorance more binding, a mysterious sanctity is spread round the most arbitrary principle; for what other name can be given to the blind duty of obeying vicious or weak beings merely because they obeyed a powerful instinct? (163)³⁰

³⁰ Wollstonecraft shows her distaste for blind obedience on any level, commenting on Madame Genlis' Letters on Education and "her absurd manner of making the parental authority supplant reason. For everywhere does

Elmwood is "vicious or weak," abandoning Matilda twice, each time for affronts beyond her control: first for her mother's challenge to his authority and second for her accidental disobedience to his tyrannical command that they never meet. As a result of his abandonment, he has little if anything to do with her education or moral development; nevertheless, he expects her obedience although he has made her the victim of his abusive power.

And she is a victim. The first the reader learns of Matilda, the narrator reports "his own daughter, his only child by his once adored Miss Milner, he refuses to see again, in vengeance to her mother's crimes" (195). She is "the perpetual outcast of [her] father" (197).

Elmwood conditionally accepts Matilda only when urged. The situation parallels his reluctant acceptance of Rushbrook, but the stakes are higher as Elmwood has more authority invested in his decision because now he is a father and it is his bloodline at stake. This time he relents only after Sandford begs him to read his late wife's deathbed letter recalling her father's friendship with him. He admits that friendship has been the basis for many of his actions:

"For Mr. Milner's sake I would do much--nay, any thing, but that to which, I have just now sworn never to consent.--For his sake I have borne a great deal--for his sake alone, his daughter

she inculcate not only blind submission to parents; but to the opinions of the world" (112).

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died my wife.--You know, no other motive than
respect for him, prevented my divorcing her."
(209)

The friendship between the two men, once the foundation for his marriage, becomes the support for his parent/child responsibility. Lady Elmwood knows the power of the relationship, stronger to Elmwood than the bond of guardian, husband, or father. She uses the friendship to appeal for the protection of her child, presenting her as "'the grand-daughter of Mr. Milner'; "'the destitute offspring of your friend; the last, and only remaining branch of his family'; and "'the child of his child whom he trusted to your care'" (210-11). In addition to recalling Matilda's lineage to the male patriarch, she casts the letter in other patriarchal language using the biblical prodigal son parable: "'I will go to my father; how many servants live in my father's house, and are fed with plenty, while I starve in a foreign land?'" (211). Finally, she reminds him of his role as guardian, minimizing his role as her husband. She asks as "Miss Milner your ward, to whom you never refused a request" and reminds him of her intercession with Henry Rushbrook (211). Because she has asked "'in the name of her father,'" Elmwood consents "'to give his grandchild the sanction of [his] protection'" (213).

His protection of Matilda is more like a ward than a "temporary parent" or guardian (Blackstone 1:448). He

assumes the most minimal of his duties, as suggested by the letter: "it became his duty, at least to provide her a guardian, if he did not choose to take that tender title upon himself" (202). Elmwood gives full power to Sandford to manage the situation and refuses to see his daughter, explaining "'though I have no resentment to the innocent child and wish her happy, yet I will never see her'" (208). He will support the child, but he makes it conditional, as he has done with his wards, Miss Milner and Rushbrook, threatening that "the very maintenance I mean to allow her daughter I can withdraw" (209). He makes it clear that he can end the arrangements and "abandon her once more" if the conditions are not carried out as he commands. Those conditions are that he never see or hear of her: it is his

unshaken resolution, never to acknowledge Lady Matilda as his child--or acknowledging her as such--never to see, hear of, or take one concern whatever in her fate and fortune. (202)

His motives for forbidding her mention are questionable. Elmwood believes that he "still of that sensible and feeling kind, which could never force him to forget the happiness he had lost"; however, the narrator relates skeptically that many people "suspected [him] rather to proceed from his resentment than his tenderness" (202).

Because Matilda has been raised by her mother in a separate household, she is in many ways more like a ward than a daughter when she comes to Elmwood. He justifies his callousness toward her by saying "'she cannot lament

the separation from a parent whom she never knew'" and "'I certainly provide for her as my daughter during my life, and leave her a fortune at my death'" (214). His treatment is more than neglect; it recalls some of the more tyrannical elements of wardship, as well as conventions of the Gothic novel. For instance, she is relegated to "some retired part" (215) of Elmwood House, and Sandford brings her to the house in the evening without notice, so as not to

give the neighbours or servants the slightest reason to suppose, the daughter of their lord was admitted into his house in any other situation than, that, which she really was.
(219)

The results of his inappropriate parenting is his failure as a father. He provides maintenance, but little protection or education. However, Matilda is "inured to retirement from her infancy" (221). Miss Woodley teaches her "that respect and admiration of her father's virtues which they justly merited" (216). Matilda has her faults, possessing "too much of the manly resentment of her father," and at times she is anxious to "provoke him to spurn her, which would be joy in comparison to this cruel indifference" (259, 244). However, she remains obedient. The relationship seems to support Wollstonecraft's observation that

It is the irregular exercise of parental authority that first injures the mind, and to these irregularities girls are more subject than boys. The will of those who never allow their

will to be disputed, unless they happen to be in a good humor, when they relax proportionally, is almost always unreasonable. (166)

Elmwood is unreasonable, and Matilda suffers.

Even though he short shrifts his responsibilities toward her as a father, she has been taught her obligations as a daughter. When he leaves the house, she visits the places she has inhabited "with a kind of filial piety" and "with filial delight" (245). Matilda practices filial duty out of a sense of obligation. There is no parental affection. No filial duty is warranted on her part, but she practices it nevertheless.

Their accidental encounter on the stairway reveals his lack of responsibility and her sense of duty, mixed with fear. When she senses the impending encounter,

She had felt something like affright before she saw him--but her reason told her she had nothing to fear, as he was far away.--But now the appearance of a stranger whom she had never before seen; an air of authority in his looks as well as in the sound of his steps . . . but above all--her fears confirmed her it was him. (273)

She gives "a scream of terror" before falling faint into his arms. While she accepts her role of submission, he confuses his roles: "Her voice unmanned him.--His long-restrained tears now burst forth" and when he tries to speak to her, he mistakenly calls her Miss Milner (274). His emotional side takes control. The moment is short-lived, and he recovers by denying his role as father. He hands over

his apparently dead child; without one command respecting her, or one word of any kind; while his face was agitated with shame, with pity, with anger, with paternal tenderness. (274)

When her hand refuses to let loose of his coat because she is still faint, Elmwood at first tries to loosen it, but "trembled--faltered" and then orders a servant to undo it (274). Reasserting his coercive power, he leaves abruptly, his habitual way of dealing with uncomfortable situations in which his patriarchal authority is challenged. He banishes her from the family house. Again, Matilda is the one who acts with appropriate morality, recognizing the duties inherent in the relationship. When she regains consciousness, she blames herself for the situation, saying, "'I know I had but one command from my father, and that I have disobeyed'" (275).

In Vindication, Wollstonecraft remarks that "parental affection produces filial duty," but adds later that "filial esteem always has a dash of fear mixed with it" (161, 170). She argues the need for parents to merit esteem, not just obedience, and connects it to a larger public morality:

Yet, till esteem and love are blended together in the first affection, and reason made the foundation of the first duty, morality will stumble at the threshold. But, till society is very differently constituted, parents, I fear, will still insist on being obeyed, because they will be obeyed, and constantly endeavour to settle that power on a Divine right which will not bear the investigation of reason. (167)

She recognizes the importance of proper parenting to society.

In the eyes of society, Matilda is vulnerable. Her unconventional relationship with her father places her in a precarious situation. An unscrupulous suitor, Lord Margrave, plans to take advantage of her. Because

there was no prospect of her ever becoming her father's heir, . . . the humiliating situation in which Matilda must feel herself in the house of her father, might gladly induce her to take shelter under any other protection. (248)

He decides to use force to abduct her, believing that Elmwood "would be utterly indifferent to any violence that might be offered her" (249). After Matilda is banished a second time from her father's house, her situation becomes even more precarious:

In this her discarded state, his lordship [Margrave] no longer burthened his lively imagination with the dull thoughts of marriage, but once more formed the brutal idea of making her his mistress. (286)

He "was no longer fearful of resentment from the Earl, whatever treatment his daughter might receive" (299). He tells Sandford, "'For the discarded daughter of Lord Elmwood, cannot expect the same proposals which I made while she was acknowledged, and under the protection of her father'" (301). Matilda knows her vulnerability; when Margrave abducts her, "she durst not" think of her father as her savior.

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However, he does save her, accepting his moral responsibility to nurture and protect her, and enters "with the unrestrained fondness of a parent, fold[ing] her in his arms" (328). Nevertheless, there remains a confusion of roles. They have lived so long outside the normal boundaries of their relationship that neither knows how to behave toward the other as parent and child. For instance, when he rescues her, "she feared to speak, or clasp him in return for his embrace, but falling on her knees clung round his legs, and bathed his feet with her tears" (328-29). He becomes the "late dreaded" Lord Elmwood, and Matilda can "only turn to him with a look of love and duty" (329). She is unsure of his reactions, whether they are temporary or sincere, and feels "a tremor seize her, that made it almost impossible to appear before him" when he asks her to join him in another room (330). When she cries, Elmwood uses his old ways to quell her tears: "assuming a grave countenance, he commanded her to desist from exhausting her spirits; and after a few powerful struggles, she obeyed" (331).

Their relationship becomes one of "easy, natural fondness, as if she had lived with him from her infancy" (333). Yet it also contains hints of the confused roles of her mother's relationship. For example, it is exclusionary. Miss Woodley reminds Sandford not to hurry in joining the father and daughter because

"At present there is no other with him to share in the care and protection of his daughter, and he is under the necessity of discharging the duty himself; accustomed to this, it may become so powerful he cannot throw it off, even if his former resolutions should urge him to it."
(332)

Furthermore, Elmwood's "propensity of man to jealousy" is so close that it "might give Rushbrook a pang at this dangerous rival in his love and fortune" (333).

Elmwood's inappropriate behavior still dominates the relationship. His method of testing her love for Rushbrook is to resort to his earlier behavior and threaten to banish him from his estate to test her reaction. She responds by kneeling at his feet and explaining her feelings for Rushbrook. Assured, Elmwood grants her the power to decide whether to fulfill Rushbrook's request. Inchbald ends the novel without reporting Matilda's decision. Instead she ends in an ambiguous position, with Matilda still fully in possession of her power to control:

Whether the heart of Matilda, such as it has been described could sentence him to misery, the reader is left to surmise--and if he supposes that it did not, he has every reason to suppose their wedded life was a life of happiness (337).

The denial of responsibility in Elmwood's relationship with his daughter suggests his awareness of his limitations to govern.

Dorriforth and Sandford

The fourth asymmetrical relationship Inchbald develops is between Dorriforth and Sandford. Theirs is the only one of the four not defined by law. Rather, it is developed through the patriarchal institutions of education and religion. Both institutions are hierarchically organized, as is the relationship. At first Sandford dominates as Dorriforth's tutor and confessor. As the novel progresses, their roles fluctuate and their relationship becomes one of almost vassalage, as Sandford is "entailed" to Elmwood, who becomes his master. Elmwood becomes a powerful secular guardian to Sandford, while Sandford remains his spiritual guardian, with diminished power.

Early in their relationship Sandford is Elmwood's "Preceptor," but his influence goes beyond that of a tutor. Sandford controls Dorriforth's emotions: he

held with a magisterial power the government of his pupil's passions; nay, governed them so entirely, no one could perceive (nor did the young lord himself know) that he had any. (38)

This government is so complete that Miss Woodley believes that Sandford "governed, or at least directed his almost every thought and purpose" (109).

Sandford gains control over Dorriforth and his cousin by encouraging their fear of him. The relationships change as they grow older; however, it is still patriarchal:

The young earl [Dorriforth's cousin] accustomed in his infancy to fear [Sandford] as his master, in his youth and manhood received every new indulgence with which his preceptor favoured him with gratitude, and became at length to love him

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as his father--nor had Dorriforth as yet shook off similar sensations. (39)

Inchbald mentions nothing of their father, reinforcing the relationship with Sandford even more strongly. His connection with the family is solidified because "Sandford had been the tutor of Dorriforth as well as of his cousin Lord Elmwood, and by this double tie seemed now entailed upon the family" (39). "Entailed," with its legal connection with property and hereditary rights, suggests Sandford has established a lasting hold in the family.

He is the primary influence on Dorriforth's moral development. At times it seems as if Dorriforth is unable to act without Sandford's advice. Although the narrator touts Sandford's qualifications, there is also a suggestion of problems in his role as "rigid monitor and friend" (38). "As a jesuit, he was consequently a man of learning; possessed of steadiness to accomplish the end of any design more meditated, but less ingenious than himself" (39). On the other hand:

Mr. Sandford, although he was a man of understanding, of learning, and a complete casuist; yet, all the faults he himself committed, were entirely--for want of knowing better.--He constantly reprov'd faults in others, and he was most assuredly too good a man not to have corrected and amended his own, had they been known to him--but they were not.--He had been for so long time the superior of all with whom he lived, had been so busied with instructing others, he had not recollected he himself wanted instructions--and in such awe did his severity keep all about him, that notwithstanding he had many friends, not one told him of his failings. (142-43).

He is the worst kind of casuist, ready to determine right or wrong in the conduct of others, but unaware of his own faults.

Miss Milner and her defiance of Dorriforth's inappropriate authority receives the brunt of his judgment. His behavior toward her exemplifies how he treats others, and is indicative of how Dorriforth will act. After all, Dorriforth has long studied his example. Sandford attributes his inappropriate behavior as necessary to protect Dorriforth:

"And here do I venture like a missionary among savages--but if I can only save you from the scalping knives of some of them; from the miseries which that lady [Miss Milner] is preparing for you, I am rewarded." (87)

By casting his behavior in colonizing terms, he reveals his feelings of moral superiority over her. He treats her in socially unacceptable ways, especially as he is a priest: "He spoke of her in her presence as of an indifferent person; sometimes forgot to name her when the subject required it" (40). Nevertheless, he realizes his own power is diminished. When she retaliates by attacking him with ridicule, "he would call on her guardian, his late pupil, to interpose with his authority" (41).

When Elmwood falls in love with Miss Milner, Sandford intends "to quit his house; and . . . he resolved, in quitting him, never to be his adviser or counsellor again" (136). This is the same strategy--leaving the house and

abandoning his charge--Elmwood repeatedly uses with his dependents. However, he reconsiders his decision:

But in preparing to leave his friend, his pupil, his patron, and yet him, who, upon most occasions, implicitly obeyed his will, the spiritual got the better of the temporal man, and he determined to stay, lest in totally abandoning him to the pursuit of his own passions, he might make his punishment even greater than his offence (136-37).

Sandford is governed by his strict religious training, Elmwood is not. Nevertheless, Sandford understands and excuses Elmwood's tyrannical treatment of those whom he loves:

"He does love [Miss Milner]--but he has understanding and resolution.--He loved his sister too, tenderly loved her, and yet when he had taken the resolution; passed his word he would never see her again; even upon her death-bed he would not retract it--no entreaties could prevail upon him." (144)

Eventually, however, Sandford becomes the victim of the abusive treatment when Elmwood dominates the relationship. After the seventeen year gap, Sandford is "intimidated through age, or by the austere, and even morose, manners Lord Elmwood had of late years adopted" (202). Elmwood recognizes the change in their relationship, and announces: "we may still be friends.--But I am not to be controlled as formerly" (215). However, he "forgave in Sandford's humour a thousand faults he would forgive in no other" (267).

However, Sandford has also changed. He is still "the same as ever--The reprover, the enemy of the vain, idle,

and wicked; but the friend, the comforter of the forlorn and miserable" (200). He has adopted a feminized morality. He no longer judges in terms of black and white, but considers in terms of degrees of nurturing. He has entered the domestic circle and is now "the firm friend of Lady Matilda" (264).

