

**Promising Happiness and Domesticating Desire:
female homosociality and novel-reading in
Frances Burney's *Camilla* and
Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda***

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Abstract

This thesis considers dominant assumptions and polemical arguments about femininity, female desire and domestic happiness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and how Frances Burney and Maria Edgeworth, respectively, negotiate these ideas through the dynamic of female-female relations in their novels *Camilla* (1796) and *Belinda* (1801). These novels register the principles of female education and desire outlined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Émile* (1762) and espoused by later eighteenth-century conduct-book writers, moralists and pedagogues, as well as the polemical arguments forwarded by Mary Wollstonecraft and other feminist writers in the 1790s. *Camilla* and *Belinda* exemplify the fraught relationship between women's same-sex relationships and a dominant ideological vision of domestic heterosexuality and happiness. As Burney and Edgeworth depict and comment on various relationships between their female characters, they engage with this gendered dialectic, and position themselves and their novels within a discussion about both appropriate female role-models and appropriate reading material for young women.

I begin by considering changes in popular conceptions of the family in the eighteenth century, and women's place in it. Focusing on *Camilla*, I consider how the *loving* mother-daughter relationship was instrumental in ensuring the authority of the father, and in upholding hegemonic gender relations generally. I then consider anxieties surrounding the young woman's "coming out." *Camilla* and *Belinda* register the different ways in which women's social relationships might threaten an ideological vision of domestic happiness and heterosexuality that rested on female passivity and self-denial.

I conclude this thesis by considering how Burney and Edgeworth address simultaneously issues surrounding women's same-sex relationships and novel reading, as they forge virtual (homosocial) relationships with their imagined readers, through their depiction of textual relationships between characters. The novels present polemical ideas about women's female happiness and independence. However, Burney and Edgeworth register the fact that dominant discourse: defines women as passive, prescribes women's happiness in domestic terms, regulates women's relationships with other women, and circumscribes, even penalizes, women's attempts to articulate their experiences. As Burney and Edgeworth accentuate the pressure exerted by this discourse (on their characters and on their novels), they implicitly challenge it.

1. “chief beauties” and “negative virtues”: delicacy, domesticity and the promise of happiness

In this project, I focus on female-female social relations and women’s reading practices in later eighteenth-century novels, conduct books, moral periodicals and feminist works. These themes generate an overlapping body of concerns, conflicts and strategies that inform and emerge out of these texts. Focusing on Frances Burney’s novel, *Camilla* (1796), and Maria Edgeworth’s novel, *Belinda* (1801), it is apparent that Burney and Edgeworth are embedded in a socio-cultural discussion about women’s roles, desires and conduct that approaches these topics substantially through the dynamic of female-female social relations. These two novels exemplify the fraught relationship between women’s same-sex relationships and a patriarchal vision of domestic heterosexuality and happiness. As Burney and Edgeworth depict and comment on various relationships between their female characters, they engage with this gendered dialectic, and position themselves and their novels within a discussion about both appropriate female role-models and appropriate reading material for young women. As they engage in this discussion, Burney and Edgeworth acknowledge and implicitly challenge the terms of a dominant model of domestic heterosexuality, which, both, denied the fact of, and sought to discipline, women’s desires. Ultimately, Burney and Edgeworth register the fact that dominant discourse: defines women as passive, prescribes women’s happiness in domestic terms, regulates women’s relationships with other women, and circumscribes, even penalizes, women’s attempts to articulate their experiences.

This discussion about women's desires coincided with a shift in popular conceptions of the family in the eighteenth century. As Nancy Armstrong observes, the family came to be seen as a private domain arranged according to an ideology of gendered subjectivity, when once it had encompassed wider kinship affiliations (*Desire* 13). As Caroline Gonda asserts, the sentimental family relied on the propagation and reproduction of a "particular kind of female heterosexuality" (30). This particular construction of female heterosexuality rested on women's commitment to the ideals of maternity and domesticity, ideals which worked to contain those desires in women that seemed "undisciplined or anarchic" (Kowaleski-Wallace 16). This construction of the modern family, as it centred on the role of the loving wife and mother, owes its inception to the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as formulated in *Émile*, 1762 (Badinter 30). As Susan Bell and Karen Offen observe, Rousseau "reconsecrated for all women a role exclusively within the family on the grounds of biological determinism" (19). After establishing the "nature" of women, Rousseau proceeded to prescribe an education for her according to this assumption (Bell and Offen 43).

Following Rousseau's example, later eighteenth-century moralists, pedagogues and social critics presented strategies for inculcating these domestic values in women. These writers vacillated continually between celebrating women's *natural* passivity and domestic disposition, and seeking to *discipline* or *domesticate* women's desires according to this ideological assumption. They devised strategies to obviate as well as contain the frightful possibility that women might reject this notion of domestic heterosexuality. Of course, their primary strategy was to argue that women were *naturally* submissive and sexually passive. While this argument provided a foundation for the pedagogical projects of these writers, it highlights the

paradoxical nature of this approach to the female subject. After all, if women were naturally the way men wanted them to be, why, then, the need to discipline and domesticate them? In *Camilla*, Burney registers this two-pronged approach to the female subject. In his homiletic address to Camilla, Mr. Tyrold assures his “innocent girl” that she has “no passions ... at which [she] need blush”. At the same time, he insists that her desires must be tightly monitored (359). Burney proceeds to demonstrate the implications of this approach. Mr. Tyrold’s exhortations initially confuse his daughter and, ultimately, have a crippling effect as Camilla attempts to quash her desire for Edgar.¹

A young woman’s “coming out” describes a process where the contradictions and dangers inherent in the negotiation of domesticity and sociability are most apparent. A young woman’s socialization rested on the assumption that her movement *out* of the household of her father would see her transition into the household of her husband. In this sense, the period was critical in realizing the *right* “kind of female heterosexuality” by bringing about “a conduct book marriage” (Gonda; Yeazell 50). However, there were pervasive fears that, during this pivotal phase, a young woman might engage her desires in such a way that would disrupt this symmetrical projection. Claudia Johnson stresses that “the modest female ... must exist in a state of affective equipoise. The engagement of her desires or the cultivation of her mind might render her unsuitable for and unhappy with ‘the husband into whose hands she may fall’ and on whose ‘humour’ she must subsist” (Johnson 155; *Camilla* 357). Essentially, a young woman’s heterosexual desires might compromise the construction of the sentimental family if they were registered and indulged too soon (Moore 92). The ultimate fear was that the young woman might lose her sexual virtue during the courtship phase. As she “linger[ed] ... between her father’s house and her

future husband's," the risk of such violation or contamination increased (Yeazell 44). Ruth Bernard Yeazell remarks on the popularity of Thomas Gisborne's essay, "On the Mode of Introducing Young Women into General Society," which was originally included in *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797). As Yeazell notes, the essay "dwells anxiously on the problem of how to see a daughter safely through the crucial transition period, even as the same book elsewhere stresses the extreme 'caution' that women in particular should exercise in choosing a mate" (44).

Of particular interest, Gisborne's essay focuses on the implications of a young woman's relationships with other women during this critical period. The social convention that required young women to have chaperones when entering society highlights the dependency of men on *good* women to inculcate certain feminine virtues and domestic values into their young friends. Gisborne articulates an opposition between a dominant vision of female happiness and heterosexuality and the breakdown of this vision when, instead of reinforcing the ideals of domesticity and maternity, treacherous and captivating women "forwarded" young women "to public places, there to be whirled, far from maternal care and admonition in the circle of levity and folly" (*Enquiry* 97-8). In different ways, women's same-sex relationships might threaten an ideology of domestic happiness and heterosexuality. A woman's (homosexual) love for another woman might replace their (heterosexual) love for a man; or, in diametric opposition to this possibility, women's same-sex relationships might encourage women to pursue the (male) object of their sexual or mercenary desires.

Given that female homosocial bonds are central to this study, it is germane to draw on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's incisive study of male-male bonds in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Sedgwick yokes together the

oxymoronic terms “homosocial” and “desire” in an effort to account for the diacritical relationship between sexual and nonsexual male bonds and hypothesize the potential continuousness of these seemingly dichotomous types of relationships. While Sedgwick concentrates on *male* relationships, she acknowledges that “in a society where men and women differ in their access to power, there will be important gender differences, as well, in the structure and constitution of sexuality”. Sedgwick suggests that “women who love women, women who teach, study, nurture, suckle, write about, march for, vote for, give jobs to, or otherwise promote the interests of other women are pursuing congruent and closely related activities”. She posits that “homosocial” and “homosexual” are not necessarily mutually exclusive terms when applied to women’s relationships and that the term “homosocial” might comprehensively denominate the entire spectrum (2-3). The purpose of this thesis requires a broader conception of female-female *loving* relationships. Whereas Sedgwick focuses on women’s homosocial relationships supporting women’s interests, as defined against the interests of men, this thesis takes into account the possibility that, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some *loving* relationships between women actually ensured men’s authority over women. This thesis is concerned broadly with the dialectical relationship between women’s same-sex relationships and a hegemonic model of gender relations based on male domination and female submission. Gonda asserts that the sentimental family relied on the propagation and reproduction of a “particular kind of female heterosexuality” (30). In a broad sense, women’s homosocial relationships supported this heterosexual construction or they undermined it, making available alternative outlets of desire for women.

Considering female homosociality in terms of a heterosexual, patriarchal social vision, this continuum implicitly places women’s same-sex relationships in

paradigmatic contrast with both the companionate marriage and male same-sex bonds. In her work, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, Janet Todd notes that women "cannot escape the conventions and constraints of their society and its literature, in which women are subordinate and men take them in rape or romantic love" (379). Following Sedgwick's intimation about the impact of heterosexual power structures on the constitution of female homosociality, Todd notes that "the hierarchical structure of the heterosexual couple presses against the literary friendship" between women (379). But, as these relationships mirrored the marriage relationship, they could be seen to press against and subvert the traditional power relationship between the sexes. This is the argument Betty Rizzo makes in her comparative study, *Companions without Vows: Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British Women*. Rizzo investigates the ways that the companionate relationship between the mistress and her humble (female) companion mirrored and ideologically challenged the marriage relationship (6-7).

A woman's dominance over another woman generated anxieties about the ideological implications of this same-sex dynamic for a traditional power relationship between the sexes. By extension, a woman's dominance threatened to disrupt a patriarchal arrangement between male homosocial bonds and women. Claude Lévi-Strauss points out that, when a man and woman unite in marriage, there is an "apparent formal characteristic of reciprocity". However, he maintains that, in a patriarchal society, "the relationship between the sexes is never symmetrical" (114). He argues that:

The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, where each owes and receives something, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as

one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners between whom the exchange takes place. This remains true even when the girl's feelings are taken into consideration.... In acquiescing to the proposed union, she precipitates or allows the exchange to take place; she cannot alter its nature.

(115)

Lévi-Strauss observes that patriarchal society rests on men's control of this heterosexual economy. Janice Raymond also observes that "this is a male homo-relational society built on male-male relations, transactions, and bonding at all levels" (10). In this asymmetrical gendered arrangement, women are passive and acquiescent. However, this thesis considers how men's authority over women actually *depended* on women's complaisance. This dialectical arrangement provides a foundation for considering why women's same-sex relationships garnered such anxious attention. Women might encourage other women to pursue their sexual desires and provoke those of men, thereby repudiating an ideology of female passivity and disrupting the arrangement Lévi-Strauss describes.

In response to their complex and equivocal nature, dominant ideology attempted to classify women's same-sex relationships. By placing them in definitional relation to an ideal marriage relationship and to bonds between men, this ideology approved certain relationships and excoriated others. Dominant ideology regarded "female friendship ... as second-rate, insignificant, and often preliminary to heteromaturity," as a way of addressing and assuaging anxieties that women might disrupt men's control over the heterosexual economy (Raymond 11). In response to concerns about the conceivable equivalency of intimate female friendships and marital relationships, dominant ideology accommodated the term "romantic friendship," defining it as "sexless, morally elevating, and no threat to male power" (Donoghue

109). This ideological appropriation supported men's control over women's relationships, at the same time that it downplayed the subversive possibilities of such relationships. As Elizabeth Wahl observes, the term "romantic friendship" was deployed to condemn female homosexuality and locate it on the peripheries of society, as a way of "insulating respectable middle-class women from the taint of homosexual desire" (250-51).²

Wahl notes that this term has been a hindrance to scholars investigating the subversive possibilities of women's relationships in the early modern period (250). Emma Donoghue challenges the way historians continue to define "romantic friendship" against "lesbian love" which involved sexual activity.³ She points out that these friendships often involved sex and were more like marriage than friendships between women today (109). Recalling Rizzo's argument, this is what made these relationships so threatening. Donoghue follows Sedgwick's argument that "romantic friendship" and "lesbian love" may have been continuous categories during this period. Lisa Moore argues more emphatically that "sapphism and romantic friendship, rather than identifying mutually exclusive and separate spheres of female intimacy, continued to exhibit a dangerous intimacy" (152). Rather than simply upholding eighteenth-century assumptions surrounding women's same-sex relationships, it is important to recognize the role of dominant ideology in producing these enduring assumptions. In her examination of eighteenth-century literary representations of women's homosocial relationships, Todd invokes five descriptive categories: "sentimental, erotic, manipulative, political, and social". However, she maintains that the novels she looks at "fail to fit neatly into any one" of these categories (3). Todd insists that women's same-sex relationships took many shapes during this period, and that literary representations of the complexities of these homosocial relationships

must be considered against the efforts of dominant ideology to classify and regulate them.

In *Between Men*, Sedgwick adapts the conceptual model of René Girard, outlined in his study of the directions and motivations of erotic desire: *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Girard's account of the "triple relationship" between the subject, the object of desire, and the "mediators" of this desire, or, rather, "rivals" for the same desired object, lends itself to considering the fraught relationship between women's same-sex relationships and reading practices, and the men whom these engagements ostensibly exclude, with respect to this hegemonic vision of gender relations. In analogous ways, female chaperones and novelists might inadvertently inculcate or blatantly promote (sexual or mercenary) desires in their young friends that challenged and looked to supplant hegemonic values. Girard's model takes into account the role of patriarchal anxieties, as expressed in the moral and pedagogical discourse of the period, in shaping these dichotomous assumptions about women's same-sex relationships and reading practices, in particular, their reading of novels. These assumptions at once belie and attest to the diversity of women's same-sex relationships and the ideological equivocalness of novels of the period. In this respect, Girard's theoretical approach helps to articulate the central contradictions that *Camilla* and *Belinda* register: that women must be *taught to be natural* and to embrace a particular construction of female heterosexuality and happiness; and that female homosociality presents a challenge to this process, at the same time that it is necessary for it.

The dialectical relationship between heterosexuality and female homosociality hinges on an implicit contract between men (and patriarchal, heterosexual values) and mothers/female role-models, and the potential for women to subvert or abuse this

contract in their relationships with other women. As Burney and Edgeworth depict various antagonistic relationships in their novels, they recall, often explicitly, the treatment of this gendered dialectic in conduct-books, moral periodicals and feminist works. The novels register the seminal arguments of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, which were adopted by later eighteenth-century writers like James Fordyce and John Gregory. At the same time, *Camilla* and *Belinda* tentatively rehearse the polemical argument of Mary Wollstonecraft that men, such as Fordyce and Gregory, endorsed an ideological programme which stultified women and, consequently, conduced to both men's and women's unhappiness. Burney and Edgeworth not only offer novelistic accounts of the tension between female homosocial relationships and patriarchal, heterosexual imperatives, but, through this medium, forge virtual homosocial relationships with female readers that can, themselves, be assessed in terms of this dialectical tension, as it intersects with a polemic on novels and young women's reading practices. This thesis considers how Burney and Edgeworth, respectively, figure the dialectical relationship between female homosociality and heterosexuality in *Camilla* and *Belinda*, and how this commentary places the novels in dialogic relation to these other works, as they each address the tension between women's relationships and patriarchal, heterosexual interests, in conjunction with issues surrounding novel-reading.