His change causes a rift in his hierarchical relationship with Elmwood. After Elmwood banishes Matilda a second time, Sandford is unable to shake his hand (284). Sandford has accepted responsibility for Matilda, which Elmwood ignores,

for as he had before given his daughter, in some measure, to his charge, so honour, delicacy, and the common ties of duty, made him approve rather than condemn his attention to her. (285)

Because of his morality, Sandford contests Elmwood's abusive authority and challenges Elmwood. When asked what he fears, he replies, "'you, my lord. . . . I know no tie--no bond--no innocence, a protection from your resentment'" (318). Elmwood, clinging to his tyranny, retaliates by reasserting his position with threats:

"You are more tormenting to me than any one I have about me--Constantly on the verge of disobeying my commands, that you may recede, and gain my good will by your forbearance.--But know, Mr. Sandford, I will not suffer this much longer." (318)

This time Sandford does not back down, defying Elmwood by asking if he really calls her daughter. When Elmwood responds with more threats, Sandford drops to his knees

"with his hands clasped in the most fervent supplication" (319). The gesture stops Elmwood "instantly" because Sandford is his confessor and he recognizes how drastically their roles have changed. He has abrogated the position of his religious superior.

After this exchange, Elmwood harbors resentment against Sandford, silently demonstrating his anger. Because this mistreatment is "from a man, for whose welfare, ever since his infancy, he had laboured," Sandford is "incensed beyond bearing . . . [and] on the point of saying to his patron, 'How, in my age, dare you thus treat the man, whom in his youth you respected and revered?'" (322). However, Matilda's abduction changes the situation. Sandford, "forgetting all the anger between them . . . [challenges Elmwood] 'Will you then prove yourself a father?'" (324). Elmwood's acceptance of his daughter restores his friendship with Sandford.

Tutorial Guardianship: Educating the Ward

Within A Simple Story, Inchbald embeds a sophisticated discussion of education. Although critics have long focused on education as a primary approach to this novel, I believe that, especially in light of guardianship and its tutorial duties, education merits a reexamination. After all, a vital component of Dorriforth's moral development involves overcoming the adverse effects of his education.

Dorriforth has been trained under Sandford, who espoused patriarchal idealism, as well as in a religious hierarchical institution.³¹ The Catholic church promotes asymmetrical relationships, including those between schoolmaster and student, priest and laity, and confessor and penitent. Each of these relationships concentrates power on the individual of higher rank in a custodial relationship--in other words, a quasi-guardianship relationship. Additionally, Dorriforth's education took him out of the family realm, leaving him unprepared to handle family matters. Also, sent away to France, Dorriforth learned little about dealing with society, comprised of people of different ages and backgrounds. Inchbald's story problematizes all these aspects of his education.

³¹ Although Wollstonecraft is referring to the Church of England, her comments apply to the oppressive nature of the hierarchical system of the government for the Catholic church:

the clergy have superior opportunities of improvement, though subordination almost equally cramps their faculties[.] The blind submission imposed at college to forms of belief serves as a novitiate to the curate, who must obsequiously respect the opinion of his rector or patron, if he means to rise in his profession. Perhaps there cannot be a more forcible contrast than between the servile dependent gait of a poor curate and the courtly mien of a bishop. And the respect and contempt they inspire, render the discharge of their separate functions equally useless. (26)

George III also seems to have perceived these issues of education--its principles of hierarchical organization; its separation of children from their families; and its unnatural segregation by gender and age--as problematic. Brooke's description of "the eighteenth-century system of royal education" includes all of these traits. He details the system

which removed children at about the age of puberty from the direct control of their parents and placed them in separate household. The nominal head of the household, standing in loco parentis, was the governor, who was always of an aristocratic family and in the case of the heir to the throne of at least the rank of earl. Joined in authority with him was the preceptor, responsible for the academic education of the children, usually a bishop or at any rate in holy orders. Subordinate to these were the sub-governor and sub-preceptor; a treasurer, responsible for the finance of the household; specialist teachers for foreign languages, fencing, dancing, and riding; and personal servants and domestic staff. Two or more children of nearly the same age would be placed in the same household, as were Prince George and Edward and later the two eldest sons of King George III. Usually the children and their attendants lived in a separate house from their parents. (36)

The results of this educational system had proven disastrous for the king and his family, as well as the nation. The royal princes were profligate, seemingly incapable of leading responsible lives. Unable to assume responsibility for their private lives, they were subject to public debate about their ability to govern the nation. The public questioned their authority, in the process contesting hereditary power and hierarchical systems of

education which fostered values inappropriate to domestic life.

The extent to which A Simple Story is specifically about education has been subject to long debate.³² Much of the reasoning has focused on the final words of the novel:

[The reader] has beheld the pernicious effects of an improper education in the destiny which attended the unthinking Miss Milner--On the opposite side, then, what may not be hoped from that school of prudence--though of adversity--in which Matilda was bred?

And Mr. Milner, Matilda's grandfather, had better have given his fortune to a distant branch of his family--as Matilda's father once meant to do--so he bestowed upon his daughter

A PROPER EDUCATION.

(337-38)

Critics have questioned the significance of these two sentences, explaining that they seem as if Inchbald added

³² A Simple Story does appropriate conventions from popular women's educational literature. The novel uses some of the discourses of contemporary female conduct books, but differs from these popular educational treatises in important ways. While it provides examples of "good" and "bad" character in the two women, Miss Milner and her daughter are not the conduct genre's "Spoiled Child" and the "unspoiled child" as Gary Kelly insinuates (75). The novel's principle element may be contrast, as he argues, which is the same principle used in conduct books: that is "the simple moral opposites found in literature written by autodidacts for a popular audience" (84). However, both Miss Milner and Matilda are drawn with much fuller detail which depicts each as a mixture of good and bad character traits. Furthermore, A Simple Story departs from the model of the majority of conduct books written during the period because it fails to supply the copious details regarding the education, training, and behavior of the two women.

them as an afterthought.³³ Specific educational practices are treated only minimally in the novel.³⁴

Both Inchbald and Wollstonecraft argue for proper education for both women and men. Although Inchbald uses few specific examples of educational methods, Wollstonecraft suggests many detailed ways to reform educational practices. First Inchbald demonstrates the results of the two major contemporary models of education--that of traditionally male education, exemplified by Dorriforth and of traditionally female education, exemplified by Miss Milner. After critiquing each, she then introduces Matilda's education: a model combining the strengths of both models.

³³ Noting that "This moral [of proper education] is frequent in novels by women at the end of the eighteenth century," Spencer raises the issue that "In A Simple Story it seems hardly to be integral to the development of the work, but need not therefore be dismissed as insincere" (Inchbald 338n). Nevertheless, she refers to the novel's "insistent but unintegrated moral tag" (xiv). Gary Kelly notes the moral's "portentiousness," but then claims it "does in fact unite the histories of mother and daughter under one moral head, and places the two halves of the novel in the context of a single 'argument'" (72). He refuses to attribute it to "simply the blatant hand of Holcroft interfering" (72), arguing "The contrast of Miss Milner's education with that of her daughter becomes a structural principle of too great importance to be merely a late revision inspired by the influence of Holcroft and Godwin (90).

³⁴ Spencer points out the scantiness of details concerning the women's education: "Neither Miss Milner's education nor her daughter's is much elaborated on" (xiv).

Inchbald foregrounds Dorriforth's education--the first words of A Simple Story briefly describe Dorriforth's education at the English college in France: "Dorriforth, bred at St. Omer's in all the scholastic rigour of that college, was by education a Roman Catholic priest" (3).³⁵ She later alludes to Sandford's role in Dorriforth's education, suggesting Sandford's shortcomings as a tutor in overly controlling his student's emotions.

³⁵ The ecclesiastical hierarchy raised the same set of issues being debated in England such as the aristocratic hierarchy and hereditary succession. The priest's vow of obedience to the Pope created suspicion among non-Catholics even after the second Roman Catholic Relief Act. The Catholic church in England had its sets of guardianship-like relationships, including those between schoolmaster and student, priest and laity, and confessor and penitent as well as the church government. Each of these relationships concentrates power on the individual of higher rank in a custodial relationship. Although Wollstonecraft is referring to the Church of England, her comments apply to the oppressive nature of the hierarchical system of the government for the Catholic church:

the clergy have superior opportunities of improvement, though subordination almost equally cramps their faculties[.] The blind submission imposed at college to forms of belief serves as a novitiate to the curate, who must obsequiously respect the opinion of his rector or patron, if he means to rise in his profession. Perhaps there cannot be a more forcible contrast than between the servile dependent gait of a poor curate and the courtly mien of a bishop. And the respect and contempt they inspire, render the discharge of their separate functions equally useless. (26)

Likewise, Miss Milner's formal education is
problematized.³⁶ It takes place at

a Protestant boarding-school, from whence she
was sent with merely such sentiments of
religion, as young ladies of fashion mostly
imbibe. Her little heart employed in all the
endless pursuits of personal accomplishments,
had left her mind without one ornament, except
those which nature gave, and even they were not
wholly preserved from the ravages made by its
rival, Art. (5, emphasis in the original)

Her informal education has proven equally superficial:

From her infancy she had been indulged in all
her wishes to the extreme of folly, and
habitually started at the unpleasant voice of
control--she was beautiful, she had been too
frequently told the high value of that beauty.
(15)

Her improper education is to be inculcated with patriarchal
values--denying women reason--rather than moral values.

On the contrary, Matilda's education seems to be the
most appropriate one in the novel. She is cloistered first
in her mother's semi-Gothic retreat and then in a walled
off wing of her father's estate, receiving private
instruction. Although the results of Sandford's education
of Dorriforth are questionable, he succeeds with Matilda,
but only after he has shed his abusive patriarchal ways and
is within the domestic circle of Miss Woodley and Lady
Elmwood. Elmwood fails in his tutorial role as guardian
and father--that is providing maintenance and education for

³⁶ In her preface to A Simple Story, Inchbald
complains about the inadequacy of her own education,
"confined to the narrow boundaries prescribed her sex" (1).

his charges. This is ironic given that he has been trained as a Catholic priest for a curatorial role. Paradoxically Matilda has a better grasp on the manners and mores of contemporary culture than either of her parents. Unlike her mother, Matilda is all too aware of the larger public discourses governing her private life. She has been taught to reason, and unlike her father she is able to form close personal relationships. Hers is the education of the private domestic circle.

Wollstonecraft argues for changes in education to instill the same values by working in similar ways to Matilda's education. She repeatedly calls for children spending less time at boarding schools and more time in their families. She believes schools are harmful because they segregate children by gender and prevent them from learning how to deal with one another in society. She argues:

I have already animadverted on the bad habits which females acquire when they are shut up together; and I think, that the observation may fairly be extended to the other sex, till the natural inference is drawn which I have had in view throughout--that to improve both sexes they ought, not only in private families, but in public schools, to be educated together. (176-78)

She has equal disdain for the masters of the schools:

"There is not, perhaps, in the kingdom, a more dogmatical or luxurious set of men, than the pedantic tyrants who reside in colleges and preside at public schools" (172-73).

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She proposes, "In order then to inspire a love of home and domestic pleasures, children ought to be educated at home" (174). Ideally, however, she presses for

the necessity of educating the sexes together to perfect both, and of making children sleep at home that they may learn to love home; yet to make private support, instead of smothering, public affections, they should be sent to school to mix with a number of equals, for only by the jostlings of equality can we form a just opinion of ourselves. (184)

Wollstonecraft sees a direct connection between education and social trends--the way society perceives itself and how it acts on those perceptions:

Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in. In every age there has been a stream of popular opinion that has carried all before it, and given a family character, as it were, to the century. It may then fairly be inferred, that, till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education. (31)

She argues that society must change if education is to achieve the results she envisions, a vision similar to the domestic ideal embodied in Inchbald's A Simple Story.

A Proper [Re]Education

In its depiction of hierarchical relationships, including those of legal guardianship and of quasi-guardianship, A Simple Story examines the power that individuals have over one another. It also looks into informal private power relationships people have regardless of their social positions or institution-connected powers.

A conversation between Sandford and Rushbrook demonstrates the need for individuals to have moral responsibility for each other in those relationships. When Rushbrook is disappointed in Miss Woodley's absence at dinner after she promised to come, Sandford asks,

"'But what right had you to ask her?'

"'The right every one has to make his time pass as agreeably as he can.'

"'But not at the expence of another.'"

(261)

Sandford discourages Rushbrook from asserting his power over Miss Woodley, setting limits to an individual's power. His notion of a feminized morality is similar to Wollstonecraft's, who states that

to subjugate a rational being to the mere will of another, after he is of age to answer to society for his own conduct, is a most cruel and undue stretch of power, and perhaps as injurious to morality as those religious systems which do not allow right and wrong to have any existence, but in the Divine will. (163)

Again and again, morality is the basic issue in the novel.

As another example, Inchbald includes an episode illustrating Elmwood's abuse of patriarchal responsibility while managing his household. The head gardener at Elmwood House, Edwards, makes the mistake of mentioning Lady Elmwood to his master. Elmwood discharges the servant, "a man of honesty and sobriety," insisting that he leave the house immediately. Edwards is "an elderly man . . . with a large indigent family of aged parents, children, and other relatives, who subsisted wholly on the income arising from

his place" and who had worked on the estate "for many years" (270). He asks both Sandford and Rushbrook to intervene for him with Elmwood, but both men are relatively powerless against his tyrannical authority. As a result,

Edwards was obliged to submit; and before the next day at noon, his pleasant house by the side of the park, his garden, and his orchard, which he had occupied above twenty years, were cleared of their old inhabitant, and all his wretched family. (272)

The household loses because of Elmwood's arbitrary use of coercive power.

However, Inchbald's primary focus is not on management of estates. She diminishes Elmwood's position as landowner by making him a Catholic priest. The action is concentrated to the domestic realm. She shifts the emphasis from the curatorial side of guardianship to focus on the tutorial side. In the process of repositioning the legal relationship of guardianship, she discounts patriarchal practices of its past and instills the relationship with a new moral authority. A Simple Story questions following old practices for their own sake, just as Wollstonecraft urges discarding ideas once obsolete. She argues:

But moss covered opinions assume the disproportioned form of prejudices when they are indolently adopted only because age has given them a venerable aspect, though the reason on which they were built ceases to be a reason, or cannot be traced. (120)

A Simple Story uses domestic relationships to indirectly comment on the values and assumptions of the public realm. Inchbald seems to suggest that the values of feminine morality are superior to those of the masculine public institutions. Similarly, Wollstonecraft's philosophical treatise seeks to provoke "a Revolution in Female Manners" leading to "Moral Improvement" (191). Although the public and private realms are separate, Wollstonecraft urges a feminized morality of public virtues and public affections, nurtured in the private domestic circle:

Public education, of every denomination, should be directed to form citizens; but if you wish to make good citizens, you must first exercise the affections of a son and a brother. This is the only way to expand the heart; for public affections, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character, or they are merely meteors that shoot athwart a dark sky, and disappear as they are gazed at and admired. (173)

New Tenants in The Old Manor House

Our system of remedial law resembles an old Gothic castle, erected in the days of chivalry, but fitted up for a modern inhabitant. The moated ramparts, the embattled towers, and the trophied halls, are magnificent and venerable, but useless and therefore neglected. The inferior apartments, now accommodated to daily use are chearful and commodious, though their approaches are winding and difficult.