Programming Women

As the eighteenth century progressed, a system of separate spheres came to delineate conceptualizations of gender and designate gender roles. Nancy Armstrong explains that this dyadic conception of society rested on an opposition between "domestic woman and economic man," and the mutuality of women's and men's

happiness within these domains (Armstrong, “Rise” 97). This shift in thinking gave rise to an exponential growth in published material that addressed the education and conduct of women: between 1760 and 1820, almost a hundred books were published concerning these topics (Todd, *Female Education* 1: xix). This proliferation coincided with the diminution of conduct books written for men. Books such as *The Art of Governing a Wife; with Rules for Bachelors* (1747) still addressed men, but, as this title suggests, critics ratified the authoritative role of men by implicitly investigating and interrogating the conduct of women (Todd, *FE* 1: xiv).

Conduct books and moral periodicals worked in concert to both consolidate discursive strategies for approaching the female subject and to reify the female ideal.⁴ This literature maintained that women had certain *natural* qualities and desires, at the same time that it concentrated on *cultivating* and *circumscribing* these, in the interest of ensuring women’s complaisance and men’s authority. In 1762, with the publication of *Émile*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau crystallized ideas about the modern family, as it centred on the role of the loving mother, and he outlined a principle of female education, which inspired and informed the approaches of later eighteenth-century moralists, pedagogues and social critics (Badinter 30). While Rousseau concentrates on the education of boys, he turns his attention to the education of women in the fifth and final book of *Émile*, entitled “Sophy, or Woman”. In this controversial book, he insists that:

A woman’s education must ... be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young. The further we depart from this principle, the further we

shall be from our goal, and all our precepts will fail to secure her happiness or our own. (328)

James Fordyce explicitly recapitulates this principle in his *Sermons to Young Women*, first published in 1766. Addressing his female subjects, Fordyce postulates that “[y]our business chiefly is to read Men, in order to make yourselves agreeable and useful” (I: 273). Fordyce defines the business of women in ancillary terms: confined to the private domain, women’s business entailed supporting the *real* (economic) business of men.

According to Rousseau’s programme, it was imperative for the happiness (authority) of men that women were conditioned, from their childhood, to embrace their contingent status and domestic “business”. Fordyce recognizes that “the honour and peace of a family are ... much more dependent on the conduct of daughters than of sons”. He acknowledges that, as a result, “[t]he world ... overlooks in our sex a thousand irregularities, which it never forgives in yours” (1: 17). Observing the critical role of women in ensuring the peace of the family and, by extension, that of society, Fordyce launches his homiletic address to women, in which he joins in censuring those women who reject the “business” he prescribes and the ideological vision of gender difference and reciprocity which underpinned it. Fordyce promulgates this ideology of gender relations and envisages/demands women’s commitment to it. This essentialist argument about women’s *natural* roles and disposition underpins Fordyce’s programme; however, it could also be seen to negate it, as it calls into question the vigour and desperation of his attempt to defend and perpetuate an arrangement, which is, by his own declaration, *natural*.

The opening sentence of John Gregory’s discussion on women’s “Conduct and Behaviour,” included in his popular treatise, *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters*

(1774), epitomizes this tension. Gregory describes a standard of femininity that is *natural*, but that women must also strive for: “One of the chief beauties in a female character is that modest reserve, that retiring delicacy, which avoids the public eye, and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration. – I do not wish you to be insensible to applause. If you were, you must become, if not worse, at least less amiable women.” (13) Following Rousseau, Gregory endeavours to programme women to “please” men and, as part of this project, he rails against those vain and immodest women who are impervious to the *right* kind of applause. According to Betty Rizzo, Gregory “endorses a view of women’s ‘naturally’ submissive and retiring nature that he himself belies in the strength of his caveats against all behavior that was unsubmitive and unretiring” (13). Interestingly, Edgeworth emphasizes the modesty of her heroine, Belinda Portman, by reversing the terms Gregory sets up. Essentially, the girl is insensible to the *wrong* kind of applause: “she had become insensible to the praises of her personal charms and accomplishments ... because she had been so much flattered and *shown off* ... by her match-making aunt” (9, orig. emphasis). Whereas critics tended to emphasize the vulnerability and gullibility of young women, Edgeworth underscores Belinda’s commitment to domestic values in spite of the influence of her manipulative aunt.

In *Émile*, Rousseau remarks on the “inexorable law of nature” which underpins the relationship between the sexes. However, Rousseau remarks on the contingency of this gendered hierarchy, insisting that the “stronger party” is “dependent on the weaker” (323). According to Rousseau, the happiness of men and women rested on women consenting to their own subordination. Fortunately, Rousseau argues that women are “proud” of their weakness (323). Wollstonecraft argues that this claim is “nonsense” (*Vindication* 78, 2n). She objects to the way men

deployed this argument about women's *natural* submissiveness as a way of ensuring their authority. Although Rousseau insisted on women's *natural* submissiveness, the contingent dynamic he describes speaks to anxieties that women might refuse to consent to their subordination. In fact, in the next breath, Rousseau notes that women can be cunning in their subservience to men (323).

In response to concerns about the tenuousness of men's authority, conduct-book writers accentuated the social significance of women's domestic "business" and conflated women's subordination with their happiness. In a cyclical manner, they prescribed a model of female heterosexuality and happiness and then promised women happiness, as well as a sense of equality within the framework of the companionate marriage, if they met these terms (Badinter 118). At the same time, men censured as well as pitied women who failed to respect these terms, and insinuated that such women would be denied happiness. Ostensibly, men promoted women's happiness; in reality, they sought to insure their own. According to Rousseau's argument, men *depended* on women embracing a "particular kind of female heterosexuality" and, concomitantly, male happiness (Gonda 30).

Burney and Edgeworth register this ideological assumption and social imperative, along with those strategies commonly deployed by men to programme women's desires. In *Belinda*, Clarence Hervey insists that "women, who were full of vanity, affectation, and artifice, whose tastes were depraved, were equally incapable of conferring, or enjoying real happiness" (362). Hervey's suspicious attitude towards women is couched in the language of concern for their happiness and resonates with the "genuine sentiments" of John Gregory, as well as the benevolent tone of Mr. Tyrold in his homiletic address to his daughter (Gregory 3; *Camilla* 355-362). Echoing his predecessor, Gregory, Mr. Tyrold insists that "[d]elicacy is an attribute so

peculiarly feminine” (359).⁵ But, as Rizzo points out, this ideological argument belied fears about the social implications of women’s wilfulness and recalcitrance. Mr. Tyrold has recourse to this essentialist argument about gendered subjectivity and, concomitantly, to an argument about women’s domestic happiness, in order to regulate the nascent sexual desires of his seventeen-year-old daughter and ensure her obedience. As Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace observes, by disguising “the terms under which such submission was demanded, the patriarch assured his own paternal authority” (17). Rather than explicitly promising Camilla future happiness, Mr. Tyrold implies that, if she fails to quell her desires, they “may wear away, in corroding disturbance, all your life’s comfort to yourself, and all its social purposes to your friends and to the world” (362). According to this ideology, if women were happy in the home as wives and mothers, like Mrs. Tyrold and Lady Percival seem to be, then their husbands might be “inspired . . . with a degree of happy *social energy*” (*Belinda* 216, emphasis added).

Before a woman could commit herself to the private domain and embrace this ancillary role, she had to *meet* and “please” a man and, in turn, he had to *choose* her as his future wife. The “coming out” of the young woman rested on the assumption that her movement abroad, away from the household of her father, would see her transition into the household of her husband. However, as it involved her movement away from the familial home, this process was associated with *pleasure* that might jeopardize this normative construction of female heterosexuality/happiness. In his *Advice to Young Ladies on the Improvement of the Mind and Conduct of Life* (1810), Thomas Broadhurst sketches out the coordinates of this conception, pointing out that the pleasure-seeking woman “is regularly seen in the ballroom or at the card-table, at the opera or in the theatre, among the numberless devotees of dissipation and fashion”

(18). Reading Broadhurst's account of this pleasure-seeking woman, Armstrong observes that her "crime" is that she "wants to be on display or simply allows herself to be 'seen'" ("Rise" 116). Discontented in the private domain, with too much "social energy" herself, this kind of woman did not make a suitable wife.

In *Camilla*, the upstanding nobleman, Lord O'Lerney, observes the vast numbers of young women following a trail of resort towns: "those who, after meeting them all the winter at the opera, and all the spring at Ranelagh, hear of them all the summer at Cheltenham, Tunbridge, &c. and all the autumn at Bath, are apt to inquire, when is the season for home" (471-2). The geographic and conceptual opposition between "home" and "abroad" that designates a young woman's "coming out" corresponds with an opposition between women's (domestic) happiness and their (social) pleasure. In their novels, Burney and Edgeworth invoke and tentatively negotiate these ideologically-freighted coordinates, as they focus on the socialization of Camilla Tyrold and Belinda Portman.⁶ These corresponding oppositions—happiness/pleasure, home/abroad—provide physical and ideological terms for charting the "coming out" of the young woman, and help to frame concerns about the miscarriage of this necessary process.

In his essay "On the Mode of Introducing Young Women into General Society," Thomas Gisborne expatiates on the perils of consigning a young woman to the charge of "some fashionable instructress, who, professing at once to add the last polish of education, and to introduce the pupil into the best company, will probably dismiss her thirsting for admiration; inflamed with ambition...". According to this common narrative, the credulous young woman fails to register the "mistaken kindness" of this "instructress" and resist the magnetic pull of her "modish example" (*Enquiry* 97).⁷ In her insatiable pursuit of admiration, the corrupted young woman

contrasts sharply with the modest and diffident women extolled by Gregory. What is more, she is “insensible” to the sort of corrective “applause” that Gregory offers on the behalf of patriarchal objectives. For, while conduct literature condemned the ease with which young women were manipulated by other women, it sought to capitalize on this pliability as it implored women to adhere to its maxims. It is apparent that conduct writers, moralists and pedagogues envisaged themselves in a discursive struggle to direct the young female subject, who, according to pervasive social anxieties, was being lead astray by various corruptive influences, in particular, by dissipated women and inflammatory novels.⁸

Gisborne contrasts this “abandonment” with the safety and insularity of the family, and, in particular, he contrasts these insidious instructresses with prudent and protective mothers. Even before the young woman enters into a potentially-compromising relationship with a man, she may be “abandoned in the outset of her life” and “whirled, far from maternal care” by another woman (*Enquiry* 97-98). Essentially, Gisborne accentuates an opposition between a dominant vision of female happiness and heterosexuality, supported by women’s homosocial relationships, and the breakdown of this vision, when treacherous and captivating women violated a social contract that assumed and demanded their allegiance (or complicity).

Anxieties about the dangers of particular women in the social arena hinged on the assumption that women’s same-sex relationships were invariably plagued by competition. Addressing his female subjects, Gregory infers that a “great obstacle to the sincerity as well as steadiness of your friendships, is the great clashing of your interests in the pursuits of love, ambition, or vanity” (34). Based on the assumption that men’s “interests never interfere with” women’s, so “there can be no foundation for jealousy, suspicion or rivalship,” Gregory advocates “an early intercourse between

the sexes” (33-4).⁹ This benign heterosocial intercourse is recommended as an antidote to the dangers such insidious female “friendships” pose for young women. However, the “jealousy, suspicion or rivalry” Gregory observes in relationships between women may be read as a projection of men’s attitudes towards relationships between women, given that their homosocial aspect seemed to preclude men’s interference.

Here, it is worth noting that Gregory’s meditations are rife with contradictions. In the next breath, he issues a warning to women against forming “friendships” with men: “Thousands of women of the best hearts and finest parts have been ruined by men who approached them under the specious name of friendship” (34). Essentially, Gregory evokes the “common enemy” Fordyce identifies in his *Sermons*: “those wicked and designing men that are combined against the sex, especially against the innocent and unwary” (1: 29). While Gregory cautions his female readers about the obliquity of men, he implicates the inherent competitiveness of women’s “friendships” in this capacity of men to victimize and deceive women. This two-pronged approach faintly resonates with Fordyce’s invective against those women who “assist the common enemy” and “corrupt the young in those low arts of dissimulation and cunning” (I: 29). Whereas Fordyce assails these perpetrators, male and female, Gregory’s tone is one of sympathy and concern for the young woman who is their victim. However, despite these differences, both writers vent their misgivings about the competitive dynamic of women’s relationships.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft joins with Gregory in noting that “various are the paths to power and fame which by accident or choice men pursue, and though they jostle against each other ... there is a much greater number of their fellow-creatures with whom they never clash” (187).

However, she takes issue with the way men fuel the competition between women, and then censure women for their vanity and duplicity. Wollstonecraft emphasizes that “when the sole ambition of woman centres in beauty, and interest gives vanity additional force, perpetual rivalship ... ensue[s]”: “They are all running the same race, and would rise above the virtue of mortals, if they did not view each other with a suspicious and even envious eye” (187). Thomas Broadhurst deplores those “devotees of dissipation and fashion” who *race* between the ballroom, card-table, opera and theatre. As Hannah More describes it, women’s aspirations to seduce and ensnare men, and not simply their idle pursuit of pleasure, made this competition particularly distasteful. More remarks that, because “daughters can only be seen, and admirers procured at balls, operas, and assemblies: ... balls, operas, and assemblies must be followed up without intermission till the object be effected,” that is, “their being splendidly married” (161). Recalling Raymond’s account of the arrangement between male-male relations and heterosexual relations in a patriarchal society, it could be argued, simply, that men, and women such as Hannah More, objected to women taking control of this social, heterosexual “race”. After all, this was traditionally the prerogative of men.

While conduct-book writers fretted about the implications of women’s “friendships,” as these were characterized by competition, they recognized the possibility of mobilizing this dynamic in the service of their own ideological programme. Women might become instruments for perpetuating patriarchal imperatives in their social relationships with other women. This complicit function involved women disciplining the desires and conduct of their “friends”. In her *Letters to a Young Lady* (1811), Jane West remarks: “you cannot excite [admiration] ... without alarming a host of competitors, who, being engaged in the same pursuit, will

narrowly investigate your conduct; and if any indirect steps, or unfounded pretensions, can be discovered, you must dread the consequences of vigilant scrutiny” (3: 3).¹⁰ West’s warning that this competition entailed a sort of surveillance is contiguous with Fordyce’s and Gregory’s inference that men will scorn frivolous and vain women and admire instead those women who are prudent and modest. Fordyce claims that “[n]ow and then indeed there may be an invidious female, who cannot bear to see herself outdone. But that is a circumstance, which will only add to your exaltation; while every one else will be tempted, for the sake of mortifying her, to pay the more respect to you” (1: 300). This inference corresponds with the blanket promise that a *good* woman will be rewarded with happiness in the form of a companionate marriage and defined in terms of her domestic and maternal duties, whilst a *bad* woman will be denied this happiness.

In 1804, the *Lady’s Magazine* printed a little poem called “The Bachelor’s Choice,” which articulated this promise. Ultimately, the judicious bachelor will spurn “the prude, or vain coquette,” even “where wealth and power are met,” and choose, instead, “... she whose modest mien / Adds graces to her matchless charms” (qtd. Yeazell 33). However, this promise that women would be rewarded for their intrinsic worth belied anxieties that men might admire the *wrong* qualities in women and, ultimately, enter into marriages resulting in the unhappiness of both parties. In *The Rambler* No. 18 (1750), Samuel Johnson bewails the fact that the bachelor did not always make the right choice. In this entry, Johnson considers five case studies of unhappy marriages. He “place[s him]self as a kind of neutral being between the sexes” and concludes that “[a man] must expect to be wretched, who pays to beauty, riches, or politeness, that regard which only virtue and piety can claim” (32, 34). But, while he concludes that men are to blame for their own folly in marrying stupid,

artful, insatiable, mean or infamous women, simply because they are beautiful or rich, his description of five contemptible women betrays a suspicious attitude towards women in general.

Similarly, Fordyce laments the power women wielded over men as a result of their beauty. He acknowledges that “we ... often see handsome idiots complimented and caressed by those men from whom better things might be expected; while the most accomplished woman in the same company shall be over-looked, if destitute of personal charms”. Fordyce remarks on the gross “injustice of neglecting merit in those who want that advantage,” but his real problem seems to be that beauty “enchant[s]” men and, ultimately, entraps them in unhappy marriages (1: 301-2). Fordyce admits that, by admiring women for their beauty alone, men indulged women’s vanity and fuelled the “perpetual rivalry” that this vanity engendered (Wollstonecraft). In line with Johnson’s argument, he warns men: “If you, who ought to assist their judgments, and animate their resolutions, in what relates to the conduct of life, be accustomed to pay your main homage to their persons, their persons they likewise will adore” (1: 304).

Wollstonecraft and Domestic Happiness

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft also deplores the competitive aspect of women’s same-sex relationships. In line with the ostensible argument of James Fordyce and John Gregory, she accuses men of fuelling such rivalry. However, she argues that, just as women’s beauty is crippling to the exercise of their reason and, by extension, their capacity to act morally, the delicacy that men prize and seek to cultivate in women is also detrimental to the development

of their minds. According to Gregory's account, an amiable, indeed beautiful, woman combines modesty and diffidence with a desire to please men. Wollstonecraft takes issue with the way men cultivate or "pamper" this putatively natural disposition to "pleas[e]" (120). She endeavours to convince women that "the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness" (9). By Wollstonecraft's account, the "chief beauties" Gregory describes are "negative virtues," "incompatible with any vigorous exertion of intellect" (Gregory 13; Wollstonecraft 58).

In her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft argues that men kept women shackled in a state of ignorance and yet still insisted on women's culpability: "Educated then in worse than Egyptian bondage, it is unreasonable, as well as cruel, to upbraid them with faults that can scarcely be avoided" (117). She insists that patriarchal imperatives kept women "confined in their cages" (56), enfeebled by false sentiments, immobilised by social codes, and kept in a state of childhood in the name of preserving their innocence. She scorns the pretence of these male conduct writers as they purport to address their female readers from a position of paternal, and sometimes fraternal, benevolence and sympathy: "Kind instructors! what were we created for? To remain, it may be said, innocent; they mean in a state of childhood" (61, also 116-17). Interestingly, Hannah More makes the same point in her *Strictures on Female Education* (1799), which she wrote in reaction against Wollstonecraft's revolutionary arguments. More deplors the competitiveness that characterized women's social relationships, as women vied for the attention of men with the "grand object" of establishing themselves in the world (*Belinda* 7). However, in the opening line of her *Strictures*, she stresses that: "It is a singular injustice which is often exercised towards women, first to give them a very defective Education, and then to

expect from them the most undeviating purity of conduct; —to train them in such a manner as shall lay them open to the most dangerous faults, and then to censure them for not proving faultless” (ix).¹¹

Patricia Meyer Spacks recapitulates this polemical argument when she comments on the double-bind that society imposed upon women: on the one hand, society treated women like children, incapable of making their own decisions; on the other hand, society expected women to exercise prudence, and penalized women for any lapses in self-control (“Ev’ry Woman” 46). In his homiletic letter to Camilla, Mr. Tyrold explains that “good sense and delicacy” will curtail “the two dangerous underminers of your peace and your fame, imprudence and impatience” (358). But, according to Wollstonecraft’s argument, women’s *natural* delicacy, as it provided the rationale for sequestering women from the social world, also kept women in a childlike state and actually inhibited the development of their good sense.

Burney and Edgeworth engage with this tension, as it is framed by the arguments of Gregory and Wollstonecraft. In *Camilla*, “[t]he extreme delicacy of Eugenia’s constitution” coincides with, indeed signifies, her extreme naïveté (22). Eugenia’s physical delicacy “had hitherto deterred Mrs. Tyrold from inoculating [sic] her; she had therefore scrupulously kept her from all miscellaneous intercourse in the neighbourhood” (22). Notwithstanding the fact that Burney was well aware of the risks associated with this procedure, as well as the crippling effects of smallpox,¹² Mrs. Tyrold’s failure to inoculate her daughter and her reservations about her daughter’s “intercourse” with outsiders provides an apposite metaphor for registering the tensions surrounding the acculturation of the young woman. Burney repeatedly evokes the notion of inoculation as she addresses this tension. For example, when Mr. Tyrold becomes aware of Bellamy’s mercenary design upon his youngest daughter, he

fails to apprise her of these. He “gave his daughter some slight cautions and general advice; but thought it wisest, since he found her tranquil and unsuspecting, not to raise apprehensions that might disturb her composure, nor awaken ideas of which the termination must be doubtful” (153).

In *Belinda*, Edgeworth invokes and experiments with Rousseau’s approach to the education of women. The story of Rachel Hartley/Virginia St. Pierre, encapsulates polemical arguments relating to the socialization and education of the young woman. This character represents an extreme example of the innocent and ignorant young woman. In her depiction of this character, Edgeworth evokes the social alienation of Eugenia Tyrold, as well as the sentimental fervency and imprudence of Mrs. Berlington (*Camilla*). In this subnarrative, Edgeworth reveals, to the point of exaggerating, the implications of a woman’s seclusion from the world. As Spacks observes, “[t]he beauty of total ignorance is usually evanescent, preserved only at the cost of complete isolation from the world” (“Ev’ry Woman” 30). As a result of her seclusion, combined with the proscriptions placed on the material she reads, Virginia has a skewed perception of the world and no capacity to understand men. When Sir Philip Baddely and Mr Rochfort scale the wall to catch a glimpse of Clarence’s mistress, Virginia recognizes them as men, but finds them “scarcely intelligible” (384). The triadic relationship between Clarence Hervey, Mrs. Ormond and Virginia demonstrates, indeed parodies, men’s desperate efforts to ensure the innocence and domestic aspirations of young women, as well as their method of recruiting exemplary “maternal” figures to superintend the upbringing of young women and orchestrate this domestic vision. In this portrayal, Edgeworth infers these “maternal” figures must strike a balance between protecting the young woman from corruption, and promoting their socialization and the cultivation of their prudence.

Edgeworth contrasts Virginia's enfeebled mind with Belinda's judiciousness and capacity for self-restraint. Furthermore, Edgeworth emphasizes that Belinda's *exposure* to the dangers of the social world, in particular, her association with "the most dissipated and unprincipled viscountess in town" (333), does not turn her into a giddy and vain coquette, but, rather, serves to reinforce her domestic convictions. At the same time, Edgeworth considers the role novels might play in the socialization of the young woman. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth evokes Burney's novel when Lady Delacour anticipates that Belinda must think she is "like Mrs. Mittin—novel reading, as I dare say you have been told by your governess, as I was told by mine, and she by hers, I suppose—novel reading for young ladies is the most dangerous—" (72). However, Belinda is not like Camilla, who is duped by this contemptible woman. Conceivably, Edgeworth infers that Belinda's reading of *good* novels, such as *Camilla*, has instilled wariness and inspired the prudent application of its precepts.

Whereas, Edgeworth contrasts Virginia's childish innocence with Belinda's rationality and prudence, Eugenia's social ignorance provides a frame for considering the plight of her older sister. Camilla's ignorance lands her in all sorts of financial and emotional difficulties. Camilla has not the "good sense" to know "of those boundaries which custom forbids [her] sex to pass, and the hazard of any individual attempt to transgress them" (*Camilla* 358). In their *Essays on Practical Education* (1822, rev. ed.) Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth comment on this in their appraisal of *Camilla*: "Mrs. D'Arblay, in one of her excellent novels, has given a striking picture of the ignorance in which young women sometimes leave their father's house.... Camilla's imprudence must chiefly be ascribed to her ignorance" (3: 146). Although they remark specifically on Burney's depiction of Camilla's mismanagement of her money, Burney demonstrates the implications of women's ignorance in all aspects of

their lives. According to Claudia Johnson, “*Camilla* never encourages us to wonder how parents, clergymen, and baronets go wrong, but rather asks how children can be so bad as to disappoint persons so good” (142). However, Margaret Doody argues that Burney “wants us to consider the possibility that whole ranges of behavior labeled female ‘indiscretion’ or female faults such as ‘coquetry’ are the inevitable results of arbitrary conditions for which the individual woman is not to blame” (234). The naïveté of these female characters and the difficulties which befall them must be read in light of the polemical argument made by both Wollstonecraft and More. According to this argument, while Burney seems to upbraid *Camilla* for disappointing her good parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold are part of a system which sets the young woman up to fail.

Camilla investigates parents’ failure to prepare (inoculate) young women for the world, which involves apprising them of their disadvantages. Speaking of her deformity and her parents’ failure to apprise her of it, Eugenia claims that “if ever I have a family of my own ... my first care shall be to tell my daughters of all their infirmities! They shall be familiar, from their childhood, to their every defect.” (302) Following Wollstonecraft’s argument, women must be made aware not only of individual infirmities, but also of the disadvantages of their sex, in light of a patriarchal programme which enervates women, even while it claims to support their interests.

As we have seen, Fordyce remarks on the inexorable preoccupation of “the world” with scrutinizing and disciplining the conduct of women. However, Fordyce does not question this censorious and seemingly unfair approach, even while he recognizes that “the world” tends to forgive irregular behaviour in men. Instead, he justifies this approach on the grounds that “the honour and peace of a family” depend

primarily on the “conduct of daughters”. In his typically benevolent tone, Gregory acknowledges the difficulties women face as a result of this arrangement: “Your whole life is often a life of suffering.... You must bear your sorrows in silence, unknown and unpitied.” (5) However, he does not challenge a vision that calls for women’s silence; rather he joins in that call. After all, the happiness (and authority) of men relied on/demanded women’s silent commitment (Kowaleski-Wallace 19). While Fordyce and Gregory seem to touch on the inequality of men and women in this ideological framework, they bury this spectre of inequality in a vision of gender reciprocity and, thereby, participate in upholding it.

Wollstonecraft exposes the paradoxical nature of this ideological project and she attacks men for their failure to admit it. She insists that women must be apprized not only of the general disadvantages of their sex, but of the fact that *benevolent* father figures, clergymen such as John Gregory and Augustus Tyrold, actually cultivate women’s ignorance, *natural* submissiveness and sense of their own inferiority, with the aim of promoting men’s happiness. At the same time, *exemplary* mothers/role-models embody this enervated condition and look to reproduce it in young women. In *Camilla* and *Belinda*, young women are ignorant of the “perversity of spirit” of mercenary men and narcissistic women; however, Wollstonecraft would have young women consider the “perversity” of a programme which claimed to support women’s happiness and promote gender equality, but which actually kept women in a “state of childhood,” and championed only “the negative virtues” (61, 58). Wollstonecraft argues that men “have most vehemently argued in favour of the superiority of man” on the grounds that ignorance “is the condition for which woman was organized”; and, she insists that, in order to shore up this claim, men have stultified women by actively cultivating this very (*natural*) condition (63).

Wollstonecraft maintains that she does not “wish [women] to have power over men; but over themselves” (62). However, as she exposes the ideological fractures in the popular notions of reciprocity and equality, and impugns those Rousseauian principles of education that are predicated on such ideals, Wollstonecraft launches a challenge to this axiomatic power relationship. Like Fordyce and Gregory, she wishes to see women’s beauty divested of its “enchanted” power. However, any concern she has about the power women exercised over men as a result of their beauty is subsumed by concerns she has about the negative implications this has for women and, by extension, for society: in order to maintain the “sovereignty” that their beauty seems to afford them, she argues, women have “resigned the natural rights, which the exercise of reason might have procured them, and chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labour to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality” (55). She insists that women are “[e]xalted by their inferiority” and that men, while they “cherish” women’s “weakness,” actually come to “despise” it (55). In *The Rambler* No. 18, Samuel Johnson observes that men often marry women of “mean intellects” and “childish insipidity” (33). Similarly, Wollstonecraft argues that men prize women for their weakness, both of body and mind, when this condition is actually conducive to both women’s and men’s unhappiness.

Wollstonecraft insists that *happiness* (for both sexes) can only be achieved if women are encouraged to exercise their rational faculties. She maintains that: “To fulfil domestic duties much resolution is necessary, and a serious kind of perseverance that requires a more firm support than emotions, however lively and true to nature.” (68) As Susan Bell and Karen Offen point out, *A Vindication* reveals Wollstonecraft’s ambivalence on “the woman question” (Bell and Offen 51). Wollstonecraft takes issue with the ways male writers have “endeavoured . . . to weaken [women’s] bodies and

cramp their minds,” as part of a programme to “domesticate” them (64). However, she confronts this project “cautiously,” noting that, despite their “sinister methods,” these writers have convinced women “to stay at home, and fulfil the duties of a mother and mistress of a family” (64). Wollstonecraft maintains her “respect” for “marriage” and emphasizes the importance of the maternal role (*Vindication* 71, 64). But, as Alan Richardson notes, Wollstonecraft defines motherhood as a *civic* duty, rather than a *natural* one (176). Despite her avowed commitment to these “traditional” ideas surrounding married life, Wollstonecraft “envision[s] an *independent* reciprocity between husband/father and wife/mother, based upon their respective functions as breadwinner and homemaker” (Bell and Offen 51. orig. emphasis). According to Wollstonecraft, this (happy) complementary arrangement between the sexes is only possible if women’s capacity for reason is developed, rather than stifled. She maintains that a woman’s “first duty” is not to their husbands or children, but “to themselves as rational creatures” (145).

In *Belinda*, Edgeworth stages a debate between Harriet Freke and Mr. Percival, in which she rehearses the polemical arguments of Wollstonecraft. In a chapter entitled “Rights of Woman,” Harriet Freke attempts to kidnap, under the pretence of saving, Belinda from the “righteous” Percivals (225). She confronts Mr. Percival about the way men “enslave” women “by talking to them of the *delicacy of their sex*”. She exclaims: “I hate slavery! *Vive la liberté!* ... I’m a champion for the Rights of Woman” (229). In this confrontation, Edgeworth marks out the coordinates of a debate about women’s delicacy as this underpins arguments about women’s happiness. Mr. Percival maintains that he is “an advocate for women’s happiness ... and for their delicacy, as I think it conduces to their happiness”. Harriet retorts: “I’m an enemy to their delicacy, as I am sure it conduces to their misery” (229).