--William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Law of England, 1765-69. (3:268)¹

Charlotte Smith is usually recognized for her contributions to the novel genre in several areas, including developing the character of the sentimental heroine; introducing landscape description to further characterization; and exploring the uses of the Gothic castle (Fry 26-7). Because of these innovations and her popularity, she is generally credited as a favorable influence on Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen.²

Additionally, Smith's personal and political background became an issue for critics. Financial need caused her to turn from writing successfully selling poetry

¹ Blackstone is commenting on "the difficulty of new-modelling any branch of our statute laws" (3:267) I use his Commentaries because they were commonly used as a legal reference in the late eighteenth-century; however, Blackstone's political conservatism must be kept in mind.

² See for instance, Mary Lascelles' Jane Austen and Her Art, B.G. MacCarthy's The Female Pen, and William Magee's "The Happy Marriage: The Influence of Charlotte Smith on Austen."

to producing novels at a furious rate. The biographical details of her life rival the ingredients of any sentimental fiction of the period. Her disastrous marriage at a young age, her subsequent separation, her commitment as sole supporter of her ten children, and the contesting of her father-in-law's will, with which he intended to provide for his grandchildren, all contributed to her need to be a successful writer. Recognizing her desperate necessity to maintain herself and her family with her writing, critics have treated Smith as an opportunist and have commented unfavorably on her writing. For example, Robert Spector dismisses her talent, saying:

No matter how serious her literary efforts, she planned them to take advantage of public taste--capitalizing on the late eighteenth-century interest in Richardsonian novels of sentiment, appealing to a Romantic liking for landscape painting and scenic portrayals, indulging in political controversy, and, indeed, playing upon the passions that were stirred by the threatening winds of Gothic mystery. (111)

Smith's literary ability is reduced to exploiting popular themes and techniques for mercenary reasons. The truth is, however, that her propensity for "indulging in political controversy" by including her political views in her novels may have decreased her immediate popularity. Contemporary critics felt her increasingly political stance bordered on impropriety, jeopardizing her position as a respectable lady writer and thus affecting her acceptability by the polite reading public. At the time critics were especially

unfavorable toward the novels she produced during the mid to late 1790s, a period when England grew more politically conservative as a result of the war with France.³ More recently, Smith's political views have intrigued critics, who have increasingly recognized her unexpectedly consistent treatment of controversial political issues.⁴

Charlotte Smith merits attention as a novelist because while adapting and improving sentimental and Gothic novel techniques, she also insightfully critiques the social practices of her times. The Old Manor House (1793) offers commentary on the changing economic practices of England, suggesting that laws and social customs have not adequately changed to meet the demands of the evolving economic order. Though situated primarily in an old Gothic manor, complete with a turret in which the heroine is imprisoned by her cruel guardian, Smith's novel directly challenges feudally-based eighteenth century laws governing property ownership

³ For a survey of contemporary criticism of Smith, see Carroll Lee Fry, Charlotte Smith, Popular Novelist 14-19.

⁴ See Fry as well as Katherine Ellis's "Charlotte Smith's Subversive Gothic."

Fry argues that Smith is ahead of her time. She incorporates social criticism in her novels, at a time when few other authors were:

Tom Paine, in The Rights of Man, expresses ideas very similar to those of Charlotte Smith. The basis of Mrs. Smith's criticism of her society, then, is not original with her. But it is unusual to find this criticism expressed in fiction in the early 1790's. (190)

and inheritance. The text demonstrates the danger of trusting government to the static, outmoded hierarchy of declining aristocratic land-owners and proposes other alternatives for a new, more responsible managerial system. Smith embeds these ideas within the Gothic framework of a haunted manor house, a situation which may cause modern readers to miss the substantial and contentious nature of her message. Nevertheless, Smith controverts ideas from some major philosophical treatises, especially Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), and comments on current debates questioning the appropriateness of existing institutions of authority to govern the family and the country.⁵

No direct public dialogue took place between Burke and Smith. Both of them joined in the general, contemporary debate about significant issues, such as limiting the power of the aristocracy in government. Burke argued for

⁵ Evidence suggests that Smith was very familiar with Burke's treatise. In her novel Desmond (1792), the title character writes that he has read Burke's Reflections and "lament[s] still more, the disposition which too many Englishmen shew to join in this unjust and infamous crusade against the holy standard of freedom" (III, 208). In her introduction to The Old Manor House, Todd explains that Smith when writing Desmond

was ready to admit the charge that she held political views, and she was prepared to affront her readers by justifying rather than apologizing for her unfeminine subject matter: "But women, it is said, have no business in politics--why not? Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting round them?" (x)

maintaining the political power structure, reestablished by the Glorious Revolution (1688), including preserving property rights and the social hierarchy. On the other hand, Smith urged change. She would curtail hereditary property rights and succession, and instead recognize individuals for their merit.

Although Burke and Smith are on opposite sides politically, the parallels between the issues they address are considerable. Burke defends the traditional social hierarchy and its feudal basis, while Smith debunks it. Both use the imagery of a noble manor house to talk about the government, though to different ends. Burke recommends conservation of the house's foundations and Smith shows how, unknown to its owner, it has already been converted to accommodate contemporary economic practices, including smuggling. Burke and Smith both comment on the fitness of the aristocratic class of society to govern: Burke using plant imagery to compare it favorably to a vine bred to produce fruitfully and Smith depicting aristocrats as withering in habits of "splendid uniformity" while waiting to die, or as rapacious spoilers of the land, vying to waste it of its resources (32).⁶ Burke, recalling the basis of power of the aristocracy in its history of

⁶ All parenthetical references in this chapter, unless otherwise specified, will be to Charlotte Smith's The Old Manor House (New York: Pandora P, 1987).

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military exploits, valorizes the aristocratic ancestors as "men of great civil, and great military talents," "asserting their natural place in society" (136, 137). When Smith treats the same subject, she puts their deeds into perspective with contemporary people, inserting into the praises of Mrs. Rayland "that hardly any other record of them remained upon earth" other than in the dimming memories of their dying descendants and in equally dim Gothic portrait galleries (215). Both Burke and Smith examine the laws of inheritance and their role in perpetuating society. Burke argues that transmitting the crowned government and upholding the power of families to maintain property is "one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it" (140). Smith argues instead that the old inheritance laws have outlived their usefulness and that primogeniture in particular actually harms estates and incapacitates deserving individuals who might make better governors. Reflecting on power in the hands of a single individual, Burke lauds the hereditary crown in which English "liberties can be regularly perpetuated and preserved sacred as our hereditary right," while Smith portrays Mrs. Rayland as an "antique heiress" with "so little idea of modern expenses" that she is unfit to govern her manor or her nephew (105, 6, 244). Perhaps their biggest point of contention is that

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Burke tried to play down the effects of commerce on the social order, while Smith examines its influence in detail.

For the most part, Smith indirectly includes these challenges to obsolete authority within the Gothic machinery of her sentimental novel. Using brilliantly engineered characterizations of tyrannical, yet inept guardian figures, she exposes their weaknesses, allowing a review of the systematic instances of despotic authority in contemporary English society.⁷ Deposed by their own inabilities to govern in a changed economy, the guardians are each bested by their deserving, yet powerless wards, suggesting the rise of a new social order. Smith portrays the legal relationship of guardian and ward and quasi-guardian and ward relationships to comment on the changed economic situation in England. In turn, her novel adds to the debates current about the nature and role of authority and its practice in England in the 1790s. Specifically, she comments on instances of tyranny in three ways: (1) she uses two legal relations of guardianship between Monimia and her aunt, Mrs. Lennard and between Warwick and his uncle, General Tracy; (2) she constructs the quasi-guardianship relation between Orlando Somerive and his

⁷ Although critical of her characterizations of Monimia and Orlando, critics have long agreed that her depictions of Mrs. Rayland, General Tracy and Mrs. Lennard are masterful. See, for example, Katherine Rogers, "Inhibitions on Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists: Elizabeth Inchbald and Charlotte Smith."

great aunt, Mrs. Rayland; and (3) she includes other asymmetrical relationships: on a smaller scale, the relationship of Mrs. Rayland with her household staff and on a larger scale--and very openly for a lady writer--direct comment on issues such as colonialism and slavery.

Set during the American Revolutionary War from September 1776 to September 1779, The Old Manor House centers on the Somerive family and their relationship to Mrs. Rayland, their aunt. Although they are her only legal heirs, Mrs. Rayland can stipulate any heir she wishes to inherit the manor Rayland Hall, the ancestral home, and her wealth because her ownership of her estate is under no entail. As the last of a direct line of titled, landed aristocracy, she has chosen against the family because of her disdain for wealth made in business--two generations of the Somerive family have married into the merchant class. Mrs. Rayland changes her mind when Orlando Somerive, the second son, proves worthy. But because she refuses to declare her intentions publicly, the family must live in financial uncertainty, especially since the first-born son is profligate, gambling away his family's small savings. Mr. Somerive attempts to provide for his family through advantageous marriages for his daughters and careers for his sons. However, Orlando has his own agenda revolving around his love for Monimia, the penniless ward of Mrs.

Rayland's housekeeper. He must keep his love secret from Mrs. Rayland, who has higher intentions for him.

When the machinations of his sister's scheming suitor, General Tracy, send Orlando to fight in the war in America, his family most needs him and Mrs. Rayland realizes her dependence on him. However, because she has continually refused to indicate publicly her intentions toward Orlando, and only hinted at them to keep him in her power, her tactics backfire and she dies without his company. Her will is almost thwarted by the very people whom she resents the most--those who have gained power and money through business and who hide their lack of scruples within the institution of the Church of England. Only by a fortuitous chain of chance incidents does Orlando recover his rightful inheritance and find Monimia, who has been deserted by her gold-digging guardian aunt. Mrs. Rayland's family line is continued, but without the "pure" aristocratic blood and without observing the convention of primogeniture.

Smith's novel comments on the changing economic situation of the late eighteenth century. The novel portrays the circumstances leading to the end of the almost automatic financial security the older aristocratic order had enjoyed due to its despotic control of property and wealth. Its unlimited control declined as the economy moved from a feudal property base to a capitalist cash base. Nevertheless, property laws, with feudal roots

insuring orderly inheritance of property along aristocratic family lines of patrilineal descent, continued to support outmoded notions of property even though the economic climate had changed, as evidenced by the continued practices of entail and primogeniture. The legal relationship of guardianship was only one part of custody and inheritance laws which maintained and solidified hierarchical power within families, adhering to rules which ignored an individual's abilities to manage property. Contemporary debate called to question these feudally-based practices which protected property and propertied individuals, leaving others powerless.⁸ Specifically, these practices included rank, descent, and noble blood. succession, and hereditary rights, as well as primogeniture.⁹

⁸ "The British state, all eighteenth-century legislators agreed," E. P. Thompson reports in Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act, "existed to preserve the property and, incidentally, the lives and liberties, of the propertied" 21.

⁹ In Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness, William Godwin lists these practices, or in his terms, "instances," which he argues render "inequalities greater and more oppressive," as

the feudal system, and the system of ranks, seigniorial duties, fines, conveyances, entails, the distinction, in landed property, of freehold, copyhold and manor, the establishment of vassalage, and the claim of primogeniture. (719).

The opening pages of The Old Manor House abound with images of the unfitness of the old aristocracy to govern their affairs adequately because of their refusal to acknowledge the changed economic climate. Products of another age, with its own concepts of economics and authority, both Mrs. Rayland and her neighbor, Lord Carlorraine, pride themselves on their resistance to change. The description of Lord Carlorraine, "the last possessor of this property, . . . a man very advanced in life," underscores his obsolescence, as he clings to outmoded practices of power:¹⁰

Many years had passed since the world in which he had lived had disappeared; and being no longer able or desirous to take part in what was passing about a court, to him wholly uninteresting, and being a widower without children, he had retired above thirty years before to his paternal seat; where he lived in splendid uniformity, receiving only the nobility of the county and the baronets (whom he considered as forming an order that made a very proper barrier between the peerage and the squirality), with all the massive dignity and magnificent dulness that their fathers and grandfathers had been entertained with since the beginning of the century. Filled with high ideas of the consequence of ancient blood, he suffered no consideration to interfere with his respect for all who had the advantage to boast; while, for the upstart rich men of the present day, he felt the most ineffable contempt; and

He believes that "[I]f the community refuse to countenance feudal and seignorial claims, and the other substantial privileges of an aristocracy, they must inevitably cease" (720).

¹⁰ The name Carlorraine--or reigning carl or king--suggests a close association between this landowner and George III.

while such were, in neighbouring counties, seen to figure away on recently acquired fortunes, Lord Carloraine used to pique himself upon the inviolability of that part of the world where he lived--and say, that very fortunately for the morals and manners of the country, it had not been chosen by nabobs and contractors for the display of their wealth and taste. And that none such might gain any footing in the neighbourhood, he purchased every farm that was to be sold; and contrived to be so much of a despot himself, that those who were only beginning to be great, shunned his established greatness as inimical to their own.

Mrs. Rayland perfectly agreed with him in these sentiments; and had the most profound respect for a nobleman, who acknowledged, proud as he was of his own family, that it had no other superiority over that of Rayland, than in possessing an higher title. . . . [T]heir whole conversation consisted of eulogiums on the days that were passed, in expressing their dislike of all that was now acting in a degenerate world, and their contempt of the actors. (32-33)

"Uninterested" in contemporary events, Lord Carloraine relies on "ancient" distinctions of class to differentiate men. Those of new wealth are of no consequence in his "inviolable" system, other than motivating him to acquire more property to keep it out of their hands, further insulating himself as a "despot" from "a degenerate world."

They feel the world is "degenerate" because concepts of property and wealth have changed. In Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833, Susan Staves explains that "the ways of measuring the 'value' of an estate had shifted":

as an estate's annual revenues in money came to seem a more relevant measure of the value of the estate, with questions of free or servile tenure fading in the light of cash income of so many

pounds a year, there was no apparent procedural way to substitute these new measures. (127)

The financial security of an estate had come to depend on more than just preserving its land holdings; wealth relied on successfully manipulating the resources on that land. Staves describes the change as "a sea change in the understanding of the purpose of property in all its forms":

a change from considering property a stable resource in a fixed form for the purpose of maintaining human life, (Model I) to considering property a more abstract, unstable asset easily transformable into whatever its highest economic use might be at a given time (Model II). (209).¹¹

¹¹ Staves continues,

In Model I, to "own" a piece of arable land means to be able to enjoy the produce of the fields year after year. If this arable land is turned into something else--if the "owner" turns it into forest or opens up new mines on it, for instance--he forfeits it for waste. In Model II, there is no impeachment for waste; 'owners' expect to be able to turn arable land into forest, if forests are more profitable at the moment, or to be able to level forests to build factories. In Model I land is to be used, not sold, whereas in Model II alienability is maximized. (209)

"Waste" is defined by Staves as

an abuse or destructive use of property by one in rightful possession, but not the owner in fee simple. Spoil or destruction, done or permitted, to lands, houses, gardens, trees, or other corporeal hereditaments, by the tenant thereof, to the prejudice of the heir, or of him in reversion or remainder. (241)

In actual practice, those estates which adopted management practices appropriate to the changing eighteenth-century economic situation were the most successful.

As a result of these changes, the focus of power was no longer directed solely on the capacity to name an heir, but on the capability of the heir to manage an estate. The proper education of an heir changed accordingly.¹² No longer was military service as important as it was in feudal times, but instead managerial acumen was essential to maintaining and increasing a family estate.¹³ Therefore, Mrs. Rayland's priorities are misdirected. She dotes on the portrait halls enshrining ancestral heroes from royal wars, while she counsels Orlando to enter the military. Both behaviors are motivated by outdated notions of maximizing family power.

¹² The shift in guardianship toward a more tutorial relationship is itself partly a result of this shift in favor of sounder management practice. Likewise, as Peter Roebuck notes in "Post-Restoration Landownership: The Impact of the Abolition of Wardship," guardians themselves took on increasingly managerial roles in their curatorial duties, causing "a gradual but general improvement in accounting procedures, for guardians' accounts had to be carefully prepared and checked" (73).

¹³ In Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall concur with Staves, observing that

A society increasingly based on new forms of property, on liquid capital, could no longer depend on traditional forms of male dominance embedded in the traces of a feudal military system which had been inherent in land ownership. (451)

Furthermore, land and its management were no longer the only means of calculating or conveying wealth. According to Staves, "[T]he development of the mortgage market and the invention of government funds began to provide significant competition to land for investors" (209). New opportunities for generating wealth created a new class of wealthy people.

Though speaking of France, Burke sees this use of wealth--versus property--as a fearful agent of change because of its liquid, less controllable nature:

In this state of real, though not always perceived warfare between the noble ancient landed interest, and the new monied interest, the greatest because the most applicable strength was in the hands of the latter. The monied interest is in its nature more ready for any adventure; and its possessors more disposed to new enterprizes of any kind. Being of a recent acquisition, it falls in more naturally with any novelties. It is therefore the kind of wealth which will be resorted to by all who wish for change. (211)

He compares the adoption of this new economy to "bringing the spirit and symbols of gaming into the minutest matters, and engaging every body in it, and in every thing" and laments it as "a more dreadful epidemic distemper of that kind is spread than yet has appeared in the world" (310).

At the same time Smith debunks those with property and power derived from feudal times, she, like Burke, questions the ability of these newly-enriched people to govern, especially because their primary concern is raising capital. For instance, the manor house and its

neighborhood are wasted and allowed to fall to near ruin while managed by a group of clergy of the Church of England whose only motivation is profit. In Smith's novel, the professionals rising to fulfill the new need for solid managers--lawyers and accountants--are too self-interested, using their professional knowledge to take advantage of their clients. The outcome of the novel suggests that the country's future lies in management by people like Orlando and Monimia, who are not solely interested in profit, but motivated by enlightened ideals.¹⁴

In The Old Manor House Smith uses Monimia's powerlessness as a legal ward to underscore the need for social and legal change. Monimia is penniless and her parentage remains common throughout the novel, disappointing contemporary readers' expectations of a "discovery" ending which would elevate her class status.¹⁵

¹⁴ Fry offers a similar critique:

In all of Mrs. Smith's social criticism in these later novels, then, she speaks against the prejudices and conventions that permit the abuses to exist and holds up reason, man's natural gift, as a remedy. (188)

¹⁵ Oliver's father identifies Monimia as "the daughter of a nobleman's steward" (258). Despite her "rather tenuous connections with the gentility," Fry explains,

in Miss Rayland's house she acts as a sort of upstairs maid and is repeatedly shown doing menial tasks. She is the only plebeian heroine that I know of in sentimental fiction. (71n)

Fry forgets Pamela, whose ditch-digging father has fallen from his position as a schoolmaster.

Smith's use of the guardian and ward relationship relies on its traditional gendered nature; however, she disrupts readers' expectations by offering examples other than the usual male guardian and female ward. None of the relationships fit that expectation; instead, they act as foils to one another, reinforcing a ward's position of dependency on a powerful guardian for proper care and education. The female guardians whom Orlando and Monimia depend on are unusually powerful women by conventional standards, and as males, Orlando and Warwick, have more personal freedom than the stereotypical female ward. The unconventionality of the relationships increases their effectiveness to communicate the problems asymmetrical power relationships pose in the larger society. The victimization of these wards by those with wealth and power works as a vehicle for Smith to discuss the abuses of the less powerful by those manipulating the existing social, legal, and economic systems.

By this period, Hannah Arendt claims, traditional authority was no longer intact and the powerful ruled by force, evident at all three traditional levels of government--foreign, public, and domestic (Between 93). Religious, military, and judicial powers were used by the government and powerful individuals to support the new economics within each realm at the expense of those with

less influence. In The Old Manor House, Smith calls for reform, unlike Burke, who dogmatically asserts

the limits of a moral competence, subjecting, even in powers more indisputably sovereign, occasional will to permanent reason, and to the steady maxims of faith, justice, and fixed fundamental policy, are perfectly intelligible, and perfectly binding upon those who exercise any authority, under any name, or under any title, in the state. (104)

Smith's use of the conventions of the gothic and sentimental genres helps to strengthen the images established by the legal relationship of guardianship.¹⁶ Specifically, three of the conventions she employs--(1) the setting of a gothic manor house; (2) a sentimental heroine and rational hero; and (3) other characters who are either sentimental or anti-sentimental--are aimed at critiquing the abusive tyranny of the rich and/or powerful who exploit existing social and legal systems to consolidate their wealth and power.

¹⁶ The Old Manor House is usually categorized as a sentimental novel employing gothic techniques. Critics have argued whether The Old Manor House is a Jacobin, or revolutionary, novel. In The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805, Gary Kelly notes that Smith "did not retain her Jacobin loyalties throughout the 90s" (112) and Fry contends that

Charlotte Smith was not a member of the rather closely-knit group of writers called the 'philosophical novelists.' Her large family and personal difficulties prevented her participation in the intellectual life in London. But she had apparently read many of the same works that had inspired these writers, and seems to have come to some of the same conclusions. (144)

The title The Old Manor House names the main setting of the novel. Smith may have chosen the title to advertise her use of popular Gothic conventions as some critics have suggested.¹⁷ However, the image of the Gothic manor house does not merely entice readers, but works in the novel in important ways. Specifically, the use of the imagery of the manor house recalls Blackstone and Burke's manipulation of the image, raising questions regarding their assertions. Smith's portrayal of the manor house--the tension she shows between its outmoded traditional feudal family functions and its contemporary usage by the unscrupulous to generate cash through smuggling and waste--comments on political and social practices. Using the manor house, Smith suggests the need for deep-seated reform, unlike Blackstone and Burke, who suggest that the "house," that is British law

¹⁷ In The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800, J.M.S. Tompkins attributes Smith's inclusion of Gothic elements, "the nocturnal wanderings and the momentary supernatural suggestion," "to the vogue of Radcliffe's The Romance of the Forest" (375).

Fry elaborates:

In 1791, Mrs. Radcliffe had scored a really important popular success with The Romance of the Forest. Thus, in 1793 Mrs. Smith, whose family was dependent on her popularity with the reading public, devotes a larger part of The Old Manor House to gothic thrills and introduces an instance of the 'explained supernatural' which is so characteristic of Mrs. Radcliffe's fiction. It is one of the ironies of literary history that Charlotte Smith found herself imitating another writer's version of a type of fiction which she helped to innovate. (127)

and government, has been saved during the Restoration and refitted adequately at the Glorious Revolution.

Blackstone uses the image of the Gothic castle to argue how appropriately feudal-based laws have evolved to suit the needs of contemporary society. In contrast, Smith's use of the Gothic manor challenges Blackstone's attempts to condone the legal practices which maintain the patriarchal aristocratic practices against the inevitability of social, political, and economic change as England moved further from a feudal economy to a capitalist one. The "embattled towers" which he holds "magnificent" are not "useless" in The Old Manor House as he would maintain. Instead, they are used by an abusive tyrant to imprison her ward to force her into a marriage, that although unwanted by the ward is potentially economically profitable for the guardian. The "trophied halls" are "venerable" as Blackstone maintains, but only to a decaying heiress, who does not neglect them, but, on the contrary, wastes her time and her nephew's extolling the virtues of the military exploits of her ancestors in their efforts to uphold tyrannous governments. And finally, none of Smith's manor house rooms are particularly "cheerful" or "commodious," because their owner sees no need to have them "fitted up for a modern inhabitant." Instead, Mrs. Rayland prefers to live

generally alone, at the Old Hall, which had not received the slightest alteration, either in its

environs or its furniture, since it was embellished for the marriage of her father Sir Hildebrand, in 1698. (6)

Smith controverts Blackstone's images to convey the stagnation and oppression of feudal practices inherent in eighteenth century life. Unlike Blackstone's Commentaries, her novel considers others: those who are not aristocratic, landed males, whose experiences of the feudal structure are all too uncomfortable.

Similar to Blackstone's usage, Burke in Reflections uses noble house imagery to argue conservatively for British law and government. He praises "the nation" at the Restoration and Revolution because though they

had lost the bond of union in their ancient edifice; they did not, however, dissolve the whole fabric. On the contrary, in both cases they regenerated the deficient part of the old constitution through the parts which were not impaired. They kept these old parts exactly as they were, that the part recovered might be suited to them. (106)

Again he argues for conservation and relies on the house imagery when he urges:

it is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice, which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society, or on building it up again, without having models and patterns of approved utility before his eyes. (111)

Burke continues this argument for preservation, rather than destruction, insisting to de Pont that France in 1789

possessed in some parts the walls, and in all, the foundations, of a noble and venerable castle. You might have repaired those walls;

you might have built on those old foundations.
(Burke 121) ¹⁸

Smith's treatment differs significantly from Burke's. Although she too supports conservation of the old manor house, it is for reasons other than "Burke's veneration for stability, dignity, and a cultural tradition" that James Boulton comments on in The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke (111). She wants the structure intact to house the rising generations of deserving individuals like Orlando and Monimia. However, Smith includes incidents warning of the dangers of keeping the "old parts" of the "ancient edifice . . . exactly as they were." Monimia and Orlando use the secret passageways of the old manor house's foundation to move undetected to the library, where Monimia can have access to books and education. However, while in those passageways, they are in danger of encountering the household staff who have appropriated the foundations of the house for smuggling. The risk to Monimia and Orlando is not one of ghosts, as Orlando correctly rationalizes, but one of unscrupulous people who use current economic systems to enrich themselves, heedless of the safety and needs of others.

¹⁸ Ronald Paulson in his Representations of Revolution (1789-1820) describes the importance of the large edifice as an image in the French Revolution: "The first Revolutionary emblem was the castle-prison, the Bastille and its destruction by an angry mob" (217).

Smith questions whether the edifice "has answered in any tolerable degree for ages," and whether it is best utilized now. Her depiction of Mrs. Rayland's use of the manor is unsympathetic: rather than assisting future generations, Mrs. Rayland maintains the manor as a conservatory of the past--its traditions and institutions, which have little if any bearing on contemporary life. Thus, the issue for Smith becomes identifying which "models and patterns of approved utility" will determine the manor's future use when Mrs. Rayland dies. The last part of the novel is a legal struggle between those who would exploit its resources for wealth and those who would carefully manage the manor to support the family--in its extended definition. When Orlando returns from the American War, he finds the house has been shut down and the lands around it exploited to the point of waste. Those who have taken it over after Mrs. Rayland's death, believing him also dead, ignore the manor's traditional role organizing local society. Their greed scatters the manor house's "family" of servants and destroys the community of the neighborhood surrounding the manor. The opportunists ignore the needs of the dependents, looking at the manor house only for its money-making potential.

Smith's picture of the desolate manor challenges those idealized images put forward by Burke and Blackstone. Rather than presenting a Gothic story of unexplained

supernatural events, the horror she presents examines the implications of social and legal trends. In order to raise capital, old landowning families as well as those newly acquiring wealth were profiting from the loopholes in the established systems. Their gains were at the expense of the powerless. Her message was appropriate to her times, for as Steven Watson observes in The Reign of George III 1760-1815, "in England an aristocrat might praise rural simplicity, but it was rural life with all its accepted conventions, rural life seen in a haze of sentimentality" (328). Rather than presenting the vestiges of manorial life as refurbished to suit eighteenth century needs, The Old Manor House presents another side.

Smith uses the conventions of the sentimental novel to erase the sentimentality presented by more aristocratic viewpoints. Particularly she converts the attributes of the sentimental hero, the "man of feeling," to create an extreme example of a sentimental heroine: Monimia. She differs widely from most central female figures of the period because she is not of the aristocracy. In fact, "the Critical reviewer complained that he expected her [Monimia] to turn out 'a very different personage,'" rather than the housekeeper's ward (Tompkins 176).

Monimia is extremely vulnerable; of all the characters in the novel, she is the most dependent on others. She is only fourteen, has no money or any

prospects of money, has no skills or education, and has no relations except Mrs. Lennard. In eighteenth-century terms, she is without any means.¹⁹ Her status as ward, with no property, further limits her prospects. If she were propertied, her guardian would be the subject of the Chancery Court's scrutiny.²⁰ Monimia's helplessness, along with her other sentimental qualities--that is, her strong emotions, honest actions, and pure intentions--elicit contemporary readers' sympathies. In turn Smith uses the reader's pity to promote support for the need for social and legal change. In this respect, Smith differs from other novelists of her period, who presented sentimental characters for their own sake. As Fry argues,

The basic method of evoking emotion from the reader is similar to that seen in other sentimental novels of the period, but in Mrs. Smith's novels, the conventions of sensibility are enlisted on the side of reform. (195)²¹

¹⁹ In The Principles of Morals and Legislation (1780), Jeremy Bentham diagnoses what determines a person's financial worth. "A man's means depend upon three circumstances: 1. His property. 2. The profit of his labour. 3. His connexions in the way of support" (52).

²⁰ Hasseltine Taylor explains in Law of Guardian and Ward that "Only children with property could be made wards of chancery," reducing drastically the number of children protected under the court. He continues,

Not until 1827 was the position of chancery with reference to children without means stated . . . supporting the view that the state had a super-parental power superior to the rights of the parents. (16)

²¹ Fry contends that Smith was ahead of her times in arguing for reform:

Smith further capitalizes on the conventions of the sentimental novel to influence readers through her development of Orlando, as well as characters who are antisentimental. She increases Monimia's helplessness by comparing her to Orlando, the rational hero. For example, when Monimia's aunt keeps her in line with ghost stories, telling her "that ghosts always appeared to people who were doing wrong, to reproach them," Orlando's rationality undoes Monimia's superstition, and thus the power of Mrs. Lennard to exploit her ward with fear of the supernatural (38-39). Orlando calls the stories ridiculous and recognizes the aunt's tactics for what they are, saying:

"But--I cannot--no, it is impossible to resist saying, that, like all other usurped authority, the power of your aunt is maintained by unjust means, and supported by prejudices, which if once looked at by the eye of reason would fall. So slender is the hold of tyranny, my Monimia!" (41)

Orlando incorporates contemporary political discourses in his rejection of Mrs. Lennard's abusive authority, labeling it "usurped authority" and "tyranny," "maintained by unjust means." His appropriation of such terms increases his rational authority, further validating his assessments.

Mrs. Smith's method, in fact, is rather similar to that of some nineteenth-century novelists who criticized their society, [but she] did not have Dickens' talent. Nor was the reading audience ready for the discussion of reform. (197-98)

Focusing on Orlando, Smith not only provides a foil for Monimia, but also develops a character who is better positioned to pronounce judgment on social and political issues because as a male he can actively engage them. As Janet Todd explains in her introduction to the novel, Orlando makes it possible for Smith to discuss issues

considered so improper for a lady writer. . . . Unlike a heroine, a man can travel and observe without being constantly observed and he can with propriety take part in the political events of his time. (x)

Smith's treatment of Orlando is particularly sympathetic. Like Monimia, he too is dependent on the whims of a benefactress. Although he is not Mrs. Rayland's ward, his hopes of becoming her heir position him in a relationship similar to guardianship. Because of his precarious situation and his rational behavior, he too elicits readers' sympathies. Thus because of his emotional appeal to readers, his pronouncements on social situations, including those of slavery and colonialism, are made more acceptable to a contemporary audience.