In *Belinda*, Edgeworth depicts this character in order to mock and condemn her. As Jennie Batchelor remarks, Harriet Freke is a “grotesque parody of a Wollstonecraftian hyena in petticoats” (171). Fittingly, Edgeworth has this cross-dressing woman snared in a man-trap at the end of the novel. However, pervasive anxieties surrounding the corruptive power of these *masculine*, Amazonian women haunt Edgeworth’s depiction.¹³ Mr. Percival explains that these women

defy the world—the world in return excommunicates them—the female outlaws become desperate, and make it the business and pride of their lives to disturb the peace of their sober neighbours. Women who have lowered themselves in the public opinion cannot rest without attempting to bring others to their own level. (253)

These reprehensible women scorned or inverted social customs and conventions. Consequently, they were cast out from society. However, as Mr. Percival’s intimation plays out, there were pervasive fears that these women might continue to disrupt or subvert society through corrupting other women. These anxieties haunt Edgeworth’s depiction of this character; conceivably, impressionable young readers of the novel might take “a prodigious fancy to Mrs. Freke,” just as the character Lady Delacour did (43). Lisa Moore describes the difficulty Edgeworth faced: “to mark the boundary between ‘virtuous’ and ‘indecent’ female friendships, one might actually have to represent an indecent character such as Harriot Freke so as to condemn her”; however, “such a representation might have the power, as it does *within* the text, to entice women to imitate her rather than to turn from her in horror” (95, orig. emphasis).

In *Belinda*, the story of Harriet Freke’s corruption of Miss Moreton speaks to James Fordyce’s two-pronged criticism of women. In his *Sermons*, he simultaneously lambastes those manipulative, designing older women, those “smooth pernicious

tempters,” and deplores the ease at which “heedless” young women are drawn into their attractive snares (1: 143). Echoing the misogynistic sentiments of Fordyce, Mr. Percival insists that Miss Moreton is “to be pitied, but also to be blamed” (*Belinda* 252). According to Moore, Belinda explicates one of Edgeworth’s principal didactic agendas on witnessing this scene (77). Belinda exclaims: “What a lesson to young ladies in the choice of female friends!” (252) Mr. Percival’s commentary on Miss Moreton’s situation, and Belinda’s affirmation of his assessment, renders a somewhat farcical scene, in which two women stand atop a rocking stone dressed in men’s hunting attire, a didactic commentary comparable to one that might be found in an eighteenth-century moral periodical or conduct book.

When Harriet attempts to cajole Belinda into leaving the Percivals, the prudent young woman is unmoved. The moment Harriet hurries out of the room, Edgeworth remarks that “[g]ood may be drawn from evil” (232). Conceivably, this insistence bespeaks Edgeworth’s anxiety about rehearsing polemical arguments about women’s happiness, couched as they are in the rhetoric of revolution. Belinda recognizes that Harriet’s “friendship [is] more to be dreaded than her enmity” (232). Conceivably this conviction is informed by Lady Delacour’s rueful account of her relationship with this woman. Edgeworth emphasizes this “evil” influence prompts Belinda to reflect on her own “habits and principles,” as well as on the model of domestic harmony represented by the Percivals. Mr. Percival and his wife “demonstrat[e] those axioms of morality, in which she had previously acquiesced,” and, which Harriet, here, assails (232). Essentially, Edgeworth seems to emphasize the need for young women to discriminate between different conceptions of female happiness, and to actively reflect on their own principles. Interestingly, Harriet’s insistence that Belinda should arrive at her own opinions, resonates with Edgeworth’s inference that women should

read critically, rather than acquiesce blindly to certain “axioms of morality” (227, 232).

Edgeworth contrasts the Amazonian woman, Harriet Freke, whom Belinda rejects, with the domestic paragon, Lady Percival, whom Belinda admires and respects. In drawing this opposition, Edgeworth negotiates Wollstonecraft’s arguments about women’s happiness. According to G. J. Barker-Benfield, Edgeworth labels Harriet’s “rejection of delicacy ... [and] feminine modesty” “freakish,” thereby inferring that such qualities are *natural* in women; however, in her depiction of Virginia St. Pierre, it is clear that she also “rejects the mindless extreme of deferential sensibility urged on women by the Rev. Polwhele” (Barker-Benfield 389).¹⁴ While she rejects radical Wollstonecraftian politics, Edgeworth argues, with Wollstonecraft, that women must “cultivate their minds” in order to fulfill their domestic duties and “inspire” their husbands “with a degree of happy social energy” (*Belinda* 233, 216).¹⁵ Mr. Percival’s wife is “the partner of his warmest affections”; but, she is also “the partner of his most serious occupations” (216).

Camilla and *Belinda* register ideological concerns surrounding the effects of women’s socialization on their *domestic happiness*. Burney and Edgeworth foreground the strategies and counter-strategies deployed by men and other women to dictate the conduct and direct the desires of the young woman in accordance with this ideology of domestic happiness and heterosexuality, and also in protest against this ideology. The novels focus on the familial upbringing of the young female subject, as well as her socialization, essentially, outside of the domestic and heterosexual *containment* of the family. Burney and Edgeworth register pervasive anxieties surrounding this pivotal, potentially ignescent period, in particular, as these anxieties focus on the young woman’s relationships with other women. As they depict various

relationships between women, Burney and Edgeworth engage with issues surrounding the acculturation of the young woman and tentatively position themselves with respect to the polemic ignited by Wollstonecraft. They maintain that their heroines, like their readers, can “draw” some “good” from these polemical arguments, and from the women who present them. However, the positions of these novelists within this ideological debate about the education and socialization of the young woman, as this takes shape around a polemic on women’s happiness, is deeply ambivalent. Terms such as “happiness,” “goodness” and “friendship” are continually subject to redefinition in these novels.

In chapter 2, I will consider the construction of the sentimental family and the idealization of the role of the mother within the family, in the context of changing modes of patriarchal authority. In *Camilla*, Burney demonstrates how the same-sex, relationship between mothers and daughters was critical in perpetuating this cyclic vision of domestic heterosexuality, essentially, in reproducing a particular kind of mothering.¹⁶ In terms of the construction of the sentimental family and the model of heterosexuality that it rested on, Burney engages with issues surrounding women’s authority within the domestic sphere, as well as the implications of the intimacy between a mother and daughter, which might compromise the affective strength of the father-daughter relationship.

This triadic relationship, between Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold and their daughter Camilla, provides a paradigm for the rest of the thesis as it explores the dialectical relationship between female homosociality and women’s relationships with men. Concerns relating to the impropriety and subversiveness of women’s relationships crystallize around a young woman’s “coming out,” which saw her symbolic departure

from the home and, following convention, entailed the establishment of new relationships between women. In chapter 3, I will consider how the relationship between Mrs. Arlbery and Camilla keys into fears that dubious women might undermine the precepts of *good* mothers and lead their young charges astray. Mrs. Arlbery certainly challenges the doctrine of female self-denial espoused by Camilla's father and embodied by Mrs. Tyrold. Through her characterization of the relationships between Camilla, Mrs. Arlbery and Edgar Mandlebert, Burney reveals how women might manipulate each other; and, by keying into the competitive dynamic inherent in male homosocial relationships, they might manipulate the sexual desires of men. This chapter also considers how the triadic relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold and their daughter Camilla is reconceived in Edgeworth's novel in her depiction of Belinda Portman's relationship with Mr. Percival and his wife. Focussing on the intimate friendships Belinda has with Lady Delacour, in contrast with her relationship with Lady Percival, Edgeworth reveals how the intensity of women's sentimental friendships might overshadow or render unhappy current and future conjugal relationships.

In my final chapter I want to consider how fears surrounding women's relationships coincide with fears surrounding women's reading practices. Burney and Edgeworth foreground (mis)reading in their novels and summon pervasive anxieties surrounding novel-reading. A young woman's "absorption" in a novel, like her investment in a friendship, was seen to defy penetration from the outside and, ultimately, promote desires that were inimical to patriarchal, heterosexual interests (Warner 225). The conflict between Edgar Mandlebert and Mrs. Arlbery can be seen to represent the conflicting positions Burney negotiates in her address to her readers. As she moves between these positions, we can read the dialogic relationship between

Camilla and the prescriptive male voice of conduct literature. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth negotiates these positions through the internal conflict of Lady Delacour, which is fuelled by her rivalry with Lady Percival. As Burney and Edgeworth depict and comment on the dialectical relationship between female homosociality and heterosexuality in their novels, they key into the terms of a debate about appropriate reading material for young women. The ideological positions that *Camilla* and *Belinda* attempt to set up bespeak the internal tension of the novelists. Burney and Edgeworth forge (homosocial) intimacies with their female readers, and presume to direct the desires of these women in accordance with their convictions about female happiness; at the same time, they anxiously anticipate their reception by a wider audience, that is, when read next to the arguments put forward in conduct books, moral periodicals and feminist works.

2. Paternal Authority and Mother-Daughter Love

The eighteenth-century conception of the sentimental family relied upon and reified an opposition between the love and security of the sentimental family, and the corruption and cruelty of the world of commerce and politics (Gonda 28). This dichotomous formulation coincided with a seemingly incongruous assumption that the strength and harmony of the family was fundamental in ensuring that of society in general. Eighteenth-century ideologues, moralists and social commentators inferred that intrafamilial dynamics, in particular, the centripetal forces of emulation and imitation that ensured the cohesion and insularity of the individual family were integral to the perpetuation of hegemonic relations out in society. In *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797), Thomas Gisborne articulates this assumption with respect to the acculturation of the young woman. He proposes that “imitation ... produces such a degree of conformity between the manners and conduct of different individuals, as maintains the harmony of society, notwithstanding the clashing pursuits and pretensions which agitate the world” (115-6). Although he focuses his observation on the period “when young women are introduced into general society,” Gisborne insists that “a propensity to imitation” must be cultivated during childhood (114, 115). Ultimately, Gisborne draws a connection between the “manner of life” adopted by women and the values “implanted” by their parents (116).

In her *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1798), Maria Edgeworth invokes this opposition between the private and public, while recapitulating the social import of the family unit for ensuring social harmony. In particular, she infers the civic importance of women’s domestic roles: “Private *virtues* are public benefits: if each bee were content in his cell, there could be no grumbling hive; and if each cell were

complete, the whole fabric must be perfect” (qtd. Gonda 28). The social “harmony” or “perfect” “fabric” Gisborne and Edgeworth envisage is a product of familial relationships, those bonds that ensure the *proper* direction of members’ desires through formal education, as well as indirectly through identification and emulation.

In his comprehensive study, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, Michael McKeon considers that there were two fundamental phases in the apotheosis of the family in the eighteenth century. Following the Reformation, the regulatory authority held by the church and priesthood was reassigned to Puritan male heads of families. The second phase in defining the sentimental family involved the concentration and consolidation of the domestic roles of the wife and mother. In light of the special qualities she was *naturally* endowed with, the ideologically-modelled figure of the domestic woman was designated the responsibility for regulating morals and finances within the family (McKeon 182). According to McKeon, this “internalization” went hand in hand with the conviction that “the state fundamentally depended on the family” and, in particular, on women’s commitment to it (182). Mary Wollstonecraft responded to this idea, insisting that “to render [women’s] private virtue a public benefit, they must have a civil existence in the state” (148-9).

Susan Moller Okin observes that, for a society that postulated and upheld the subordination of women, the ideals of equality and individual freedom propounded by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in the seventeenth century posed an intellectual challenge. In her *Reflections upon Marriage* (1706), Mary Astell elucidates the challenge that this logic presented: “If Absolute Sovereignty be not necessary in a State, how comes it to be so in a Family? or if in a Family why not in a State[?] ... *If all Men are born free*, how is it that all Women are born slaves?” (76, original emphases). Okin argues that the emergence of the sentimental family in the latter half

of the seventeenth century, and its subsequent idealization, provided further rationale for the unequal treatment of men and women, while still seeming to uphold these ideals (65). As Edgeworth's vision of the contented bee and complete cell signals, this institution was represented as "united in its affections and interests" (Okin 88). But, as Okin notes, these interests, and the bonds of affection that ensured them, centred on reinforcing men's authority and women's subordination.

On August 27, 1789, at the outset of the French Revolution, the National Assembly issued a *Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen*, which stated that "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights," and that the law "must be the same for all" (114). Conceivably, such a proclamation incited new articulations of Astell's feminist challenge. However, in spite of the feminist controversy spearheaded by Mary Wollstonecraft, the 1790s saw a new wave of reactionary conservatism with respect to the position of women in society. As G. J. Barker-Benfield notes, "[f]acing the bogey of a Wollstonecraft depicted as both as Amazon and a woman of sexually unbridled sensibility," literate women relinquished any political aspirations, along with "the sexual promise of sensibility," and embraced their domestic calling (xxviii).

Amid the feminist controversy of the 1790s, the construction of the sentimental family worked to quash women's aspirations for independence. According to Okin, "anyone who wished to register objection to the subordinate position of women had now to take care not to be branded as an enemy of that newly hallowed institution—the sentimental family" (88). The construction of the sentimental family seemed to satisfy women's quest for independence; in reality, it absorbed this revolutionary energy. Caroline Gonda articulates the ideological argument that underpinned this construction: "Women should not seek for independence or political power, because this would disrupt the family; but in any

case, the new family rhetoric proclaims, women do not *need* independence, because their interests, the interests of the family, can be protected by men.” (29-29, orig. emphasis) As Okin concludes: the sentimental family unit “acted ... as a *reinforcement* for the patriarchal relations between men and women that had been temporarily threatened by seventeenth-century individualism” (74, orig. emphasis).

For women, motherhood seemed to promise happiness, fulfilment and a sort of limited independence within the family. Elisabeth Badinter observes that women responded to a demand to reproduce, and subscribed to an emergent construction of motherhood, “not [solely] because they were convinced by the economic and social motivations of the men but because behind the men’s arguments another message, more attractive to their ears, was implied—a message of happiness and equality” (118). In actuality, this special calling entailed women’s self-sacrifice and silence. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace emphasizes the necessity of the woman’s silent commitment to the project: “Acting as an intermediary between father and child, she is to have no voice of her own” (19). In *The Female Guardian* (1787), the writer gives a “picture” of the ideal mother: “She lives only for her children; she renounces dissipation and pleasures, to devote herself entirely to their education; passes the day in giving them lessons, and a part of the night in studying in order to instruct herself for *them*; sacrifices with joy, her youth, her time!” (23, orig. emphasis) In terms of their representation in conduct books and moral treatises, women who did not embrace this self-sacrificial, and yet joyful, assignment felt inadequate, unfulfilled and unhappy.ⁱ

Arguably, the *a priori* categorization of women as *daughters*, *wives* and *mothers*, and the domestic developmental continuum this denominated, insisted on women’s relational status and the implicit authority of husbands and fathers.ⁱⁱ In *The*

Spectator No. 104, Richard Steele participates in this project of categorizing women: “It would methinks be a short rule for behaviour, if every young lady in her dress, words, and actions, were only to recommend her self as a sister, daughter, or wife, and make herself the more esteemed in one of those characters.” (336) These regulatory “characters” represent the limits of a young lady’s legitimate positions in society. In her *Letters to a Young Lady* (1811), Jane West stresses that “[m]arriage may be said rather to open than to close the eventful period of female life; since it is by that means that we enter on a scene of enlarged usefulness, activity, and responsibility...” (2: 451). The expectation of love and marriage, tied up with the process of “coming out,” is, as West describes it, secondary to women’s subsequent roles as wives and mothers. The opening of West’s letter on “On the Duty of Mothers” encapsulates this assumption: “The maternal character generally follows the conjugal; the subject of this letter is therefore pre-determined.” (3: 183). Arguably, the role of the mother was pivotal in exemplifying as well as perpetuating an incontrovertible cycle whereby the young woman transitioned from *daughter* and *sister*, to *wife* and then *mother*. As McKeon notes, “[r]ightly educated, the female child becomes the domestic wife and mother whose crucial role is to reproduce her experience for the succeeding generation” (187).