Perhaps Smith's best use of sentimental fiction's conventions is her development of the antisentimental characters in the novel: Mrs. Rayland, Mrs. Lennard, General Tracy, and Mr. Roker. These characters display few, if any, of the characteristics of sentimental characters. They are unscrupulous and mean-spirited in their selfishness. Unlike Orlando, they are irrational,

but simultaneously, unlike Monimia, they are not sincere in their emotions. Nevertheless, because Smith develops each of these characters with fine detail the reader cannot dismiss them easily without considering what they represent. Each character embodies the worst aspects of a social institution: Mrs. Rayland, the antiquated and ineffectual aristocracy; Mrs. Lennard, the commodifying and tyrannical guardianship relationship; General Tracy, the corrupt and self-serving military; and Mr. Roker, the usurping and greedy legal profession. Smith uses their inappropriate behaviors to critique a society which allows individuals to subvert institutions for their own profit at the expense of others who are less powerful. Making them mouthpieces of politically conservative ideas, Smith opens those ideas to sarcasm and ridicule.

Smith uses characters--both sentimental and antisentimental--to manipulate readers to accept her social and political agenda. Fry sums up this technique, juxtaposing Smith with other authors of sentimental fiction:

the same conventional characters are used in these works, but for rather unconventional purposes. The reader is asked to feel for the sentimental characters, but it is made plain that those who cause their distress are representative of faulty institutions or know how to profit by faults in these institutions. These characters who know how to exploit flaws in the social structure are ideally suited to evoke a negative emotional response from the reader of the period, for they are conventional antisentimentalists. (194)

Most of these characters, both sentimental and antisentimental, are involved in guardian and ward relationships, either legal or, in the case of Mrs. Rayland and Orlando, appropriating the characteristics of the legal relationship. Therefore, investigating these relationships is key to reading the novel's critique of social institutions.

The Guardian and Ward Relationship

There are two legal guardian and ward relationships in the novel. Monimia is ward to her aunt, Mrs. Lennard, and General Tracy recognizes his nephew, Warwick, as his ward when his vanity allows. However, before she introduces either of the two legal relationships, Smith establishes Mrs. Rayland's tyranny over the Somerive family, particularly Orlando. Of these three relationships, the quasi-guardianship relationship between Mrs. Rayland and Orlando is the most well-developed, laden with rich implications about the nature of outmoded practices of abusive authority. A quasi-guardianship relationship is a custodial relationship which, like feudal wardship, concentrates power on the individual of higher traditional rank. Smith's description of the relationship establishes the template for the other asymmetrical relationships in the novel, similar to the way Adeline's relationship with

the Abbess in The Romance of the Forest defines her other relationships.

Orlando and Mrs. Rayland

Mrs. Rayland's relationship with Orlando incorporates the feudal customs and traditions of vassalage while engaging Burke's observations in Reflections. Vassalage involved male subordinates offering their services of homage and fealty to their land-owning superiors. These fief-holders, according to Carl Stephenson in Mediaeval Feudalism, "enjoyed a virtual monopoly of wealth, of military prestige, and of political authority" (56). The landowners offered land, protection, and seigniorial government in return for homage, the

formal and public acknowledgement of allegiance, wherein a tenant or vassal declared himself the man of the king or the lord of whom he held, and bound himself to his service,

and fealty, "the obligation of fidelity on the part of a feudal tenant or vassal to his lord" (OED). Although "much of the original vassalage persisted well into the later Middle Ages," the system was gradually replaced by the early modern period with more complicated economic and political relationships (Stephenson 38-39). The statute of 1660 permanently revoked all the remaining remnants of feudal tenures, so that by the late eighteenth century only traces of feudal discourses remained. Nevertheless Burke relied on those traces as important touchstones for his

audience to identify with in his Reflections. For

instance, he laments the loss of fealty:

When the old feudal and chivalrous spirit of Fealty, which, by freeing precautions of tyranny, shall be extinct in the minds of men, plots and assassinations will be anticipated by preventive murder and preventive confiscation, and that long roll of grim and bloody maxims, which form the political code of all power, not standing on its own honour, and the honour of those who are to obey it. Kings will be tyrants from policy when subjects are rebels from principle. (172)

Likewise, Mrs. Rayland's treatment of Orlando incorporates the main elements of vassalage. Smith's depiction of her actions as a contemporary heirloom of feudal nobility adds another dimension of meaning to Stephenson's statement that "[A]s long, indeed, as society continued to be dominated by the old warrior class, its traditional institutions, among them vassalage, retained their vigor" (39). The legal institution was long dead, but Mrs. Rayland, believing herself the guardian of the old warrior class, still practices its customs. Through her depiction of Mrs. Rayland and Orlando, Smith indirectly criticizes these displays of tyrannical authority as well as those who, like Burke and Mrs. Rayland, cling to outdated social and political models.

Mrs. Rayland's motivation to act as Orlando's guardian and bring him up in aristocratic warrior ways stems from the responsibility she feels for his upbringing because of her anxiety over having an heir to continue her

aristocratic family of noble warriors. Her emphasis on the importance of long family lines of inheritance mirrors Burke's. He insists:

We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage; and an house of commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties, from a long line of ancestors. (119)

Burke uses the image of "a relation in blood" to argue for "our frame of polity, saying, "In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood." He describes it as:

binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchers, and our altars. (120)

Mrs. Rayland's actions toward Orlando portray Burke's insistence on the need to conserve family lines and the existing government.

Mrs. Rayland distrusts Orlando's family's ability to educate him properly because the two generations previous to him have married tradespeople. By her reckoning, Orlando is only one-quarter aristocratic, but he is her only probable heir. Consequently, she feels she must recreate him, inculcating him with her feudal notions. Smith describes the feelings of Mrs. Rayland for Orlando in terms of creation: she is "[T]he old Lady, who had now long been accustomed to contemplate Orlando as a creature of her own forming" (298). The template Mrs. Rayland uses is one

of vassalage. In addition to demanding his homage and fealty, she requires that he observe the traits of vassalage, which, according to Stephenson, was "always personal [and] properly restricted to fighting-men" (26). She insists on a military career for him.

Smith brilliantly portrays the ludicrousness of Mrs. Rayland's praise of the military and ridicules her need to force Orlando to follow the family tradition. In the process, she echoes Burke's unconditional support of the titled aristocracy and its noble military past. In the portrait gallery of the old manor house, filled with paintings of her long dead ancestral warriors, Mrs. Rayland establishes Orlando's connection with the family's military exploits. Smith's choice of a portrait gallery to question the importance of ancestors responds to Burke's assertions that liberty

carries an imposing and majestic aspect. It has a pedigree and illustrating ancestors. It has its bearings and its ensigns armorial. It has its gallery of portraits; its monumental inscriptions; its records, evidences and titles. (121)

Smith's depiction is far less noble than Burke's and is more reminiscent of Thomas Paine's description of the aristocracy in Rights of Man, which he labels a "military order" to support a government "founded in conquest" (52):

After these a race of conquerors arose, whose government, like that of William the Conqueror, was founded in power, and the sword assumed the name of a sceptre. Governments thus established, last as long as the power to

support them lasts; but that they might avail themselves of every engine in their favour, they united fraud to force, and set up an idol which they called Divine Right, . . . [to] "govern mankind by force and fraud. (70)

Rather than Burke's "liberty," Mrs. Rayland's recollections in the portrait gallery reveal her family's monarchical, conservative leanings:

"My grandfather after whom you were by the permission of our family called--my grandfather, I say, Sir Orlando Rayland, appeared with distinguished honour in the service of his master in 1685, against the rebel Monmouth, though not of the religion of King James. My father Sir Hildebrand distinguished himself under Marlborough, when he was a younger brother, and saw much service in Flanders. Of remoter ancestors, I could tell you of Raylands who bled in the civil wars; we were always Lancastrians, and lost very great property by our adherence to that unhappy family during the reigns of Edward the Fourth and Richard the Third. My great great grandfather, who was also called Orlando . . ." (215)

By putting these unremarkable historical accomplishments into a contemporary perspective, Smith devalues them. Mrs. Rayland drones on and on about the "loyalty and prowess" of her ancestors forgetting "that hardly any other record of them remained upon earth than what her memory and their pictures in the gallery above afforded" (215). Lost within the images of her feudal values, she completely ignores Orlando. Nevertheless, Orlando hears her "not only with patience but with pleasure," because "it appeared that she had somehow associated the idea of his future welfare with that of their past consequence" (215). Mrs. Rayland's tactics work; the connection with the past becomes a

strong incentive for him to join the military to insure his future economic prospects.

Similar to Mrs. Rayland, Dr. Hollybourn's speech also valorizes inherited titles:

"a title has its advantages no doubt, and especially if it be an ancient title, one that brings to the mind the deeds of the glorious defenders of our country--men who have shed their honourable blood in defence of the Church of England, and their King--who bled in the cause for which Laud and his sainted master died! When I hear such names, and see their posterity flourishing, I rejoice--When I learn that such families, the honour of degenerate England, are likely to be extinct, my heart is grieved." (189)

Because Smith has made these characters who spout these patriotic speeches so hypocritical, their words become satirical. By paralleling Burke's remarks concerning the aristocracy, these characters' undermine Burke's arguments and perhaps indirectly imply that his defense of the traditional landed gentry is self-serving. Although he himself was not a titled aristocrat, he was a member of parliament and a landowner. Hollybourne does not share Burke's praise of the titled aristocracy out of any reverence for noble deeds. His motives are mercenary. He is interested in marrying his daughter to Orlando, but only after Orlando is named Mrs. Rayland's heir and guaranteed of having a share of Mrs. Rayland's long line of family's wealth.

Smith repeatedly depicts Mrs. Rayland as hypocritical. Rather than having any real sense of noblesse oblige, Mrs.

Rayland, "never known to have done a voluntary kindness to any human being," expects a direct return for the annual giving of money to the poor in her parish:

though she sometimes gave away money, it was never without making the wretched petitioner pay most dearly for it, by many a bitter humiliation--never, but when it was surely known, and her great goodness, her liberal donation to such and such people, were certainly related with exaggeration, at the two market towns within four or five miles of her house.
(6)

Her sense of obligation, based on nearly extinct notions of feudal practices, have degenerated into hollow, nearly meaningless gestures, meant to elevate her own reputation and regardless of the benefit or harm to her tenants.

Mrs. Rayland is also hypocritical in following feudal customs selectively. She chooses to ignore primogeniture, "the rule that a fief should pass intact to the eldest son" (Stephenson 25). Instead, she decides to pass her property intact to Orlando, the second born son. In this regard, she recognizes his deference to her and her ability to mold him, disregarding contemporary political thinkers who would abolish primogeniture and its related practices in order to promote fiscal responsibility and accountability. For instance, Montesquieu argues in The Spirit of Laws (1748) for making "an equal division of the father's estate among the children." He explains that the children will not be as well off as the father and, therefore, "are induced to avoid luxury, and to follow the parent's industrious

example" (138). Instead, her choice parallels the parliament's decision at the Glorious Revolution, which Burke describes as "a small and a temporary deviation from the strict order of a regular hereditary succession." He is quick to add that "it is against all genuine principles of jurisprudence to draw a principle from a law made in a special case, and regarding an individual person" (101). Like the parliament choosing William, Mrs. Rayland naming an heir out of line "somewhat" would suit Burke, who praised the Revolution.²² He explains:

The crown was carried somewhat out of the line in which it had before moved; but the new line was derived from the same stock. It was still a line of hereditary descent; still an hereditary descent in the same blood, though an hereditary descent qualified with protestantism. When the legislature altered the direction, but kept the principle, they shewed that they held it inviolable (106).

The linear patrilineal descent is maintained in theory, if not in strict practice.

Another example of her hypocrisy is her determination to keep her decision of naming Orlando her heir a secret. Although Orlando will eventually inherit her estate, her reluctance to admit naming him increases her power over him. This kind of arrangement was common during the period so that the present owner could maintain economic and

²² In The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought: 1688-1863, R.J. Smith claims that Burke "considered the Glorious Revolution as the crown of British liberty" (40).

personal power. John Brooke writes in King George III that in the Regency Act of 1765, George III

approved of the Act of 1751 but wished for one fundamental change: that he himself should have the power of naming the Regent "without specifying the particular person in the Act of Parliament,"

an action which Mrs. Rayland's reluctance to publicly name her heir recalls (110). Doubtless, George III recognized the power he would have relinquished to the person named.²³ According to Staves, property owners'

hostility to registration was apparently based partly on a desire to evade taxation and partly on owners' fondness for manipulating others, especially dependent family members, with uncertainties about what future interests in the land they had granted or would grant. (88)

Burke also sees the connection between the power to determine behavior and to dispose property:

²³ As Brooke goes on to explain, "The proposal to reserve to the King the right to nominate Regent was unprecedented. In all previous Acts the Regent had been named" (110). However, the reason George III gave for his withholding the name was "to prevent any 'faction or uneasiness' in the Royal Family." Brooke suggests that "the King disapproved of his brother's [the Duke of York's] mode of life" (111). After debate in the House of Lords as to who was the Royal Family, the King

suggested the addition of the words 'born in England' which effectively excluded [the Princess Dowager]. The bill thus amended passed the Lords and was sent down to the Commons.

When the Lord Chancellor suggested that this was an affront to his mother, the King was upset, "'in the utmost degree of agitation and emotion, even to tears.'" The King could have avoided the entire situation had he openly named a Regent in the bill. An amendment to the Bill was proposed and passed, and the bill was passed as the King had originally proposed it (112-113).

The power of perpetuating our property in our families is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it, and that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself. It makes our weakness subservient to our virtue; it grafts benevolence even upon avarice. (140)

Mrs. Rayland's obstinacy nearly backfires when Orlando must leave for America and she suddenly realizes how much she cares for him. Nevertheless, she remains steadfast in her silence:

She almost repented that she had ever consented to his going; but to detain him now without acknowledging him as her heir (which she had determined never to do), was not to be thought of. (243)

Even her motivation to place Orlando in the military is not exempt from hypocrisy. General Tracy reassures her that because Orlando "would not quit England, he would enjoy all the advantages of an honourable profession, without losing the advantage of her protection" (244). She selfishly is more interested in his personal safety than in his earning "distinguished honour," bleeding in civil wars, or losing "very great property" as her ancestors had done.

Finally, although she is Orlando's "ancient benefactress" (244), her attempts to fund his outfitting fail because of her antiquated notions of economics:

She had, however, so little idea of modern expences, that she really considered this as a very great sum; and such as it was an amazing effort of generosity in her to part with: yet, while she made this exertion, her kindness towards him was so far from being exhausted, that she told him he should find her always his

banker, so long as he continued to give her reason to think of him as she thought now" (244).

With no conception of contemporary economics, she exists as centralized authority in the novel only because of her wealth derived from her ancestral connections with the past. Rooted in her feudal notions, she wrongly identifies the source of her power. As Katherine Rogers explains in "Inhibitions on Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists: Elizabeth Inchbald and Charlotte Smith,"

[h]earing that a newly rich man has bought a neighboring estate, she laments that 'money does every thing'--totally oblivious of the fact that every bit of her own consequence derives from her wealth. (76)

Mrs. Rayland represents the widespread beliefs of her social class. "It was the English gentry, the landed families of the counties," Stephenson says, "who more truly maintained what was left of the feudal tradition" (85).

No longer is tradition linked with authority. In the England of the late eighteenth century, power is measured in economic terms. Burke's lament rings true: "the age of chivalry is gone.--That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded." And, in his estimation, "the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever" (170).