Nancy Chodorow’s important sociological and psychoanalytical study, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), concentrates on the intrapsychic aspect of this relationship between mothers and daughters. Chodorow concludes that mothering “produces women who enter into asymmetrical heterosexual relationships”: “it produces women who turn their energies toward nurturing and caring for children—in turn reproducing the sexual and familial division of labor in which women mother” (209). In contrast with male homosocial relationships, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

suggests that “women who love women, women who teach, study, nurture, suckle, write about, march for, vote for, give jobs to, or otherwise promote the interests of other women are pursuing congruent and closely related activities” (2). The figure of the mother, as formulated and reified by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conduct-book writers, educationalists and moralists, embraced the roles of suckling, nurturing and teaching. However, these roles were entrenched in an ideological economy that restricted women’s agency, at the same time that it seemed to celebrate women’s ethical qualities and grant her authority within the family. Ostensibly, this ideological economy promoted gender equality. However, it rested on and looked to perpetuate asymmetrical relationships between men and women (Lévi-Strauss). Consequently, the mother-daughter relationship must be considered in terms of this complicated dialectical relationship. Mothers might have loved their daughters, suckled and then educated them, but these activities were prescribed and circumscribed by an ideology that served patriarchal interests.

The construction of the sentimental family witnessed a permutation of the domestic structure as a mode of paternalism replaced one of authoritarianism. Under this new mode of patriarchy, men’s dependence on women to respect and uphold their implicit authority was imperative. This dependent dynamic signalled men’s commitment to the ideals of reciprocity and equality; but, it also posed a threat to patriarchal authority. In short, the sentimental family, and the constructions and assumptions surrounding the *natural* roles and dispositions of women that supported it, can be seen to highlight the dependence of patriarchal society on the complaisance of women, essentially, on their subscription to this skewed equality.

Arguably, the mother was critical in ensuring the bonds of love that held the sentimental family together. However, the strength of the mother-daughter bond

might be seen to interfere with the daughter's socialization and, subsequently, the prospect of her marriage. Ideologically, as Gonda notes, "the successful construction of female heterosexuality is a delicate balancing act" (34). The "reproduction of [a particular kind] of mothering" required the daughter's identification with and emulation of the mother. In addition to this intrapsychic dynamic, this process also required her movement out of the family and her individuation from the mother. In Frances Burney's novel, *Camilla*, these issues are manifested in the conflicting imperatives to sequester Camilla from the social world and force her out into it.

In my next chapter, I will consider the nebulous forces that haunted, as well as delimited, the sentimental family in terms of subversive women manipulating the desires of other women, as well as men, in a public setting. Within the family, the role of women, as *good* wives and mothers, was to anticipate and prevent this destructive influence by programming their daughters' aspirations in line with domestic discourse, as this ensured women's lasting happiness. However, just as Gisborne and Edgeworth invoke the "clashing" and "grumbling" that threatened this construction from without, the very centrality of women could be seen to threaten the delicate equipoise that this construction rested on from within.

Burney's portrayal of the Tyrold family seems to fit with the sort of idealized arrangement formulated in conduct books and moral periodicals with the mother at "the center of both narrative and descriptive concern" (Shevelow 131). I focus on *Camilla* in this chapter because, in *Belinda*, the heroine's background is never discussed. However, the same relationship dynamics and issues that Burney registers, in her depiction of the Tyrold family, account for the tensions in *Belinda*, as Edgeworth focuses on the socialization of Belinda Portman and the re-socialization of Lady Delacour. In *Camilla*, the intersecting relationships between Mr. and Mrs.

Tyroid, their daughter, Camilla, and their prospective son-in-law, Edgar Mandlebort, reveal how the mother-daughter relationship was subsumed by that between husbands and wives. More generally, these fictional relationships show how men relied on as well as penetrated women's intimate relationships with each other. The triadic relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Tyroid and Camilla provides a paradigm for the rest of the thesis as it explores the fraught relationship between female homosociality and a woman's relationships with men. As I discuss in the following chapter, Edgeworth reconceives this triadic dynamic in her depiction of Belinda Portman's relationship with Mr. Percival and his exemplary wife.

The Husband and Wife

The "harmony" of patriarchal society rested on the "content[ment]" of members within each "cell". The reciprocal happiness of husband and wife was fundamental in ensuring this centrifugal process. For example, in *Camilla*, Burney emphasizes that the marriage of Augustus and Georgiana Tyroid was built upon "an interchange of happiness the most deserved" (9). In *Camilla* and *Belinda*, patriarchal figures invoke this expedient, *natural* arrangement between the sexes as it manifests itself within this structure and simultaneously describes and prescribes the domestic role of women. Mr. Tyroid emphasizes "reciprocity," with particular reference to relations between husbands and wives, as the mainstay of social harmony (*Camilla* 232). Similarly, Mr. Percival celebrates this (constructed) symbiosis: "Fortunately for society, the same conduct in ladies which best secures their happiness most increases ours." (*Belinda* 230) Through this character, Edgeworth recapitulates the "public benefits" of "[p]rivate *virtues*" in such a way that explicates the gendered nature of

this construction and suggests that the contentment of the *male* bee and patriarchal society generally is a function of *women's* happiness.

However, this “interchange of happiness,” much as it postulated gender equality, corresponded with and helped to reify assumptions about *natural* sexual difference, between women’s sensibility and men’s rationality, and, in particular, women’s relative status to men. Wollstonecraft invokes and challenges the dichotomous assumption that “man was made to reason; woman to feel: and that together, flesh and spirit, they make the most perfect whole, by blending happily reason and sensibility into one character” (63). According to Wollstonecraft, this notion of natural difference was fundamental to the doubled-edged *equality* envisaged by those writers who “vehemently argued in favour of the superiority of man”. She points out that, in order “to soften the argument, they have laboured to prove, with chivalrous generosity, that the sexes ought not to be compared” (63). This incontrovertible argument about *natural* sexual difference worked to forestall women’s quest for independence and equality with men. By exalting women for their *natural* qualities and disposition, this argument worked to reconcile women to a “calling” in life that placed them in a position relative to the authority of men.

In *Camilla*, Burney offers different conceptions of how this balance between *natural* sexual difference and equality in marriage might work. As she foregrounds Sir Hugh’s idea of equality in marriage, one founded on equal educational opportunities, Burney indirectly draws attention to the contrived nature of an opposition between women’s sensibility and men’s capacity for reason. Sir Hugh’s vision of equality does not accord with the dichotomous assumption of natural difference promulgated by eighteenth-century conservative moralists and ideologues. Unsurprisingly, then, his effort to unite his niece and heiress, Eugenia Tyrold, with her cousin, Clermont

Lynmere, and thereby realize his conception of equality, is met with derision. In plotting out his scheme, Sir Hugh devises a classical education for Eugenia to match the one Clermont is receiving at Leipsic: “I mean to make sure work, by having them educated exactly to fit one another” (48). Burney seems to highlight the artificiality of an inflexible ideology of natural difference. However, as I discuss in my final chapter, she keeps her propensity to deconstruct it in check and, ultimately, participates in reinforcing this ideological balance.

Okin discusses a process whereby the sentimental family, and women’s place within it, purported to offer women equality and freedom when, in fact, it foreclosed women’s pursuit of these conditions. Sir Hugh’s scheme actually represents a perversion of this ideological process because he imagines a kind of equality based on educational opportunity, rather than on gender complementarity. When Clermont arrives at Cleves, Sir Hugh apprizes his nephew that “I’ve had [Eugenia] brought up in the style of a boy, for the sake of your marrying her” (592). Clermont scoffs at this logic: “what have I to do with marrying a girl like a boy? ... Besides, what has a wife to do with the classics? will they shew her how to order her table?” (592). Clermont regards his uncle’s project as tantamount to the perversion of a woman’s *natural* domestic character and derides the notion of educational equality that underpins it. Considered in this hegemonic light, as Burney seems to invite readers to, Sir Hugh’s education of Eugenia constitutes a further injustice: just as her physical deformity mars her in the eyes of men, so too does her education. Miss Margland clings to this assumption when she warns Sir Hugh of the “danger of injuring [Indiana’s] beauty by study” (46).

Burney reveals the dreadful consequences of Eugenia’s elite education and social seclusion. She is “unpractised ... in those discriminative powers, which dive

into their own conceptions to discover the latent springs, the multifarious and contradictory sources of human actions and propensities” (271). As a result, she fails to register the mercenary designs of Alphonso Bellamy. Furthermore, Eugenia’s insulated education seems to alienate her from her family, by compromising her capacity for empathy. When Eugenia discloses to Camilla that Edgar “had publicly and openly disclaimed any views upon Indiana, and had declared himself without any passion whatever, and free from all inclination or intention but to travel,” Eugenia fails to register the alterations of Camilla’s feelings: Camilla’s initial “blush of pleasure” is pierced by “the tingle of shame,” then eclipsed completely by “surprise and sorrow” (271). Sir Hugh’s vision of educational equality provides a background for considering the model of domestic relations Burney forwards in her depiction of Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold. Burney subscribes to an idea of the *natural* complementarity of men and women. However, she rejects an opposition between women’s sensibility and men’s reason. Mrs. Tyrold is able to make her husband happy, not because she knows Greek and Latin, but, because she is rational, prudent and self-disciplined. She has the “resolution” to “to fulfil [her] domestic duties” (Wollstonecraft 68); and, in her relationships with her daughters, she has maternal empathy and intuition. In this depiction, Burney also registers patriarchal anxieties surrounding this Wollstonecraftian conception of domestic relations.

In *Camilla*, Burney keys into assumptions about *natural* gender complementarity within a marriage when she registers the “distinctness of disposition” in Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold as this conduces to their mutual happiness (8). Burney encapsulates the symmetry of this union: “Mr. Tyrold revered while he softened the rigid virtues of his wife; who adored while she fortified the melting humanity of her husband.” (9) According to Claudia Johnson, Burney reassigns the

qualities conventionally ascribed to a husband and wife: “while the once classically masculine virtues of severity, firmness, resolution, and fortitude fall to the sturdy wife, the good husband is ‘exalted’ in his possession of virtues such as gentleness, compassion, mildness, indulgence, and softness” (147). This reconception of gender complementarity follows the practice of male sentimentality and bespeaks a new mode of paternal authority. In line with the principles of paternalism, Burney emphasizes the lenity and generosity of Mr. Tyrold. At the same time, she emphasizes the redoubtable character of his wife. In this initial description, Burney seems to intimate the problematic notion of women’s centrality and agency within the private realm.

As she adumbrates the dynamics of this partnership, Burney sets the foundation for considering how women’s fortitude and rationality was troubling to this mode of patriarchy. Burney intimates that the rigid complementarity of Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold “instigated a spirit of comparison, ... which here could rarely escape proving injurious” (8). Later in the novel, Lionel Tyrold comments on the eminence of his mother: “My mother ... makes no allowances. She has no faults herself, and for that reason she thinks nobody else should have any. Besides, how should she know what it is to be a young man?” (240). In many respects, his comments key into the problem of women’s eminence within the domestic sphere, in particular, with respect to the authority of men. As this construction acknowledged and celebrated women’s unique domestic capacities, it endowed women with authority over this realm and, by extension, implied the limitations of men’s authority.

A woman’s special status as ethical agent, in particular, her role in reforming the behaviour of her husband, generated anxieties about the tenuousness of patriarchal authority because it implied new meritocratic or ethically-determined power

relationships coexisting with, even dislodging, traditional hierarchies. A century earlier, Mary Astell elucidated this perceived problem in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1696):

a good and prudent Wife wou'd wonderfully work on an ill man.... Doubtless her Husband is a much happier Man and more likely to abandon all his ill Courses, than he who has none to come home to, but an ignorant, forward and fantastick Creature.... The only danger is that the Wife be more knowing than the Husband. (167-68)

In terms of her classical education and intelligence, Eugenia is “more knowing” than Clermont, and this is one reason for his contempt. But, “[e]arly absorbed in the study of literature and languages, under the direction of a preceptor who had never mingled with the world,” Eugenia is also ignorant of the world (271). Clermont scoffs at this combination of education and seclusion. In her *Serious Proposal*, Astell considers that a woman’s unique abilities and qualities, as these are manifested in the domestic sphere, might be just as threatening to a man as a woman’s knowledge of politics, commerce and literature. In fact, she provokingly envisions this dilemma for men. As I will discuss, Mr. Tyrold is reliant on the perceptiveness and prudence of his wife with particular respect to the upbringing of their daughters. Mrs. Tyrold is aware that these qualities may be threatening if she exercises them without acknowledging the pre-eminence of her husband.

Burney uses Mrs. Tyrold’s example to engage with issues surrounding women’s independence and authority within the companionate marriage. When his wife boldly considers refusing Dr. Marchmont’s offer to accompany her on her journey to Lisbon, Mr. Tyrold launches into one of his homiletic effusions. He stresses that “[t]hat species of independence [in women], which proudly flies all ties

of gratitude, is inimical to the social compact of civilised life, which subsists but by reciprocity of services” (232). In his harangue on the matter, Mr. Tyrold equates women’s independence with defiance and ingratitude. However, this equation might be unpicked and read as a projection of pervasive anxieties among men that women’s independence bespoke the erosion of the patriarchal “social compact” they sought to uphold. As we see in the literature of the period, men were primed to detect traces of independence and admonish women for such exhibitions, desperate to shore up their own authority and happiness. Here, Mr. Tyrold uses this example to discourse generally on the necessary (im)balance of the sexes. Recapitulating the commonplace argument of Thomas Gisborne, Mr. Tyrold identifies “reciprocity” as a binding agent within a marriage and within society generally.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the novel, Mrs. Tyrold, the exemplary mother figure, and Mrs. Arlbery, the dubious friend, exhibit independence to a threatening degree. But, while Mrs. Tyrold exhibits this awesome power, it is “softened” and attenuated by “the melting humanity of her husband” (9). In terms of the argument of Kowaleski-Wallace, any potentially dangerous “maternal energies” are firmly contained by the ideological construction of “maternity” as this is founded on domestic discourse and channelled through her relationship with her husband (16). To borrow Claudia Johnson’s phrasing, she is “happily tethered within heterosexual disciplinary structures” (163). As I will discuss in the next chapter, Mrs. Arlbery resists and rejects the ideological strategies deployed by men to ensure women’s subordination. In fact, she seeks to invert a traditional hierarchical relationship between the sexes, by seeking female domination and male submission. According to Claudia Johnson, Mrs. Arlbery defies this patriarchal, heterosexual system and “experiences her ‘equivocal being’ as pleasure”. By contrast,

Johnson observes, Mrs. Tyrold “becomes the guardian of a system which negates her agency on any other terms except the ones which make her dreadful” (162, 148).

Burney’s depiction of Mr. Tyrold might seem enervating if we consider the “fortitude” and prudence of his wife. However, Mr. Tyrold’s apparent passivity might be seen to *contain* the agency of his wife. Burney repeatedly emphasizes that, for Georgiana Tyrold, “the exalted character of her husband was the pride of her existence” (8). Arguably, Mrs. Tyrold has the “fortitude” to endure the restrictions placed on her agency, and, rather than threatening her husband’s authority, this quality locks her into this submissive position. As Betty Rizzo notes, a woman’s deviation from her subordinate role was labeled “weakness,” when in fact it showed boldness and rebellion (17). By the same discursive recasting, as women embraced their domestic and maternal calling, they were extolled for their “strength” and “independence”. Of course, it is certainly possible to reconcile women’s submissiveness and self-sacrifice with their fortitude. If a woman’s “life is often a life of suffering,” as John Gregory acknowledges, a woman must have the strength to “bear [her] sorrows in silence” (5). As Claudia Johnson suggests, Mrs. Tyrold’s strength is circumscribed by her commitment to domestic ideology, a commitment which saves her from the charge of being “dreadful”.