George III shared these views as well. According to Brooke, his biographer,

[t]he King had all the prejudices of an hierarchical society based on the ownership of land. He felt it right that the nobly born and

the broad aced should govern and receive the rewards of government. (313)

In a letter written in 1780, the king makes clear that

"Gentlemen of landed property" were the only fit and proper people to sit in the House of Commons; and he disliked "stock jobbers", "moneylenders", "nabobs", and nouveaux riches of all descriptions. (313)

Despite his strong prejudices, the king was powerless to stop the evolving economic order and its consequences, even within his own family. George III may have considered his "monarchy directed by laws, controlled and balanced by the great hereditary wealth and hereditary dignity of a nation," to use Burke's terms, but his sons did not share his restraint (227). George III had fifteen children, among them seven sons who lived to reach adulthood. He made it his personal business to direct their educations and determine their employments. "He wished his children to grow up as 'examples to the rising generation,'" Brooke reports. The king's correspondence conveys his sincerity:

"I can have no wish concerning them", he wrote in 1786, "but to make them by a good education enabled to produce any talents they may possess, and as such become of credit to their family and of utility to their country." (Brooke 351)

As with Mrs. Rayland, he determined that the army and navy would offer suitable careers for his sons. However, his sons were all spendthrifts, particularly his eldest son, George. They overspent huge amounts of money, forcing the king to request larger amounts of money from parliament. Raising revenue was a continual problem for the monarchy,

and the economic irresponsibility of his sons exacerbated an already bad situation, especially given the increasing financial accountability characterizing the period.

Wealth and the expanding cash economy presented other problems for the king. Because he felt his sons were vulnerable to the advances of fortune-seekers, he pushed for the Royal Marriage Act of 1772. Its importance to the king should not be underestimated. According to Brooke, it "was the personal measure of the King: apart from the Regency Act of 1765 the only legislative enactment which he proposed during the whole course of his reign" (275-76). No longer did he possess the legal feudal right to choose his sons' marriage partners, nor was he accorded the social custom to approve marriages of his sons or courtiers (Brooke 298-99). Instead of his authority, he was forced to rely on legal powers to control his children as subjects of law which "made it illegal for any member of the Royal Family to marry without previous consent of the Crown; declared future marriages contracted without such consent to be null and void; and imposed penalties upon all assisting at such marriages" (Brooke 275). In addition "to protect[ing] members of the Royal Family who were peculiarly liable to the designs of ambitious women," the act was specifically aimed at preventing royal marriages with commoners (Brooke 359). According to Brooke,

[t]he position of Parliament in the British constitution made it undesirable for a member of

the Royal Family to marry a subject. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Parliament met infrequently and at the will of the Crown such marriages were not objectionable. (274)

Smith's depiction of Mrs. Rayland appropriates many of these historical issues. The parallels between Mrs. Rayland and George III are noteworthy. They include her dislike for the newly monied, her appropriating the feudal right to approve Orlando's marriage choice, her disdain at the idea of him marrying a commoner, and her choice of military career for him. Like the king's twelve surviving younger children, who were victims of the results of their oldest brother George's profligate spending, Orlando suffers on account of his older brother's fiscal irresponsibility. The same issues Smith raises in the quasi-guardianship relation between Mrs. Rayland and Orlando occurred in the king's relation to his own children. Indirectly they pose questions about the ability of each to govern in a world changing in economic and social practices. Likewise, the legal guardian and ward relationships in The Old Manor House question the fitness of locating tyrannical authority within any one individual.

Monimia and Her Aunt, Mrs. Lennard

As a guardian, Mrs. Lennard's character acts as a foil to Mrs. Rayland's. Both are hypocritical in the care of their dependents, and both inculcate them with outmoded

values, disregarding current economic practices. Mrs. Rayland, on the one hand, strives to pass on to Orlando a feudal value system, which, although antiquated, she personally practices. Mrs. Lennard, on the other hand, though, forces upon Monimia a set of values she herself is trying to escape. She instills in Monimia economic values inappropriate to contemporary life, while she herself pursues those of the new cash economy. She teaches Monimia servitude, dependence, and fear, while she aggressively seeks economic independence and self-advancement first with Mrs. Rayland and then through marriage to Roker, the lawyer. Mrs. Lennard's greed even extends to calculating the basis of her relationship with Monimia for its potential to generate profit.

Ironically, their relationship embodies the tyrannical elements of wardship within the context of eighteenth century England. Mrs. Lennard's attempts to capitalize on her guardianship of Monimia cause her to employ abusive practices which recall those common in the days of feudal wardship. Specifically, she commodifies Monimia at every opportunity, using force to coerce her when she deems necessary. She uses Monimia to ingratiate herself to Mrs. Rayland. She tries to arrange a marriage for Monimia, ignoring the wishes of her ward in favor of economic advancement. When Monimia refuses to co-operate, her aunt considers selling her to a would-be suitor. And, she

exerts complete control over Monimia's freedom, immuring her in her bedroom, located in a turret of the old gothic house. At every turn, Mrs. Lennard's self-interest obstructs her support of Monimia.

However, the relationship is unlike wardship because Monimia has no property. Monimia inherited nothing from her own family, and thus curatorial guardianship is not an issue. Her guardianship is strictly tutorial. Nevertheless, Mrs. Lennard fails miserably as a guardian in the legal sense in which "guardianship" designates "tutelage" (OED). Because of her mercenary nature which keeps her from teaching the values Monimia needs, she is a negative example of a guardian, as Orlando's description of the relationship details:

Almost alone in the world, she had no connection but her aunt, whose reluctant kindness and cold friendship answered but ill to the affectionate temper of the lovely girl, who would have been attached to her, all repulsive as her manner were, from gratitude, and because she believed her the only relation she had, if Mrs. Lennard had given her leave.--But, selfish, narrow-minded, and overbearing, it was impossible for Monimia to love her. (151)

Monimia realizes her dependence on her aunt is "precarious" and "painful." (135) yet must endure the relationship because she has no alternatives.

The selfish, narrow-minded, overbearing woman exercises three tactics to control Monimia: she teaches her fear, emphasizes her powerlessness, and discourages self-improvement. Mrs. Lennard uses superstition to keep

Monimia from independently moving about the old manor house. She reinforces Monimia's powerlessness by continually reminding her of her position. Smith relates that "the only lessons she had been taught [by her aunt] were h[er] poverty, her dependence, the necessity of her earning a subsistence by daily labour." Nor is she offered any chance of escape: "the only hope held out to her [was] that of passing through life in an obscure service" (47). To this end of keeping her dependent and without hope, Mrs. Lennard disapproves of Monimia learning to read and write. Nevertheless, under Orlando's tutelage, Monimia secretly learns at night. When Mrs. Lennard discovers it, she lashes out at Monimia:

"Improve yourself!--Yes, truly, a pretty improvement--Your chalky face and padded eyes are mighty improvements: and I'd be glad to know what good your reading does you, but to give you a hankering after what you've no right to expect? An improved lady will be above helping me, I suppose, very soon." (171)

Mrs. Lennard would leave Monimia resigned to a fate of menial household labor, unable even to attain the position she has as housekeeper.

Smith's use of images--slavery, animal, and vegetative--describes the injustice of Mrs. Lennard to Monimia. As I will show, Burke uses similar imagery, but for much different purposes. Instead of vindicating the oppressed, he defends the existing social order. Comparing

the two authors' use of images further illuminates their political differences.

Betty, "a poor girl that [Mrs. Lennard] has taken from the parish" (40) to exploit in household service, compares their situation of service at the manor house to slavery: "'tis hard indeed if one's to be always a slave, and never dares to stir ever so little; -- one might as well be a negur.'" Both Monimia and Betty are subservient to the whims of Mrs. Lennard, but Betty insists that their situation is different from slavery. She claims they have no need to obey her because she lacks authority: "'Why, what can your aunt do, child? She can't kill you; and as for a few angry words, I've no notion of minding 'em, not I;'" Monimia understands the real threat is not physical harm, but economic hardship. Her compliance is motivated by her understanding of the economic power that her aunt wields, as evidenced in her reply: "'I would not for the world offend my aunt when she is kind to me; and it was very good in her to give me money to buy these things, and to let me go for them'" (78). Betty's use of slave imagery differs from Burke's. While she speaks of the restraint of "never dar[ing] to stir ever so little," he plays down the oppression by evoking the image of newly freed slaves. He complains of them abusing "the liberty to which [they] were not accustomed and ill fitted" (123). Her emphasis is on personal freedom; his is on the effects on the larger

society of a body of oppressed people who do not fully understand the responsibilities of their freedom.

Not only is the relationship between Mrs. Lennard and Monimia characterized in animal terms, they are adversarial and Monimia is a victim. Mrs. Lennard, anxious to catch Monimia at fault, becomes a "hungry tigress who has long been disappointed of her prey" (84). And, when she decides to shut Monimia up in her turret bedroom, the cook comments that Mrs. Lennard "'uses that sweet child, her niece as they call her, no better than a dog. . . . and shuts her up like a felon in a jail'" (231). Smith uses animal imagery to increase the reader's sympathy for Monimia, the victim of her aunt's abuse. Burke, on the other hand, uses animal imagery to discourage reader sympathy for the French masses as well as sympathetic English philosophers. He ridicules the French for reducing their king and queen to animals in their "scheme of things" in which "a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order" (171). Later in Reflections, he compares English sympathizers to a "half dozen grasshoppers under a fern" and warns them:

not to imagine, that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour. (181).

In his "scheme of things" Dr. Price and other political philosophers become mere insects, incapable of deserving pity.

The vegetative imagery Smith uses responds most closely to Burke's. Monimia compares her situation to "a passion-flower":

that having once been supported by a sort of espalier, the wood had decayed, and, nothing being put in its place, the plant crept along the ground, withering, from the dampness to which it was exposed," saying, "'See . . . this plant resembles me! It seems abandoned to its fate.'" (151)

The image suggests that she realizes that she has no financial support in the world. However, the image assumes a wider significance when compared with Burke's use of similar vegetative imagery. When talking of the abolition of religious institutions, he argues:

To a man who acts under the influence of no passion, who has nothing in view in his projects but the public good, a great difference will immediately strike him, between what policy would dictate on the original introduction of such institutions, and on a question of their total abolition, where they have cast their roots wide and deep, and where by long habit things more valuable than themselves are so adapted to them, and in a manner interwoven with them, that the one cannot be destroyed without notably impairing the other. (266)

Here the support is not a decayed, wooden espalier, but a thriving, well-established plant with "roots wide and deep" which is "interwoven" with another plant. Removing the original would destroy both flourishing plants. Burke's image, like the other imagery he uses, argues for the

conservation of institutions. He appeals to the sympathy of the man "under the influence of no passion." In contrast, Smith's image achieve a much different effect. There is passion, transformed into a passion-flower, a plant deriving its name from the association of its appearance to Christian symbols of the passion. In Smith's image, the support is rotten, and the plant once dependent on it is "withering." The image suggests that new support structures are necessary, that the old institutions are past recovery and no longer of benefit to those who need them.

What little support Monimia has is completely withdrawn when Mrs. Rayland dies. Mrs. Lennard succeeds in marrying a rich lawyer, and she abandons Monimia.

"[D]esirous of getting rid" of Monimia and hopefully for financial gain, she considers selling her to Belgrave, a newly enriched suitor. Monimia relates that her "cruel aunt, unmoved by my resignation and submission":

would have been glad to have sold me to Sir John Belgrave; and when she insisted upon my consenting to marry him, though I do not believe he ever intended it, and only made that a pretence for getting me into his power. (457)

Eventually, Monimia is "consigned" by her aunt to a hatmaker as an apprentice (463). From then on, Mrs. Lennard refuses to acknowledge Monimia, who claims:

"my cruel aunt . . . had never taken any other notice of me than to send me a small supply of clothes and two guineas. . . .It was in vain I wrote to her, urging every plea that I thought

might move her, and soliciting her pity and protection, as the only friend I had in the world." (466)

Monimia, left without protection and believing Orlando dead, still considers her aunt her only hope: "'except Mrs. Roker, [her aunt, now married] I had no friend or relation in the world'" (470). However, neither laws nor social customs insure her access to her guardian's protection. She is victim to the system because she falls through its cracks. With no property or title, she is beyond the jurisdiction of the chancery court.

However, Mrs. Lennard has miscalculated in her avarice. She becomes the victim of her husband, who has married her only for her wealth inherited from Mrs. Rayland. Her husband locks her in an attic, ironically the same treatment she had earlier imposed on Monimia (445). Now it is Mrs. Lennard who is trying to escape "from her tyrant" (446).

General Tracy and Warwick

Unlike Mrs. Lennard, who has more interest in acquisition of property than in the disposition of it, General Tracy considers his guardian relationship to his nephew Warwick as a means of providing him with a convenient heir. The relationship, which appears affectionate on both sides, is self-serving to both men, similar to Mrs. Rayland and Orlando's. However, unlike

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Mrs. Rayland, General Tracy loses his power over his ward. Because of his guardian's ridiculous romantic ventures, Warwick is able to appropriate his inheritance early and make a fool of his self-centered uncle.

Before the reader learns that General Tracy has a ward, however, Smith details the custodial relationship he develops with the Somerive family. Not trusting his eldest son and heir under primogeniture, Mr. Somerive designates General Tracy as his children's guardian, "that in him Mr. Somerive had found a sincere friend, and their children a powerful protector" (223). He also names General Tracy the executor of his will, "and trusted the welfare of his wife and daughters entirely to him and to Orlando" (224). The arrangement benefits Tracy more than it does the family. Though forty years her senior, he uses his position to court Orlando's sister.

When marriage seems likely, General Tracy considers the guardianship a liability:

The greatest inconvenience he foresaw, was what arose from the precipitate affection he had shewn towards his nephew, Captain Warwick, the orphan son of his sister, whom he had taught to consider himself as heir to his fortune, who would be much mortified at the disappointment (277).

General Tracy anticipates male heirs, making his relationship with Warwick unnecessary.

Like Monimia, Warwick is without relation or fortune, a nephew and ward with "no other dependence" (289).

Therefore, Tracy considers him completely in his power because

whatever he had done for Warwick was entirely voluntary; and . . . he would hardly, for his own sake, so behave as to cut himself off from a share of his future fortune because he could not have it all. (289)

Warwick's upbringing has made access to a fortune almost a necessity. He has been raised to become a profligate:

Indulged from his infancy, by his uncle, in every thing that did not interfere with his own pleasures, and having no parents to restrain him, Warwick never dreamed of checking himself in whatever gratified his passions or flattered his imagination. (292)

The relationship at once mutually benefits and obligates both men. General Tracy's dignity insures the relationship remain, no matter how badly Warwick treats his uncle:

"However enraged the General might at first be, his pride would not suffer him finally to abandon his nephew" (324).

Nevertheless, the relationship eventually victimizes General Tracy. Warwick uses "the very money his uncle had given him, as the means of disappointing his benefactor" by eloping with the General's betrothed (327). Warwick proves shrewder at understanding how to manipulate the relationship.

Other Asymmetrical Relationships

In addition to developing sentimental and antisentimental characters to critique contemporary laws and social customs for their failure to meet the demands of

the evolving economic order, Smith includes depictions of social, economic, and political institutions themselves to call attention to their disregard of individuals. She not only critiques domestic practices, but uses Orlando's interlude in America to comment on colonialism and slavery. Smith is very direct in her comments on these British foreign practices; however, she is much more guarded in her criticism of social inequities in England.

For example, instead of directly discussing the royal family and its problems, Smith addresses issues being discussed at the time regarding the monarchy by creating situations at the old manor house which parallel those at the royal palace. The relationship between Mrs. Rayland and her household staff, or "family" in the extended definition of the word, represents similar problems among the king, his ministers, and the parliament.

Mrs. Rayland's household staff takes advantage of her ineptitude at governing. Mrs. Lennard takes over much of Mrs. Rayland's decision-making while Pattenson, the butler, sets up a smuggling operation using the basement of the old manor house as the basis of his operations. It remains ambiguous whether Mrs. Lennard knows of the smuggling, but her superstitious stories of ghosts help to protect the secrecy of the smuggling.²⁴ Although Smith fully explains

²⁴ Wondering "'how she escaped being included in the charge [of smuggling],'" Monimia explains,

the strange events, attributing the "haunting" to the smugglers, perhaps the actual explanation is even more frightening. It presents the prospect of a new class of greedy individuals illegally gaining financial power.

This situation which Smith meticulously constructs exactly parallels Burke's observation in Reflections. He warns, "You are terrifying yourself with ghosts and apparitions, whilst your house is the haunt of robbers" (248). Burke continues, saying:

It is thus with all those, who attending only to the shell and husk of history, think they are waging war with intolerance, pride, cruelty, whilst, under colour of abhorring the ill principles of antiquated parties, they are authorizing and feeding the same odious vices in different factions, and perhaps in worse. (248-49)

Smith's depiction of those involved with the smuggling bears out Burke's pronouncements. While her novel seems to abhor "the ill principles of antiquated parties," that is, Mrs. Rayland, she nevertheless refuses to support those with "the same odious vices," that is, those who would gain financial power and tyrannical authority through taking advantage of the cracks in the system.

"I know she was acquainted with, and I believe she was concerned in the clandestine trade which had for so many years been carried on at Rayland Hall; but probably Pattenson dared not impeach her, lest, though he might ruin her, he should at the same time provoke her to discover some things in his life which would have effectually cut him off from that portion of favour he still possessed with Mrs. Rayland." (460)

Pattenson, previously dependent on Mrs. Rayland, becomes wealthy because of his smuggling, "an organised and lucrative business" during this time (Brooke 310). Smuggling was profitable because it avoided excise taxes added with the 1660 statute which abolished the Court of Wards and Liveries. The statute 12 Car.2 (1660) specifically identified the tax as recompense to the crown for the loss of revenue from wardships:

to the intent and purpose that his Majesty, his heirs and successors, may receive a full and ample recompence and satisfaction, as well for the profits of the said court of wards, and the tenures, wardships . . . Be it therefore enacted by the authority aforesaid, That there shall be paid unto the King's majesty, his heirs and successors for ever hereafter, in recompence as aforesaid, the several rates, impositions, duties and charges herein after expressed.
(Pickering 477)

In order to provide revenue to the crown to make up for the lucrative sales of wardships, the parliament established taxes on alcohol, coffee, chocolate, and tea.²⁵ Peter Roebuck writes about the changes in his article "Post-Restoration Landownership: The Impact of the Abolition of Wardship." These "new revenue arrangements," he claims,

negotiated between the King and Parliament at the Restoration, utilizing customs, excise, and the hearth tax and thereby spreading the load more widely over the nation embodied a shift in the pattern of taxation which was favorable to the landed classes. As henceforward the

²⁵ The statute benefitted the landed classes in two ways. While removing the burden of wardship from them, the statute imposed taxes on spirits, which the wealthy avoided paying because their households made their own.

monarchy became increasingly dependent on those who voted its taxes, the constitutional importance of this was lasting. However, the fiscal gains of landowners were more than cancelled out within a generation by the introduction of heavy direct land taxation from the later seventeenth century. (68)

However, avoiding the taxes made smuggling profitable to those who saw the chance to advance in the new economic order of the eighteenth century, which no longer confined wealth to the titled and propertied.

The seizure of Pattenson's contraband, "about two hundred pounds worth of spirits, tea, and lace" is

a thing that offended Mrs. Rayland extremely, as she thought it derogatory to her dignity, and a profanation of her cellars, which . . . are immediately adjoining to the family vault of the Raylands. (459-60)

Even at this juncture, she is more worried about insult to her family's honor than her staff's power over her.

Instead of punishing Pattenson, Mrs. Rayland,

who, angry as she was with him, stocked the farm he retired to, furnished his house, and continued every advantage he enjoyed at the Hall, except the opportunity of making it a receptacle for smuggled goods. (460)

She never realizes the extent to which her staff manipulates her. As Monimia reports, "the dismissal, and soon afterwards the death of Pattenson, . . . threw the old lady more than ever into the power of my aunt" (460). Mrs. Rayland, nominally the authority in her household, is the victim of her staff's tyrannical power, which is amassed and calculated for their own financial gain. Once again,

Mrs. Rayland's actions reflect the older feudal system in which "feudal grants could also be made to remunerate persons who served the king in other ways, notably the chief members of his household" (Stephenson 87).

The issue Smith indirectly raises is the fitness of the staff who surround the king. If their corruption adversely affects their judgment and influence over the monarch, should they be making decisions for him? This issue is especially crucial if he, like Mrs. Rayland, is incapable of evaluating the soundness of that advice. In Rights of Man, Paine sarcastically argues against just such vested interest of the men surrounding the king:

It is easy to conceive, that a band of interested men, such as Placemen, Pensioners, Lords of the bed-chamber, Lords of the kitchen, Lords of the necessary-house, and the Lord knows what besides can find as many reasons for monarchy as their salaries, paid at the expense of the country, amount to. (126)

These "interested men" selfishly support monarchy because they directly benefit.

George III and his relationship with advisors, ministers, and the parliament has interesting parallels with Mrs. Rayland's relationship with her family. With the advent of his porphyria in 1788, the most contested issue became regency. It became increasingly clear the king was unfit to rule because of his "madness." When he seemed near death in November, Pitt introduced the Regency Bill of 1788. The bill named Prince George regent, but sought to

limit his powers to create peerages, and thus to keep his friends from gaining institutionalized power. As Brooke explains,

the King's illness led to a bitter political controversy, the Prince and his friends contending that the Regent should exercise the full powers of sovereignty as if the King were dead while Pitt maintained that Parliament must determine what those powers should be. (327-28)

The fight was as much over which set of men would be ministers and advisors as it was over the right of the regent to rule.

Earlier regency bills were of little help in determining action.²⁶ The 1765 Regency Bill "provided only for the King's death, not for his incapacity" (Brooke 110). The situation was alleviated by the king's recovery, just days before the Regency Bill had its third reading. Regency was avoided; however, the king's illness raised serious questions regarding limiting the monarchy and the influence of the monarch's ministers. And the king was oblivious to the struggle, until after his recovery.

Burke raises these same issues regarding kings and their ministers in Reflections. Although he is remarking

²⁶ The first regency bill to affect George III was that of 1751, during his grandfather's reign when his father died and he had not reached the age of majority. George II established a precedent in the monarchy by naming George III's mother as regent. In 1755, on George II's visit to Germany, another regency act was passed naming "a council of regency to exercise the authority of the crown during his absence" (Brooke 46). The Regency Act of 1765 reaffirmed the Act of 1751, but gave the King the power of naming the Regent.

on the imprisoned French king, the same concerns directly apply to a mad George III, restrained by his doctors.

Burke asks his readers to consider:

A king circumstanced as the present, if he is totally stupefied by his misfortunes, so as to think it not the necessity, but the premium and privilege of life, to eat and sleep, without any regard to glory, never can be fit for the office. If he feels as men commonly feel, he must be sensible, that an office so circumstanced is one in which he can obtain no fame or reputation. He has no generous interest that can excite him to action. At best, his conduct will be passive and defensive. To inferior people such an office might be matter of honour. But to be raised to it and to descend to it, are different things, and suggest different sentiments. Does he really name the ministers? They will have a sympathy with him. Are they forced upon him? The whole business between them and the nominal king will be mutual counteraction. (321)

Is a "nominal king," "stupefied by his misfortune," "fit for the office"? If he does not "really name the ministers," who has power? Do the laws allow individuals to profit from the faults of the institution of monarchy?

Curatorial Interests: Colonialism and Slavery

The question of the self-interest of advisors, ministers, and parliament is extremely important given the high economic stakes they stand to profit from depending on their decisions concerning British interests in foreign lands. The institutions of colonialism and slavery channel money into the pockets of their controlling powers--that is the aristocracy who invest in and govern the institutions.

The relationship in these institutions between the aristocracy and those oppressed shares similarities with that between the guardian and ward. These asymmetrical custodial relationships consider people as property to exploit, are empowered by arbitrary authority, maintain hierarchical power within the traditional ruling class, and demand sound management practices to maximize economic gain. Smith comments directly on the institutions of colonialism and slavery and the capability of those in power to profit from them.

She uses Orlando's posting to fight the war in America to voice her opinions about unscrupulous individuals who would comfortably profit from inflicting misery on others. She establishes three tiers of knowledge of the war, each level occupied by a group with different economic interests. The ill-supported soldiers know very little about the causes of the conflict they must fight; the merchants and gentlemen believe popular propaganda about the causes of the war, though they are removed from the fighting; and the ruling class, including the monarch and the parliament, understand its causes all too well--they are personally involved in the war for vanity and profit.

On the voyage to America, Orlando has time to ponder the reasons for the war. He hears "with a mixture of wonder and disgust, the human tempest roar" of the sick and dying in the ship's close quarters, "and for the first time

enquired of himself what all this was for?" (334). When he asks himself the same question a little later, it is in the context of the war. Though he poorly understands war, he begins to grasp its senselessness. When he ponders

such of them as survived going to another hemisphere to avenge a branch of their own nation a quarrel, of the justice of which they knew little, and were never suffered to enquire, he felt disposed to wonder at the folly of mankind, and to enquire again what all this was for? (336, emphasis in original).

Orlando's friend points out his mistake in trying to reason causes, arguing that individual soldiers do not ask why. Indeed, he asserts that they are paid not to do so:

"It is," said he, "our business to fight; never to ask for what--for if every man, or even every officer in the service were to set about thinking, it is ten to one if any two of them agreed as to the merits of the cause. A man who takes the King's money is to do as he is bid, and never debate the matter." (347)

He uses economic terms; it is a "business," whose employees are quantifiable in percentages and paid off in money.

Mr. Somerive and his brother represent extremes of reactions to the American war. Orlando's father expresses a neutral position toward the Americans, while calculating the benefits of fighting to Orlando's financial prospects. Because Mrs. Rayland believes that the American Revolution is being fought by Englishmen against the descendents of the Regicides, he views Orlando's alignment against the Americans as having a positive influence on Mrs. Rayland:

"and as the British nation is now engaged in a quarrel with people whom she considers as the descendants of the Regicides, against whom her ancestors drew their swords, it is not, I think, very unlikely that she might approve of her young favourite's making his first essay in arms against those whom she terms the Rebels of America." (132)

On the other hand, Orlando's uncle, a wealthy merchant, expresses a violent vindictiveness for the colonists. He offers a toast wishing the Americans death: "Confusion to the Yankies, and that there may soon be not a drop of American blood in their rebellious hearts!" In reaction, Orlando's "reason and humanity alike recoiled," and he is "shocked and disgusted by every word his uncle spoke" (286). None of these arguments sway Orlando into accepting the war as necessary or identifying the American colonists as enemies.

Instead, Smith shows him questioning his basic belief systems, especially the "prejudice" of "glory for is country":

If, for a moment, his good sense arose in despite of this prejudice, and induced him to enquire if it was not from a mistaken point of honour, from the wickedness of governments, or the sanguinary ambition or revenge of monarchs, that so much misery was owing as wars of every description must necessarily occasion; he quieted these doubts by recurring to history . . . and all the crowned murderers of antiquity. . . There was something great in their personal valour, in their contempt of death; and he did not recollect that their being themselves so indifferent to life was no reason why, to satisfy their own vanity, they should deluge the world with human blood. There were, indeed, times when the modern directors of war appeared to him in a less favorable light--who incurred

no personal danger, nor gave themselves any other trouble than to raise money from one part of their subjects, in order to enable them to destroy another, or the subjects of some neighbouring potentate. (336-37)

Orlando's conceptions of history and war have changed since his tour of the portrait gallery with Mrs. Rayland. He recognizes the positions of safety the monarchs and "modern directors of war" enjoy. He connects war with economic gain and realizes that "glory" is bought and sold at a profit benefitting contractors. They supply the military with inferior goods, killing soldiers in the process of satisfying their greed.

Nor had he, after a while, great reason to admire the integrity of the subordinate departments, to whom the care of providing troops thus sent out to support the glory of their master entrusted. . . . But it was all for glory. And that the ministry should, in thus purchasing glory, put a little more than was requisite into the pockets of contractors, and destroy as many men by sickness as by the sword, made but little difference in an object so infinitely important. (337)

Smith goes even further in her attack. She continues on to directly indict members of parliament for profiting from the war:

it was known (which, however, Orlando did not know) that messieurs the contractors were for the most part members of the parliament, who under other names enjoyed the profits of a war, which, disregarding the voices of the people in general, or even of their own constituents, they voted for pursuing. (337)

The members of parliament take advantage of the institution to promote their own self-interest. Colonialism preserves

their economic and political status. As with guardianship, Smith shows colonialism and the military actions connected with preserving it to be economically based to enrich the ruling aristocracy.

After Orlando has rationally considered his war experiences, he insists that they are "not to be justified by any cause." However, his fellow soldiers find a way to justify their feelings. They

consider the English Americans as men of an inferior species, whose resistance to the measures, whatever those might be, of the mother country, deserved every punishment that the most ferocious mode of warfare could inflict. (346)

In contrast, Orlando remembers the colonists are English.

He feels sympathy for

the American soldiers, fighting in defence of their liberties (of those rights which his campaign as a British officer had made him forget were the most sacred to an Englishman).

He recognizes the wrongful role his country plays, as "his heart felt for the sufferings of the oppressed, and for the honour of the oppressors" (437).

Smith works to gain her readers' sympathy with the oppressed by adding heartrending details, such as her portrait of the English fight to control their colonial interests in America:

The country, lately so flourishing, and rising so rapidly in opulence, presented nothing but the ruins of houses, from whence their miserable inhabitants had either been driven entirely, or murdered!--or had, of the burnt rafters and sad relics of their former comfortable dwellings, constructed huts on their lands, merely because

they had nowhere else to go.--Even from these wretched temporary abodes they were often driven, to make way for the English soldiers; and their women and children exposed to the tempest of the night, or, what was infinitely more dreadful, to the brutality of the military. (345)

Her novel questions the institution of colonialism which tyrannically oppresses individuals for economic gain. As she did while examining the quasi-guardianship relationship between Mrs. Rayland and Orlando, she deflates the glorification of military exploits as noble. She exposes the military as a means of enriching the aristocracy and enabling them to usurp power, maintaining their undeserved political and social status at the expense of those at home and abroad. Smith's description of war-torn America is reminiscent of Burke's definition of the process of conquerors subduing a "country of conquest":

Acting as conquerors, they have imitated the policy of the harshest of that harsh race. The policy of such barbarous victors, who condemn a subdued people, and insult their feelings, has ever been, as much as in them lay, to destroy all vestiges of the antient country, in religion, in polity, in laws, and in manners; to confound all territorial limits; to produce a general poverty; to put up their properties to auction; to crush their princes, nobles, and pontiffs; to lay low every thing which had lifted its head above the level, or which could serve to combine or rally, in their distresses, the disbanded people, under the standard of old opinion. (298)

Although Burke refers to colonial powers subduing other peoples, Smith uses similar images to argue that the situation in America is worse because the British are

subduing their own people using conqueror's tactics. And making matters worse yet, the landed and titled members of British government are reaping a profit from the war in the name of "glory" while British soldiers are dying in a war the people do not favor. The institutions are being manipulated by a powerful few for economic gain at the expense of many. The Old Manor House presents a full array of systematic instances of despotic authority practiced in eighteenth century England. In comparison, guardianship is a relatively mild form of legally condoned exploitation, while colonialism and the military action enabling it present the wider-reaching effects of coercive power.