The Mother-Daughter Friendship

The proposals of John Locke, as outlined in his seminal text, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), were profoundly important in terms of informing the changing dynamics of relationships between parents and children in the eighteenth century. Essentially, Locke proposed “a milder Sort of Government” in the context of familial relations, questioning authoritarian approaches to the education of children.

According to Locke's educational programme, the parent might secure the loyalty of their children, firstly, by inspiring "Fear and Awe" and, later, through "Love and Friendship" (146). Locke stressed that the parent must establish a psychological hold over their children when they are still young, "till *Awe* and *Respect* be grown familiar, and there appears not the least Reluctancy in the Submission, and ready Obedience of their minds" (147). Locke's ideas imbued popular conduct books and pedagogical expositions throughout the eighteenth century. For example, John Freame recapitulates the central tenets to this Lockean paradigm in his essay "On Education" (1799): "when once there is true love, fixed in their minds, they will often be fearful of offending those they love; and that fear which is settled upon a bottom of love and duty, is far more durable than that which proceeds from the fear of a rod and punishment" (15). It is worth noting that Thomas Gisborne also invokes these Lockean principles when he ruminates on the upbringing and acculturation of the young woman. In addition to the young woman's "propensity to imitation," Gisborne identifies two concomitant impulses that operate "unimpaired" in "youth," and that allow parents to manipulate their children: "the love of admiration and the dread of shame" (115, 117).

Arguably, the same generosity and leniency that Mrs. Tyrold identifies in her husband, and that works to contain her maternal agency, also accounts for Mr. Tyrold's potency as a father. Margaret Doody notes that the eighteenth century emphasized the emotive dynamic of parental-filial relations. In terms of the government of the family, "the father is to gain authority (even authority to destroy) through tenderness; a sort of emotional blackmail is substituted for more straightforward authoritarianism" (Doody 24). In her reading of *Camilla*, Claudia Johnson makes the same point, suggesting that the father might vanquish his children

through bonds of love (149). Midway through the novel, Camilla and Eugenia visit Mr. Dubster in Cornfield. After a prank of Lionel's, the sisters become stuck in Mr. Dubster's summer house. A group of market women and a small boy pass by and jeer at Eugenia; and, for the first time in her life, she is apprized of her physical disfigurement (286-87). As Gonda notes, Mr. Tyrold fails to pacify his distressed daughter through the exercise of reason. Instead, "the spectacle of paternal emotion produces the desired effect" (Gonda 183). As Mr. Tyrold embraces his daughter, Eugenia feels his tears on her cheek: "sinking to the ground, [she] pressed his knees. 'Oh my father,' she cried, 'a tear from your revered eyes afflicts me more than all else!'" (303) Eugenia exclaims: "you have conquered me, my beloved father! Your indulgence, your lenity shall take place of every hardship, and leave me nothing but filial affection!" (304)

The mother-daughter relationship was increasingly conceived of as a *friendship* in the moral and pedagogical literature of the time. Of course, in terms of a Lockean paradigm, a wife's commitment to her husband surpassed the intimacy a mother might share with her daughter. This ideological conflation of terms, then, might be understood as a permutation of the paternal mode of familial governance, a means by which the father might exercise his paternal authority *through* this intimate relationship. As Jane West insists, a mother may be the "chosen companion of her daughters" (3: 76). West's comment is pregnant with wider implications: arrived at independently, apparently, the young woman's *choice* conveniently coincided with the objectives of an overriding patriarchal scheme. In keeping with a conciliatory scheme of dictating and then cultivating women's *natural* domestic and maternal character, by promising them freedom, equality and happiness, this mother-daughter

“friendship” was prescribed and imposed, and, ultimately, daughters programmed to perceive, even *choose*, their mothers as friends.

In his essay “On Parental Duties,” included in *An Enquiry*, Gisborne urges mothers to “train daughters to develop the habit of regarding you not as a parent only but as a friend” (383). Conceivably, the success of such a project might disguise, as well as enhance, the double-edged function of this relationship. In her “friendship” with her daughter, the role of the mother involved both “invisibility and vigilance” (Armstrong, “Rise” 120). The mother might satisfy the first of these functions simply by exemplifying submissiveness, self-denial and absolute loyalty to her husband. Assuming the daughter’s “natural” “propensity to imitat[e]” her mother, the daughter might adopt these feminine virtues and imbibe lessons about the role of a *good* wife, relative to the authoritative position of her husband. The invisible mimetic dynamic of the mother-daughter relationship might support the transmission of (domestic) values. However, the mother was also in a position to actively direct, as well as discipline, the daughter’s values and aspirations. The role of the mother was instrumental in both inspiring and programming the values and aspirations of the daughter, and in investigating and interpreting the daughter’s *secret* desires, before sharing this information with her husband.

In *Camilla*, Mrs. Tyrold embodies this “peculiar combination” of feminine “invisibility” and maternal “vigilance” (Armstrong, “Rise” 120).^{iv} As the novel concentrates on the efforts of Edgar Mandlebert to determine the nature of Camilla’s character and the state of her heart, Burney reveals the twofold significance of Mrs. Tyrold, as she shapes Camilla’s character and penetrates her innermost desires. When Edgar informs his tutor that he wishes to marry Camilla, Dr. Marchmont adjures him to follow “two points” of advice:

First, That you will refuse confirmation even to your own intentions, till you have positively ascertained her actual possession of those virtues with which she appears to be endowed: and secondly, That if you find her gifted with them all, you will not solicit her acceptance till you are satisfied of her affection. (159)

These two stipulations provide a framework for discussing the significance of Mrs. Tyrold in the novel.

As to the first of Dr. Marchmont's stipulations, Edgar clings to an assumption that the virtues and values of the mother are reproduced in the daughter. Edgar is heir to Beech Park, "one of the finest estates in the country," and his tutor stresses that Camilla may have mercenary motives for marriage (17). He assumes that women are brought up to believe "that a good establishment must be [their] first object in life" (161). Dr. Marchmont insists that Edgar must ascertain Camilla's exclusive partiality for him, "a partiality, in fine, that is appropriate to yourself, not to the rank in the world with which you may tempt her ambition" (179). In response to this scary prospect, Edgar apprizes Dr. Marchmont that, in light of the virtues inculcated by her mother and the example provided by her parents of felicitous marital relations, he is convinced that Camilla "is too noble to suffer any sordid motives to unite us" (159). Unlike the orphaned Mrs. Berlington, Camilla is aware that an "amiable companion" is essential to her "own peace" (425). Edgar informs Dr. Marchmont that, "though I have latterly lost sight of her, by travelling during our vacations, I know her to have always been under the superintendence of one of the first of women" (159). He assures his tutor of Camilla's virtuous nature and extols Mrs. Tyrold for inculcating these early "ideas of right" (159). As Edgar's comment suggests, Mrs. Tyrold assumes the primary role of superintending the upbringing of her daughter. Mr. Tyrold's

authority is exercised, and his interests upheld, *through* this relationship. Here, Edgar envisages himself as Camilla's future husband.^v Consequently, he infers that Mrs. Tyrold's influence also operates in *his* interests. Edgar's assumption that his interests coincide with those of Mr. Tyrold is validated at the end of the novel when Mr. Tyrold encourages him to listen in on a private exchange between Camilla and her mother.

Throughout the novel, Burney focuses on Edgar's assessment and reassessment of Camilla's character, and his suspicious speculations as to the state of her heart. This unrelenting project of examination coincides with an important dimension of a young woman's "coming out". Without forgetting its geographical and social coordinates, a young woman's "coming out" was characterized by interrogation and exposure.^{vi} Mr. Tyrold seems to acknowledge this dimension when he informs Camilla that, "[u]nused to, because undeserving control, your days, to this period, have been as gay as your spirits. It is now first that your tranquillity is ruffled; it is now, therefore, that your fortitude has its first debt to pay for its hitherto happy exemption." (355) Barbara Zonitch concludes that Burney's depiction of Camilla's carefree childhood works retroactively to call attention to experiences of women out in society under a pervasive and oppressive "patriarchal gaze" (95).

Arguably, the concentration of surveillance, speculation and scrutiny that a young woman's "coming out" entailed was simply an extension of the attention and discipline a young woman might receive within the home. Burney emphasizes the pervasiveness of this pattern of interrogation and exposure as Camilla is besieged, not only by the penetrative attentions of Edgar, but, also, by those of her mother and father. Ostensibly, Mr. Tyrold exhorts his daughter to "shut up every avenue by which a secret which should die untold can further escape you" (360). But, at the same time

that Mr. Tyrold exhorts her to repress and eliminate her secret desires, he endeavours to probe the “hidden recesses” of his daughter’s “breast” (359). This certainly resonates with Dr. Marchmont’s recommendation that Edgar join Camilla’s party to Southampton, where he might “dive into the most secret recesses of her character” (595). As Burney concentrates on the efforts of men to assess women’s characters and desires, she engages with a broader gendered relationship, that is, men’s reliance on, as well as penetration (violation) of, women’s intimacy with one another. Within the home, the figure of the mother was pivotal in terms of mediating between her daughter and both her husband and her future son-in-law.

In *Camilla*, the chapter entitled “A Maternal Eye” (215-221) encapsulates the double-edged role of the mother figure. Mrs. Tyrold is a sympathetic mother as well as a quiet interrogator working in her husband’s interests. When Camilla suddenly returns from Cleves, where she had been living with her uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold are baffled and concerned. Mr. Tyrold discusses with his wife: “We will not ... press her; she will tell us all in her own way, and at her own time. Forced confidence is neither fair nor flattering. I will excuse her return to my brother, and she will the sooner be able to give her account for finding herself not hurried.” (218-19) Mr. Tyrold’s insistence on parental patience and passivity speaks to the emphasis placed on filial love as a strategy for ensuring children’s confidence, honesty and obedience. He does not blatantly coerce his daughter into revealing her feelings, but Camilla registers the force of an implicit familial contract founded on love, after prompting from her mother. Mrs. Tyrold insists that Camilla has nothing to fear, imploring her to “open to us your whole heart!—Where else will you find repositories so tender?” (220). In doing so, she invokes the sympathetic and loving bonds that hold the family together. Effectively, Mrs. Tyrold ensures that her daughter abides by the values

inculcated through this love, which, in this case, involves her divulging her feelings to her sympathetic, non-judgmental parents.

Camilla experiences the conflicting impulses to repress and reveal her feelings, and this tension manifests itself on her countenance when her “cheeks ... received their fugitive roses” (220).^{vii} Camilla and her mother share a moment of silent communion as they read each other’s faces. Mrs. Tyrold is able to discern the chief reason behind Camilla’s sudden departure from Cleves, as this is betrayed in her blush. At the same time, Camilla perceives her mother’s cognizance of her predicament: she notices “in the countenance of her mother, an expression of deep commiseration, which was followed by a thousand maternal caresses of unusual softness, though unaccompanied by any words”. Camilla is “penetrated” by her mother; by extension, she is “penetrated” by her father. But, Mr. Tyrold can only read his daughter *through* his wife. When he tries to comfort his wife, she cries out: “Alas! ... do you not see what thus has touched me? Do you not perceive that our lovely girl ... has given her whole heart to Edgar Mandlebert?” He replies: “I perceived it through your emotion, but I had not discovered it myself.” (220-221)

Camilla’s implicit communication to her mother, and Mr. Tyrold’s indirect reception of it, anticipates a revelatory scene at the end of the novel when Camilla, in confidence with her mother, declares her love for Edgar, and he hears it through a thin partition, in collusion with Mr. Tyrold. Camilla has been exhorted to repress her feelings; but, in order that Edgar might ask for her hand, she must first communicate her feelings for him. In a “final piece of ironic propriety,” Camilla manages to overcome this “insoluble bind,” explaining her situation and revealing her feelings in a way that does not compromise her dignity (Gonda 134; Epstein 149). Overriding the imperative to repress her feelings is the pressure to divulge them to her “tender”

parents and, especially, to her mother. In an approach imbued with maternal sympathy and patience, Mrs. Tyrold effectively compels Camilla to explain her wretched situation. Taking her daughter's hand, she asks:

‘shall I ever, my dear girl, learn the history of this locket?’

‘O yes, my dearest Mother,’ said the blushing Camilla, ‘of that—and of every—and of all things—you have only—you have merely—’ (894).

After priming her daughter to divulge, Mrs. Tyrold asks, “in two words,” why she and Edgar have parted. Camilla responds: “Accident, my dearest Mother,—deluding appearances, ... and false reasoning on my part,—and on his, continual misconstruction! O my dearest Mother! how have I missed your guiding care!” (896, orig. ellipsis). Mrs. Tyrold's gentle approach at soliciting information, and her daughter's ensuing divulgence, restores a connection that has been emotionally strained as well as physically severed.

In an ebullition that flows on from this explanation, Camilla expresses the depth of her feeling for Edgar: “—with an esteem that defies all comparison, ... a respect closely meliorating even to veneration! ... Never was a heart ... my dearest Mother, so truly impressed with the worth of another ... with the nobleness...” (896, orig. ellipses). Finally, Edgar has a testimony from Camilla as to the true state of her heart. He learns that he is “exclusively loved” (178). However, this conclusion is not reached through the process of independent observation and reflection that Dr. Marchmont recommends (179). Rather, this somewhat contrived moment in the novel epitomizes and enacts a gendered relationship that Burney engages with throughout the novel, that is, men's reliance on, as well as penetration of, women's intimacy with one another.

Furthermore, this narrative moment reveals the way that men conspired together to access this information. Edgar apologizes for his unceremonious interruption. But, rather than being angered, Mrs. Tyrold weeps with joy at, what Edgar terms, the “blest intrusion” (896). It is clear that this intimate mother-daughter relationship could be mobilized to serve the interests of men, and that Mrs. Tyrold is receptive to, indeed facilitates, this dialectical dynamic. To seal the matter, Edgar informs Mrs. Tyrold that her husband was responsible for placing him in the adjacent room so that he might overhear the private confessions of Camilla. In doing so, Edgar indirectly appeals to the intimacy between the married couple, an intimacy which subsumes that between mother and daughter. Burney emphasizes the symmetry in this scene, as the relationship between mother and daughter is balanced by that between Mr. Tyrold and his ward. But, this symmetry of intimacy is clearly slanted: Camilla realizes that “[t]he conspiracy is so complex and [that] even my Mother [was] so nearly a party concerned”. She elects not to “quarrel” with “her offenders,” joking that she “dare not risk the unequal contest” (902). Of course, Burney would have us consider the implications of the inequality of this contest for the young woman, placed in a situation where her “friendship” with her mother is subsumed by an alliance between her mother and her father and future husband.

Edgar recognizes his future father-in-law as “the accomplice of [his] happiness” (897); but, it is clear that Mrs. Tyrold has a pivotal role in bringing about the reunion of Camilla and Edgar. She passively serves the interests of her husband, and, by extension, those of her future son-in-law. Edgar acknowledges Mrs. Tyrold’s “kind mediation,” and he beseeches her to exercise this power once more and encourage Camilla to forgive him (900). (Of course, such forgiveness is not necessary: Camilla is quick to admit her guilt in the misunderstanding and to reject

any suggestion of Edgar's culpability). As we have seen, Mrs. Tyrold not only facilitates men's access to knowledge of her daughter's desires; she also provides information about Camilla's character based on the assumption that the virtues of the mother are reproduced in the daughter. Mrs. Tyrold rears the ideal wife for Edgar; she then helps to inform Edgar of Camilla's exclusive love for him by compelling her daughter to confess.