Slavery, however, is the extreme example of oppression Smith uses to critique despotic authority. It is related to colonialism because the inexpensive labor allows British colonizers to reap even larger profits from their colonies. Like the military contractors, the merchants who deal indirectly with slave traders make their money as middlemen. Orlando's friend Carr, the lawyer relates the disregard these professionals have for the humans they indirectly oppress:

The merchant, who sits down in his compting-house, and writes to his correspondent at Jamaica, that his ship, the Good Intent of Liverpool, is consigned to him at Port-Royal with a cargo of slaves from the coast of Guinea, calculates the profits of a fortunate adventure, but never considers the tears and blood with which this money is to be raised. He hears not the groans of an hundred human creatures

confined together in the hold of a small merchantman." (486).

Smith reminds her readers that these profits come at the expense of human suffering. However, William Godwin in his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, published the same year as The Old Manor House, is even more specific connecting slavery with wealth:

Every man may calculate, in every glass of wine he drinks, and every ornament he annexes to his person, how many individuals have been condemned to slavery and sweat, incessant drudgery, unwholesome food, continual hardships, deplorable ignorance, and brutal insensibility, that he may be supplied with these luxuries. It is a gross imposition that men are accustomed to put upon themselves when they talk of the property bequeathed to them by their ancestors. The property is produced by the daily labour of men who are now in existence. All that their ancestors bequeathed to them was a mouldy patent which they show as a title to extort from their neighbours what the labour of those neighbors has produced. (Godwin 711-712)

Godwin explicitly ties hereditary wealth with contemporary asymmetrical power relationships. His argument is even larger because he links slavery with "every man" and his enjoyment of wine and personal ornaments. Indicting everyone, he goes beyond Smith, who disdains those abusing existing laws and institutions for their own benefit.

The New Tenants in the Old Manor House

Throughout the text, Smith comments on those who misuse institutions to gain power, particularly economic power, over others. Those institutions range from outmoded

feudal vassalage to colonialism and slavery. Her comments concerning the problems of asymmetrical power structures extend to those with hereditary wealth as well as those who hope to create new wealth. The situations reinforce Smith's felt need for systematic change. Even though the economic order has evolved, Smith asserts that it is business as usual. Even though old institutions have changed and new classes of people are in charge, economics, the motive of profit, still rules the decisions people make in their relationships with one another. Power is no longer solely invested in feudally landed or titled families, but now is equated with the ability to generate money.

Smith would probably agree with Burke that "hereditary wealth, and the rank which goes with it, are too much idolized by creeping sycophants, and the blind abject admirers of power." However she is not one of his "petulant, assuming, short-sighted coxcombs of philosophy" who "too rashly slight[s hereditary wealth and rank] in shallow speculations." She would disagree with his assertion that "Some decent regulated pre-eminence, some preference (not exclusive appropriation) given to birth, is neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic" (141). She would hold as too narrow his views that

By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges, in

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the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit
our property and our lives. (Burke 120)

However, she would expand his intended boundaries of his
statement about inheritance extending through the
generations to include those currently on the margins of
the economic order, who have refused to take advantage of
loopholes in the system. For Smith, "Society is indeed a
contract," and

As the ends of such a partnership cannot be
obtained in many generations, it becomes a
partnership not only between those who are
living, but between those who are living, those
who are dead, and those who are to be born.
Each contract of each particular state is but a
clause in the great primaeval contract of
eternal society, linking the lower with the
higher natures, connecting the visible and
invisible world, according to a fixed compact
sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds
all physical and all moral natures, each in
their appointed place. (Burke 194-95)

The contract must be protected by laws and social customs
which protect people from the unscrupulous.

Property becomes a key element. The problem in the
last part of the novel is Orlando's struggle to wrestle the
old manor house away from the clergy of the Church of
England and their unscrupulous lawyers. The estate, now
being managed for profit, has become a business enterprise.
The house is in disrepair, the estate has been wasted, and
the family has been allowed to scatter. Like Burke, Smith
criticizes those who would ruin a dwelling for future
generations. Speaking of the French Burke complains:

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that they should not think it amongst their rights to cut off the entail, or commit waste on the inheritance, by destroying at their pleasure the whole original fabric of their society; hazarding to leave to those who come after them, a ruin instead of an habitation--and teaching these successors as little to respect their contrivances, as they had themselves respected the institutions of their forefathers. (192)

Smith doesn't have revolutionaries who do this, but investors.

Orlando and Monimia do eventually gain the old manor house, and Smith asserts their rights. They struggle against the tradition, corruption, and greed of power to gain what is rightfully theirs. Their situation represents the political and economic forces of the time. As Arendt points out in her essay "What Is Freedom?,"

It was not out of a desire for freedom that people eventually demanded their share in government or admission to the political realm, but out of mistrust in those who held power over their life and goods. (Between 150)

"Laughed at Old Rules": Contesting Guardianship,
Challenging Authority

After Queen Mary's death Freedom became the universal theme, and freedom in opinion pervading church and state, laughed at old rules, and pointing out absurdities in parents, guardians, kings and governors, lessened authority in every hand that was accustomed to hold it.

--Hester Lynch Piozzi, Retrospection, 1794
(2:317)

Challenging authority by contesting guardianship, the novels of Ann Radcliffe, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith each conceptualize alternative forms of authority to oppose patriarchal practices. In The Romance of the Forest Adeline rejects her usurping oppressive governor, who embodies the tyrannical elements of guardianship, and chooses Theodore in marriage, embracing the rational authority of La Luc's government. A Simple Story traces the progress of Dorriforth through an internal struggle leading him to reconsider the assumptions he has made as a patriarchal guardian and to accept the authority of a feminized morality. And The Old Manor House uses the manipulative, self-deluding authority of the three guardians to allow their deserving wards to outwit them, so that the wards can assume responsible roles in the actual authority structure of the late eighteenth century.

As I have shown in the preceding chapters, each of these novel delegitimizes the authority of the guardian;

however, each replaces the authority with an alternative one. Rather than abolishing all government, these novels reassert the need individuals and society have for appropriate authority, relevant tradition, and uncorrupted religion. As Hannah Arendt suggests in Between Past and Future, eighteenth-century struggles were "gigantic attempts to repair these foundations, to renew the broken thread of tradition" (140). Like other more openly political texts, these novels attempt to repair those broken threads.

In sixteenth-century England, the monarchy's challenge to the power of the church started the process of tearing the whole cloth of authority. By challenging the monarchy, the aristocracy opened a small loophole. Once the small tear began, arbitrary authority of all sorts proved vulnerable, making possible larger rents in the fabric. The authority of the aristocracy to govern became an issue. Opening the hole ever wider, the oppressed began to question the rights of all oppressors. As a result, patriarchal authority at all levels became subject to scrutiny. At the family level, the authority of parents over their children and the extent of filial duty and obedience were questioned. Pulling the thread in one part of the cloth had destabilized the texture of society.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the reformation, the expanding cash-based capitalism, and the

abolition of feudal tenures eroded the feudal family-based power of the aristocracy. By the 1790s, the traditional kinds of power--religion, economic, and military--were no longer in the hands of the aristocracy but had become invested in public institutions. In order to maintain its position of ascendancy, the aristocracy reinforced its weakening authority with judicial power. According to E.P. Thompson in Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act,

The hegemony of the eighteenth-century gentry and aristocracy was expressed, above all, not in military force, not in the mystifications of a priesthood or of the press, not even in economic coercion, but in the rituals of the study of the Justices of the Peace, in the quarter-sessions, in the pomp of Assizes and in the theatre of Tyburn. (262)

According to Thompson's argument, the aristocracy enacted and revised pre-existing forms of law "to legitimize its own property and status" (260).¹ Law became "the institutionalized procedures of the ruling class" and it became an "ideology" which "legitimized class power" (261, 262). However, paradoxically, the very laws created to protect the power of the aristocracy questioned its rights

¹ Thompson argues that English common law, because it is uncodified and is "in some ways more flexible and unprincipled--and therefore more pliant to the 'common sense' of the ruling class," provided "a medium through which social conflict could find expression" (267).

According to R.J. Smith in The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought: 1688-1863, the Gothic debate pitted historiographers against each other in their efforts to rewrite British history using precedent to justify the changes in the contemporary government power structure.

to power. While originally "devised by men of property as a defence against arbitrary power," the laws could be interpreted to question the usurpation of power by the aristocracy. The aristocracy performed the same acts of arrogance for which it had censored the monarchy. As a result of using law to safeguard its position, the aristocracy had to accept its tenets, including its "contradictory" stance regarding arbitrary power. That is, "the law mediated . . . class relations through legal forms, which imposed, again and again, inhibitions upon the actions of the rulers" (264).

The legal relationship of guardianship embodies a similar history: the transformation of the relationship from feudal wardship to early modern guardianship produced the same paradox. Crafted to solidify aristocratic power at the expense of the monarchy, the new laws diminished the role of the guardian, dispersing those powers to the court and to lawyers and accountants. While insisting on the authority of the guardian and thus the aristocracy, the new legal relationship nevertheless questioned that authority by placing it under the increasing scrutiny of the rising class of professionals.

By the eighteenth century, authority and religion were no longer absolutes. Exploring Montesquieu's position on the subject, Arendt in believes

Europe's peoples, though they were still ruled by habit and custom, no longer felt at home

politically, no longer trusted laws under which they lived, and no longer believed in the authority of those who ruled them.

This "progressive loss of authority of all inherited political structures which [Montesquieu] had in mind," Arendt argues, "became plain to an increasing number of people everywhere throughout the eighteenth century" (Between 113). The loss of authority--though disconcerting to many, aristocrat or not--had various repercussions.

Arendt identifies the extremes:

With the loss of tradition we have lost the thread which safely guided us through the vast realms of the past, but this thread was also the chain fettering each successive generation to a predetermined aspect of the past. (Between 94)

The thread was broken and tradition itself became suspect. People began to question the need to continue to practice law and custom simply because of precedent, viewing law as a construct of a given society and time. As a result, some saw an opportunity for changing the whole structure of society.

Because the challenge to authority was taking place throughout society, oppressions of all kinds were questioned. Radical thinkers removed the blame from the oppressed for their oppression, placing it squarely on the oppressors. Groups previously unprotected by law were championed. Specifically, Catholic emancipation, as well as the abolition of slavery, were the liberal causes of the period (Elite 317). Some even went so far in their

denouncement of all forms of oppression to question colonialism. For instance, in his Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke: Occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France, Joseph Priestly connects the downfall of patriarchy with the end of colonialism:

The very idea of distant possessions will be even ridiculed. The East and the West Indies, and every thing without ourselves will be disregarded, and wholly excluded from all European systems; and only those divisions of men, and of territory, will take place, which the common convenience requires, and not such as the mad and insatiable ambition of princes demands. No part of America, Africa, or Asia, will be held in subjection to any part of Europe, and all the intercourse that will be kept up among them, will be for their mutual advantage. (147)

The largest group whose rights were relatively unprotected by law were women. Suppressed by existing power structures, many women were particularly eager to challenge patriarchal power hierarchies. In those structures women had been relegated to the role of conserving family power. They were expected to consolidate family lines by marrying advantageously for wealth and status and to continue those lines by producing heirs. However, individuals in England seized the historical moment between the beginning of the French Revolution and the declaration of war with France to articulate a counterdiscourse challenging existing hierarchical power structures.

Popular forms of culture represented and influenced these challenges to patriarchal authority. In her history of England, Reflections, Piozzi explains the phenomenon:

[C]omedies exhibited fathers in the character of old miserly wretches, devoting their daughters to a long course of sorrow in the arms of some shocking partner, deformed or otherwise disgusting, for the sake of money; till every audience joined in loud applauses bestowed on the spirited girl who broke such chains, and the young lover who was represented as infinitely deserving. (317-18)

Tyrannical authority and coercive power were being challenged at the family level, just as it had been contested publicly for centuries. Instead of negating all forms of authority, reformers called for limiting the arrogance of power by allowing people to choose their own governors, cashier them for misconduct, and form their own government. Applied at the family level in philosophical treatises including Richard Price's A Discourse on the Love of Our Country (1789), Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man (1792), and Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), this process of choosing government involved reexamining the relationships between husband and wife, father and daughter, and guardian and ward for the assumptions they made about obligation and duty. Popular literature responded to the preoccupations of society. Exploring the private realm of family relationships, domestic fiction dominated public taste.

From its inception, the novel challenged the continuity of patriarchy, conceptualizing an alternative in the authority of the rational individual. The novel developed out of the issues defined in the figure of the legal relationship of guardianship. That is, the individual--usually female--struggles to create a coherent interiority against the oppressive state-authorized guardian. Exploration of the legal, historical, and social discourses of guardianship provides a focus for examining the contradiction of consciousness being debated as society adjusted to the shift in economic, military, and judicial power.

The novel genre particularly articulates the connection between patriarchal power and the economic oppression of women. For example, guardians who immured their wards within the family estate epitomize the attempts of the powerful to conserve their economic and legal control. The Marquis keeps Adeline prisoner to protect his illegal claims to her rightful property; Dorriforth tries to control Miss Milner's public social life and limit her power by ordering her to stay home; and Monimia is locked in her turret when she refuses to marry financially advantageously according to her guardian's wishes. Again and again fiction of the period contains examples of what Katherine Ellis in "Charlotte Smith's Subversive Gothic" identifies as "the imprisonment that is the underside of

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economic dependence" (55). The increased opportunities for economic gain, which challenged the power of the aristocracy, were not available to women, who were literally immured to keep them from overstepping their prescribed roles.

Indeed, women desired the right to ownership of private property, and thus access to the new economic power that was changing English society. To some extent, if they were of the right class and legally astute, they were able to achieve some economic power. Susan Staves comments on the struggle for women to gain economic power and its relation to the larger evolution of authority:

Moreover, a wife who could in effect renegotiate her marriage contract into a separate maintenance contract would appear to be in some respects in a position analogous to that of the king's subjects after the Revolution of 1688. Like the king's, the husband's authority appeared less absolute. (164)

However, unlike other groups who did eventually negotiate protection under the law, women were to remain oppressed by law. Staves argues that

basically nothing changed--not because English society as it changed continued to find appropriate forms of married women's property, but rather because the deeper structures of male domination and female subordination persisted from Anglo-Saxons right through the Family Provision Act of 1975 and beyond. (35)²

² Staves points out that in law,

Some such rules are principally archaic, the leftover rubbish of the legal system, and

To a large degree, remnants of the feudal forces embodied in the legal relationship of guardianship remained in effect.

As I have shown, Ann Radcliffe, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith used the legal relationship of guardianship in their novels to contribute to contemporary debate concerning the power of the individual to determine her own government. Because the legal and economic oppression of women continued long after the 1790s, the guardian and ward relationship has remained an effective vehicle to explore the abusive authority controlling women. As popular fiction increasingly generated a more conscious examination of social issues in the nineteenth century, the use of guardianship continued to generate counterdiscourses to those of patriarchal practices. For example, Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (1813), Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847), Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights (1847), and Charles Dickens' Bleak House (1853) all make use of the relationship of guardian and ward to discuss issues of asymmetrical power similar to those treated by Radcliffe, Inchbald, and Smith.

Indeed, these authors--like Price, Burke, Paine, and Wollstonecraft--offer a critique of "the brief summer of enlightened optimism and faith in progress" (R.J. Smith 111). Although their visions have yet to be fully

perform no social function. Others may perform important ideological functions. (206)

realized, their contributions to the debate deserve recognition. They are part of the emerging

freedom in opinion pervading church and state, [which] laughed at old rules, and pointing out absurdities in parents, guardians, kings and governors, lessened authority in every hand that was accustomed to hold it. (Piozzi 2:317)

Using the threads that had unravelled from the older cloth, Radcliffe, Inchbald, and Smith suggest alternative ways to reweave a more suitable societal pattern. With their stories of guardians and wards, they contest guardianship in order to stress the need to challenge tyrannical authority.

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