Leaving Home

As critics have noted, the intimacy of the mother-daughter relationship, coupled with the insularity of the family unit generally, might be seen to compromise the ultimate realization of this heterosexual vision: the establishment marriage between members of different families. In her late twentieth-century exposition on this relationship, Nancy Chodorow points out that, "[b]ecause her first love object is a woman, a girl, in order to attain her proper heterosexual orientation, must transfer her primary object choice to her father and men." (192). Chodorow suggests that:

Because of the father's lack of availability to his daughter, and because of the intensity of the mother-daughter relationship in which she participates, girls tend not to make a total transfer of affection to their fathers but to remain also involved with their mothers, and to oscillate emotionally between mother and father. (193)

Chodorow argues that a young woman's intimate relationship with her mother can eclipse her relationships with men, who "remain *emotionally* secondary" (193, orig. emphasis). This theoretical observation helps to elucidate eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anxieties that attended the mother-daughter relationship.

This perspective might be read next to Caroline Gonda's reading of the intensity of relationships within the sentimental family generally, as depicted in the novels of this period. Gonda focuses on how the intensity of familial relationships often "overshadows any sexual or marital love which the daughter may come to feel for a man outside the family" (34). While daughters identified with their mothers, and, perhaps, viewed them as friends, the emotional element of relationships between fathers and daughters was equally compelling, as is exemplified in the abovementioned emotional exchange between Mr. Tyrold and Eugenia. Arguably, the mother-daughter dynamic Chodorow identifies, if considered within the frame of the eighteenth-century sentimental family, fed into and shaped the intense emotional relationships between parents and children generally. Mothers forged friendships with their daughters and cultivated bonds of love in order to activate, as well as disguise, the implicit authority of the father. In this respect, mother-daughter intimacy, which might threaten to surpass or replace father-daughter intimacy (Chodorow), was also critical to the intensity of familial relationships generally. In her reading of various novels of this period, Gonda intimates that this familial intensity was problematic itself. According to Gonda's reading, the mother facilitates a transferral of affection and loyalty to the father. The problem lies in the transferral of this affection to a man outside of the family.

Arguably, the bonds of love which ensure the centripetal nature of the Tyrold family may be inimical to Camilla's socialization. Camilla does not "stray from the mother's careful wing" (645-46); but, rather, plot contrivances remove Mrs. Tyrold from the immediate picture. Mrs. Tyrold departs for Lisbon to support her brother, Relvill, after he is traumatised by the fraudulent escapades of Camilla's brother, Lionel. In fact, rather than straying from the family home at Etherington, Camilla

seeks asylum there. When Miss Margland accuses her of being in love with Edgar and of hampering Indiana's rightful conquest, Camilla hastily departs Cleves. Camilla seeks to restore a connection with her mother, and she literally "hid[es] her face on her mother's bosom" (218). This physical posturing symbolizes her (premature) return to the "bosom of her respectable family" (8).

In *An Essay of the Government of Children* (1756), James Nelson recapitulates the central tenets of John Locke's approach to the upbringing and education of children. Nelson insists that the love children have for their parents "will naturally make them fly to them on every Emergence" (qtd. Gonda 31). This psychological force prevails throughout the novel. When Edgar urges Camilla to break off her acquaintance with Mrs. Berlington, he cautions her that "her dangers must be yours": "You are too young for such a risk. Fly, fly from it, my dear Miss Camilla!... as if the voice of your mother were calling out to caution you." (476, orig. ellipsis). Camilla's sudden return to Etherington, and her distress at hearing of her mother's imminent departure, indicates that this Lockean dynamic is firmly in place: "'I had hoped,' she cried, 'that I should have come home to peace, comfort, tranquillity! to both of you, my dearest father and mother, and to all my unbroken happiness under your roof!— How little did I dream of so cruel a separation!'" (218) For Camilla, the family represents safety and protection. She wishes to reverse the process of "straying from the mother's careful wing" and reacts with panic that this wing might be taken away from her.

With respect to this passage, it is important to note that Mrs. Tyrold expresses her regrets that Camilla was sent away in the first place, telling her daughter that she is "too young, too inconsiderate, too innocent, indeed, to be left so utterly to yourself" (218). Mrs. Tyrold anticipates that her retrospective opinions might be interpreted as

insubordinate to the authority of her husband, recollecting that it was his decision to send Camilla to Cleves, after the desperate entreaties of his lonely brother. She leaves her husband, and readers of *Camilla*, in no doubt of her reverence for and submission to his authority: “Forgive me, my dear Mr. Tyrold; I do not mean to reflect upon your brother, but he is not *you!*—and with you alone, this dear inexperienced girl can be secure from all harm” (218, orig. emphasis). While Dr. Marchmont implies the inadequacy of Mr. Tyrold in ascertaining the dangers that face his daughters, Mrs. Tyrold is quick to defend his competency. Mrs. Tyrold’s remarks demonstrate how the marital relationship subsumed other familial relationships, notably that between mothers and daughters.

Arguably, Mrs. Tyrold’s somewhat overstated declaration—“with [Mr. Tyrold] alone,” Camilla “can be secure from all harm”—fits with Gonda’s intimation that intense familial relationships, including those between fathers and daughters, may eclipse any sexual or marital relationships a daughter might enter into, or obviate their formation altogether. While the novel seems preoccupied with the heroine’s desire to stray from the mother, and to deviate from the domestic narrative that this mother represents, this is not the only problem that it deals with. In the novel, Burney also considers the conditions that frustrate the daughter’s necessary movement out of the home, and the individuation from the mother that this involves (Chodorow). Arguably, *Camilla* is beset by competing impulses: to sequester the young woman away from the (social) world, and prevent her from “straying from the mother’s careful wing”; and, “to force her abroad” (645-46, 778).

Put simply, a young woman’s “coming out” was critical in introducing her into certain social circles and, in particular, in bringing about her marriage. If we recall the observations of Gonda and Chodorow, it could be argued that a young woman’s

“coming out” was essential because it represented a *break* from the family; and yet, ultimately, it promised to reinforce this connection with home and, in crude terms, “reproduce” this institution. With respect to the “reproduction of mothering,” as it is played out in this novel, Camilla must individuate from her mother, at the same time that she must identify with and emulate her. The “unbroken happiness” Camilla longs for actually requires that she break out of the home of her “dearest father and mother,” so that, ultimately, she might reproduce this ideological condition in the home of her husband (218).

In my next chapter, I will consider the importance of this transition out of the home and beyond the protective compass of the mother, with particular attention to the influence of chaperones, role-models and intimate friend on the values and aspirations of the young woman. According to social convention, the young woman required a female chaperone to conduct her in society. Ideally, this chaperone or role-model might reinforce those precepts established and embodied by the *good* mother, while introducing her young charge into certain social circles. In her *Letters*, Jane West suggests that the bond between mother and daughter is preferable to other homosocial connections a young woman might make. However, she adds that “[a] judicious friend, in whom there is a similar disparity of years, may in some cases act as a *substitute* for a maternal advisor” (3: 77, orig. emphasis). This judicious “advisor” might impress those discourses that supported patriarchal authority and, concurrently, obviate the formation of ideas and desires deemed inimical to this authority. As Claudia Johnson notes, Edgar wants Camilla to be friends with “women happily tethered within heterosexual disciplinary structures, women like Lady Isabella Irby” (163) Essentially, Edgar infers a connection between the “transparent openness”

of Mrs. Tyrold and the “maternal precepts” she both embodied and inculcated in her daughter, and the transparency and purity of Lady Irby (489, 476).

In terms of an ideological vision which saw females transition from *daughters* and *sisters* to *wives* and then *mothers*, the young woman’s “coming out” represented a critical phase. However, there were serious concerns about the potentially subversive implications of the same-sex relationships that the young woman might establish. Issues surrounding the *independence* of women within the companionate marriage, coupled with issues surrounding the *intimacy* of the mother-daughter relationship, account for anxieties attending women’s same-sex relationships in the social arena. In my next chapter, I will consider how Camilla’s relationship with Mrs. Arlbery keys into fears that dubious women might undermine the precepts of *good* mothers and lead their young charges astray. I will also investigate how the triadic relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold and their daughter Camilla is reconceived in Edgeworth’s novel in her depiction of Belinda Portman’s relationship with Mr. Percival and his wife. Focussing on the intimate friendship Belinda has with Lady Delacour, in contrast with her relationship with Lady Percival, Edgeworth reveals how the intensity of women’s sentimental friendships might overshadow or render unhappy current and future conjugal relationships.

3. “Coming out” and Female Heterosexuality: chaperones, role-models and intimate friends

The social convention that required young women to have chaperones when entering society provides a trenchant example of the dialectical relationship between female homosociality and the “particular kind of female heterosexuality” that ensured the success of the sentimental family (Gonda). Conceivably, the primordial mother-daughter relationship provided a model for a young woman’s subsequent same-sex relationships. While mothers nurtured and educated their daughters, these activities were prescribed and circumscribed by an ideology that served patriarchal interests. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s suggestion that the terms “homosocial” and “homosexual” are contiguous when applied to women’s same-sex relationships does not register adequately the (patriarchal) dynamic of the *loving* mother-daughter relationship within the sentimental family. This same-sex love sustained a “hetero-relational society,” predicated on the ideology that “woman is for man” (Raymond 11). Effectively, men relied on *good* women in the social arena, like *good* mothers in the home, to direct the desires of young women in accordance with patriarchal interests. According to Janet Todd’s categorization of eighteenth-century literary representations of female friendships, in their “social friendships,” women might “aid and sustain each other” in a patriarchal, heterosexual society (4). The function of such relationships was double-edged: women supported, even loved, one another; but, ultimately, they respected and reinforced male domination

Patriarchal anxieties about women’s same-sex relationships can be understood in terms of the necessary disparity between male homo-relations and female homo-relations in an asymmetrical (male-dominated) society. Janice Raymond articulates

the relationship between men's same-sex relationships and (patriarchal) hetero-relations in such a way as helps to elucidate concerns about women's same-sex relationships in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She explains that "this is a male homo-relational society built on male-male relations, transactions, and bonding at all levels. Hetero-relations serve to provide men with sustenance and support from women that they do not get from men." (10) And how does this hegemonic arrangement accommodate women's same-sex relationships? According to Raymond, in this "*hetero-reality*," women's relationships are deemed to be "second-rate, insignificant, and often preliminary to hetero-maturity" (7, orig. emphasis, 11). This ideological conceit supported men's control over women's relationships, at the same time that it downplayed the subversive possibilities of such relationships.

The conceivable equivalency of women's same-sex relationships and, both, men's same-sex relationships, and a normative heterosexual relationship between a man and his wife, posed a threat to this hegemonic arrangement. Betty Rizzo points out that the eighteenth-century companionate relationship between the mistress and her humble companion "mirrored the marriage relationship and was often identified with it" (1). According to Rizzo, men generally "demonstrated a sense that the conventional marital model of the time—controlling husband and amenable wife—was perfectly satisfactory". At the same time that men extolled women's submissiveness in these relationships, they inveighed against "autocratic and tyrannical mistresses" (2). Rizzo observes the ideological incongruity of the submissive wife and the (potentially) dominant mistress of a companion (9). As she demonstrates, the power dynamic of these homosocial relationships replicated, but also challenged, the conventional hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. Women, in their same-sex relationships, might invert a traditional hierarchical

relationship between the sexes by seeking female dominion over other women and, by ideological extension, over men.

At the same time, there were fears that women's sentimental love for one another competed with, to the point of eclipsing, women's marital relationships. Like Rizzo, Todd considers the significance of women's homosocial relationships next to the standard heterosexual marital relationship. Todd describes "sentimental friends," as they abound in the literature of the period: "They must cry and confide a lot, protest and embrace, in short, exist so intensely that their friendship acquires many of the signs of love. Their relationship is close, even suffocating, prying, exacting, hortatory, and eulogistic." (*Women's Friendships* 307) Following Sedgwick's suggestion, we might read these "sentimental friendships" as contiguous with homosexual ones insofar as they signal that men are irrelevant or, at least, "emotionally secondary" in their lives, to borrow Nancy Chodorow's phrase (193). Whereas the ideal mother represented and looked to perpetuate a cycle whereby the young woman transitioned from *daughter* to *wife* and then *mother* herself, the *loving friend* did not slot easily into this patriarchal, heterosexual classificatory system. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the ideal mother-daughter relationship was considered a "friendship" as a way of, simultaneously, reclaiming this problematic term and mobilizing mother-daughter love in terms of a patriarchal, heterosexual social vision.

Claudia Johnson observes that "in [Burney's] exceedingly capacious novels women's relations to other women are depicted with a richness and consequence that in some cases rival the sway men are supposed to have in their affective lives" (160). In *Camilla*, Mrs. Arlbery represents the possibility that female happiness might lie beyond the regulatory categories of *wife* and *mother*. As Burney rehearses polemical arguments about women's happiness through this character, she registers Edgar's

fears about the ideological “consequence” of Camilla’s friendship with this questionable woman. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth attempts to reconcile Lady Delacour’s female friendships with her marital relationship. Her relationships with Belinda Portman and Lady Percival help to bring about Lady Delacour’s *rapprochement* with her husband. However, it could be argued that Lady Delacour’s sentimental investment in Belinda, and her longstanding competition with Lady Percival, persist in undermining the “affective sway” her husband is “supposed” to exercise.

Manipulative Women and Rivalling Men in *Camilla*

In *Camilla*, the rivalry between Mrs. Arlbery and Edgar Mandlebert can be understood in terms of, both, their investments in conflicting visions of female heterosexuality and happiness, and their egotistical desire to manipulate Camilla Tyrold. Both characters justify their attempts to manipulate Camilla on account of their divergent claims to know what is best for her happiness. Edgar clings to a vision of Camilla’s domestic happiness as a way of suspending his ardent love for her, justifying his obsessive scrutiny of her conduct, and downplaying his acute jealousy of Mrs. Arlbery and his male rivals. Meanwhile, Mrs. Arlbery challenges this ideological vision, and she endeavours to expose and counter the strategies Edgar deploys to enforce it. In addition, she looks to shake Edgar’s equanimity and agency in order to satisfy her own egotistical interest in Camilla. Mrs. Arlbery challenges the normative relationship between female homosociality and heterosexual relations, in terms of the necessary disparity between male homo-relations and female homo-relations to this asymmetrical (male-dominated) society. She represents the possibility that women might defy the efforts of men to control their same-sex relationships, and

that women might manipulate the male-male relations which form the basis of this hegemonic arrangement (Raymond).

In a society defined by an ideology of female passivity and male dominion, the social critique Mrs. Arlbery offers is threatening, not least because she has the temerity to offer it. Mrs. Arlbery articulates the fraught relationship between men's and women's homosocial relationships as these centred on heterosexual desire. She points out that, while men's homosocial relationships seem to signal their autonomy from women, they are, in fact, organized around and influenced by women. In the novel, a group of men consider leisure pursuits that exclude women. Interrupting the Irish ensign, Macdersey, Mrs. Arlbery exposes the fallaciousness of men's claim to autonomy and insinuates that their authority over women is conditional:

“Whether avowedly or clandestinely,” said Mrs. Arlbery, “still you are all in our chains. Even where you play the tyrant with us, we occupy all your thoughts; and if you have not the skill to make us happy, your next delight is to make us miserable; for though, now and then, you can contrive to make us miserable, you can never arrive at forgetting us.” (479)

Of course, while she challenges men's independence, Mrs. Arlbery does not pretend that women can *forget* men. However, her astute observation sheds light on the anxieties men had about this prospect. What was really at issue was the possibility that women might *forget*, or consciously dismiss, their *natural* status and roles within this delicate heterosexual framework. In abstract, yet salient terms, men feared women's *independence* as this epithet referred to women's pursuit of desires and expectations that lay outside the bounds of an orthodox heterosexual vision. This indulgence signified the failure of men to dictate and direct women's desires. At the

same time, it presented the possibility that women might manipulate men. Mrs. Arlbery's quizzical gesture of insubordination suggests this possibility.

Whereas Mrs. Arlbery insists that men can never forget women, Mary Wollstonecraft takes issue with women's preoccupation with men. In her *Vindication*, she makes the subversive claim that

Men, for whom we are told women were made, have too much occupied the thoughts of women; and this association has so entangled love with all their motives of action; and, to harp a little on an old string, having been solely employed either to prepare themselves to excite love, or actually putting their lessons in practice, they cannot live without love. (120)

Essentially, Mrs. Arlbery and Wollstonecraft invoke the same gendered social dynamic, but approach it from different angles. Wollstonecraft does not deny the heterosexual magnetism operating between men and women, but, in the same provocative vein as Arlbery, implies the possibility of resisting or mobilizing this dynamic. She challenges the subordinate status of women, as this was sustained by their "pampered desire of pleasing," and she enjoins them to broaden their outlooks and strengthen both their bodies and minds (120, 64). Wollstonecraft champions those women who "imitat[e] manly virtues," even while men excoriate such women as "masculine" (8). This conflation of gender characteristics threatened men who championed in women the "negative virtues" alone: "patience, docility, good-humour, and flexibility; virtues incompatible with any vigorous exertion of intellect" (Wollstonecraft 58). Wollstonecraft maintains that she is not in favour of women gaining power over men, but, rather, exhorts women to take control over their own lives (62). However, this argument for women's independence speaks to concerns, as expressed vehemently by Gregory and Fordyce, about the erosion of men's authority.

In *Camilla*, the prodigious power of Mrs. Arlbery to captivate both men and women within her social ambit, combined with the fact that she nominates herself as a role-model for young Camilla, unsettles an implicit contract between *good* women and heterosexual, patriarchal interests. Mrs. Arlbery's initial appearance in *Camilla* announces her commanding and equivocal significance. On her arrival at the ball, she walks straight through the ballroom "with a look that announced a decided superiority to all she saw, and a perfect indifference to what opinion she incurred in return" (73). Mrs. Arlbery arrests the attention of men and women alike: "Lionel, seeing her surrounded by the most fashionable men of the assembly, forgot Mr. Dubster and his gloves, in an eagerness to be introduced to her"; meanwhile, his sisters, Camilla and Eugenia, become "wholly engrossed" (74). This feeds into concerns that men might be attracted to adroit and enthralling women, and impressionable young women inclined to emulate their immodest or duplicitous conduct (Fordyce 1: 143).

René Girard's triangular model of desire helps to explain Edgar's ambivalent attitude towards Mrs. Arlbery. According to Girard, the subject feels "the most submissive reverence and the most intense malice" towards their rival and this ambivalence engenders "the passion we call *hatred*" (10, orig. emphasis). Edgar observes Camilla's fascination with Mrs. Arlbery at the same time that he finds himself drawn to her just as Camilla's brother is; however, he strives to "hide this desperate admiration from others, and from himself" (Girard 11). Girard's model takes into account both the egotistical and the ideological aspects of the rivalry between these characters. It helps to explain how Mrs. Arlbery's interest in Camilla's happiness is driven by her egotistical desire to vanquish her rival. It also takes into account Edgar's efforts to conceal his ardent desire for Camilla, as well as his obsession with Mrs. Arlbery, behind the righteous façade of promoting the future

happiness of his “sister” and “friend”. According to this formulation, the rivalry between Edgar and Mrs. Arlbery stems from the alignment of their interests, as they both vie for the attention and admiration of Camilla Tyrold, and the divergence of the visions they have for her happiness.

Burney delineates the nascent rivalry between Edgar and Mrs. Arlbery with respect to an ideological debate about women’s happiness. Edgar urges Camilla to join him in listening to Melmond’s recitation of Thomson’s *Seasons*.¹ Lionel comes in and enquires scornfully why they are in the shop “when Mrs. Arlbery and all the world are enjoying the air on the public walks” (99-100). Lionel’s interruption sets up an opposition between the “enjoyment” (or “pleasure”) one might pursue in “public” and “a scheme of human happiness” proposed in Thomson’s famous poem (101). Whereas Mrs. Arlbery seems to lead a pursuit of the former, Mandlebert’s “favourite picture” of happiness is contained in Thomson’s poem (101). The idea of happiness presented in Thomson’s *Spring* revolves around: “Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books, / Ease and alternate labour, useful life, / Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.” (qtd. *Camilla* 101)² When Edgar hears these words, he sighs and looks to Camilla. However, Camilla has run out the shop with her mischievous brother, intrigued to know more of Mrs. Arlbery.

On another occasion, Lionel Tyrold leads his sister on a jaunt near the Grove, in the hope of running into this captivating woman. After Lionel pulls his sister into a stream at the edge of the property, Mrs. Arlbery insists on providing Camilla with a change of clothes and a warm fire (245). Camilla is astonished by Mrs. Arlbery’s unconventional deportment. Mrs. Arlbery responds to her guest’s dubiety:

“You are not used to my way, I perceive,” cried she, smiling; “yet, I can nevertheless assure you, you can do nothing so much for your happiness as to

adopt it. You are made a slave in a moment by the world, if you don't begin life by defying it. Take your own way, follow your own humour, and you and the world will both go on just as well, as if you ask its will and pleasure for everything you do, and want, and think." (246)

Mrs. Arlbery seems to invoke a paradox when she urges Camilla to "[t]ake your own way," as well as to adopt hers. However, this sense of collective independence among women was exactly what men feared. Mrs. Arlbery's appeal to Camilla certainly resonates with Mr. Percival's condemnatory assessment of women like Harriet Freke who "defy" the conventions and assumptions of the patriarchal "world" and who "cannot rest without attempting to bring others to their own level" (*Belinda* 253). In *Camilla*, Mrs. Arlbery promotes an idea of women's independence/happiness, which entails women's defiance of those social conventions and ideological assumptions which, in her eyes, enslave women. Mrs. Arlbery's argument seems to resonate with the vision of female independence forwarded by Wollstonecraft. But, whereas Wollstonecraft maintains that she respects marriage, "as the foundation of almost every social virtue," and wishes to see women "fulfil [their] domestic duties" (71, 68), Mrs. Arlbery envisions women's happiness beyond this framework of domestic heterosexuality.

While Mrs. Arlbery claims to be interested in promoting Camilla's happiness, her interest in the young woman can also be considered in terms of her egotism. Janet Todd argues that "narcissism is the dominant trait" of many fictional heroines of this period, and this trait prevents them from "enter[ing] an equal friendship" with another woman. According to Todd, "female narcissism is a special kind, not simply a woman's love of herself, which may in time encompass love of another like herself ... but instead the love of her effect on another.... Constantly concerned with her self-

image, she can only think of charming, not of the woman charmed” (*Women’s Friendship* 406). In the novel, Mrs. Arlbery perceives that Camilla is struck by her, and she feels “a propensity to increase” Camilla’s “youthful wonder” (89). Her admiration of Camilla, then, is relative to the admiration Camilla has for her: “Mrs. Arlbery, charmed with all she observed, and flattered by all she inspired, felt such satisfaction in her evident conquest, that before the *tête à tête* was closed, their admiration was become nearly mutual” (248). Their admiration for each other may be “nearly mutual”; however, as their relationship unfolds in the novel, it is apparent that Mrs. Arlbery actively censures, encourages, provokes and “plots,” while Camilla passively listens, is enchanted and confused.³

If we consider Todd’s assessment, within the theoretical framework of Girard, it could be argued that Mrs. Arlbery loves not only her effect on Camilla, but also the subsequent effect this has on her rival, Edgar Mandlebert. According to Girard, Mrs. Arlbery’s “vanity” fuels her rivalry with Edgar and “demands his defeat” (7). Mrs. Arlbery certainly acknowledges this dynamic: “she scarce knew which would most delight her, to mortify Edgar, or restore Camilla to gaiety and independence” (375). According to Johnson, Mrs. Arlbery’s narcissistic conquest of Camilla has “all the earmarks of seduction” (162). But, this “seduction,” rather than suggesting a sapphic element to their relationship, must be read in terms of countering Edgar’s romantic heterosexual conquest. Mrs. Arlbery seeks not to quell Camilla’s heterosexual desires, but, rather, to direct her desires away from the vision of heterosexuality Edgar represents and imposes, and towards alternative conceptions of women’s happiness. She implies that the vision Edgar holds for Camilla’s happiness is constitutive of an ideological system that oppresses women and, in reaction against this system, she focuses on vanquishing Edgar. In fact, as we shall see, she seeks to invert a traditional

hierarchical relationship between the sexes by seeking female dominion and male submission.

Mrs. Arlbery seeks to expose and counter Edgar's strategies for programming and disciplining Camilla's expectations and desires. In particular, she impugns Edgar's claims to be Camilla's "friend" and "brother". Like the strategic conflation of *mother* and *friend*, discussed in the previous chapter, Edgar claims to be Camilla's friend and, at other times, her brother. Speaking to the Tyrold sisters, Edgar expresses his "filial love and gratitude to Mr. Tyrold" and invokes the "brotherly character in which I consider myself to stand with you ... all" (339, orig. ellipsis). He also asks Camilla whether she will permit "an old friend, though in the person of but a young man" to offer her "a little counsel" (267). Throughout the novel, Edgar assumes and insists that his interests align with those of his "invaluable guardian," Mr. Tyrold (235). This claim works to sublimate and legitimise the (sexual) interest he takes in Mr. Tyrold's second daughter.

Camilla maintains that Edgar's censure of her conduct derives "[f]rom goodness, from kindness, from generosity," but Mrs. Arlbery insists that she is deceived: "those are not the characteristics of young men who counsel young women!" (420). Mrs. Arlbery makes the astute inference that Edgar must wish to marry her.

"When an old friend," said Mrs Arlbery, archly, "happens to be a young man, you must conduct yourself with him a little like what you are; that is, a young woman. And a young woman is never in her proper place, if such sort of old friends are not taught to know their own. From the instant you permit them to think of being offended, they become your masters; and you will find it vastly more convenient to make them your slaves." (447)

Whereas Camilla accepts that Edgar might “torment” her out of “kindness” and “generosity,” with her happiness in mind (267, 420), Mrs. Arlbery awakens Camilla to another implication: “You do not see, he does not, perhaps, himself know, how exactly he is calculated to make you wretched. He is a watcher; and a watcher, restless and perturbed himself, infests all he pursues with uneasiness” (482). At the same time that Edgar watches Camilla and “infests” her with “uneasiness,” and is drawn to Mrs. Arlbery, Edgar is the subject of Mrs. Arlbery’s searing attention and he registers the discomfort and anxiety that this subjection generates. Furthermore, Mrs. Arlbery urges Camilla to become a “watcher” herself, thereby reversing a traditional pattern of scrutiny and objectification.

Edgar Mandlebert is drawn to, and yet despises, Mrs. Arlbery. He “admires” her, even though she “obstinately thwarts his most legitimate ambitions” (Girard 11). In terms of Girard’s account, Edgar seems more obsessed with his rivals than with Camilla Tyrold, the ostensible source of this rivalry. For example, he follows Camilla’s party to Tunbridge and, arriving late, retires to his hotel for the night. There, he overhears the voice of Camilla; “Mrs. Arlbery’s voice he also distinguished, Sir Sedley Clarendel’s, General Kinsale’s, and, least of all welcome, . . . the Major’s” (408, orig. ellipsis). His immediate thoughts on the circumstance reveal that his interest in Camilla is embedded in his interest in his rivals, both male and female:

To visit a young man at an hotel; rich, handsome, and splendid; and with a *chaperon* so far from past her prime, so elegant, so coquetish, so alluring, and still so pretty; and to meet there a flashy Officer, her open pursuer and avowed admirer— (408, orig. emphasis).

Interestingly, the attractiveness of Mrs. Arlbery arrests Edgar’s thinking. Of particular note, however, his concerns crystallize around the fact that Camilla is visiting another

man. This same-sex fixation adds a new perspective to the homosocial-heterosexual dialectic that underpins this chapter. It attests to the potency of heterosexual desire as it draws men to women and also to other men.

Essentially, Mrs. Arlbery adds a new dimension (or triangle) to her fraught relationship with Edgar by provoking the competitive “bond between males that [Girard] most assiduously covers” (Sedgwick 21). Mrs. Arlbery insists that men “can never arrive at forgetting” women, a (heterosexual) dynamic which undermines men’s claims to autonomy and ascendancy over women. For a woman to manipulate another woman and indulge her sexual desires, and, worse still, provoke the sexual desires of men, was to fuel a debate about the incompatibility of these homosocial arrangements and a conventional power dynamic between the sexes, one that was predicated on the *natural* submissiveness and sexual passivity of women (Rizzo 9).

Mrs. Arlbery urges Camilla to “adopt” her independent way in defiance of an ideology of gender reciprocity, which relied on women’s complaisance. In defiance of men’s control over women, Mrs. Arlbery declares that “you will find it vastly more convenient to make [men] your slaves” (447). In *Belinda*, Lady Delacour reformulates Mrs. Arlbery’s precept when she implores her young friend to: “Follow my example, Belinda; elbow your way through the crowd; if you stop to be civil and beg pardon, and ‘hope I didn’t hurt ye’, you will be trod under foot.” (29) In an instigative tone, akin to that of Mrs. Arlbery, Lady Delacour apprizes her young friend that, through following these precepts, “you’ll marry better than any of your cousins, Clarence Hervey if you can; and then it will be your turn to laugh about nets and cages” (29). At the same time, Lady Delacour urges Belinda to show the world “you’ve got no feeling” (29). The indifference she urges Belinda to affect recalls Mrs. Arlbery’s provocative intimation that women might reject (*forget*) their *natural* feelings.⁴ These

two characters challenge an ideological assumption that women were passive and domestic *by nature*. Their intimation that women might capitalize on the heterosexual magnetism between the sexes and “play the tyrant” with men, makes the independence of these female “role-models” particularly subversive.

To recapitulate an earlier argument, the idea of the companionate marriage rested on the love, respect and complementarity of husband and wife. Women’s *independence* applied to their deviance from or defiance of a dominant model of woman’s happiness and domestic heterosexuality that was anchored by the companionate marriage. Patricia Meyer Spacks stresses that, as foundations for marriage, women’s sexual desires, as well as their mercenary intentions, were highly dubious (“Ev’ry Woman” 35). The figure of the “catch-match-maker” threatened this construction of the companionate marriage in two ways: she promoted women’s mercenary desires, and she provoked the sexual desires of men (*Belinda* 15). In *Camilla* and *Belinda*, the speculations and suspicions of male characters regarding the power of this dubious figure inform their equivocal assumptions about Mrs. Arlbery and Lady Delacour, women who elude this epithet, but are nevertheless renowned for being savvy, manipulative and enthralling.

The vision Selina Stanhope endeavours to impress upon her niece, Belinda Portman (*Belinda*), parallels the vision Miss Margland has for her young charge, Indiana (*Camilla*). Belinda’s aunt “had endeavoured to teach her, that a young lady’s chief business is to please in society, and that all her charms and accomplishments should be invariably subservient to one grand object—the establishing herself in the world” (7). In *Camilla*, Edgar is primed by his tutor that “a good establishment” is the “first object in [a woman’s] life” (161). This warning resonates with the concerns expressed by both Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More that women desire to

charm men “merely to seduce success in a disadvantageous marriage market” (Myers 202). Miss Margland’s insistence on “the necessity of *bringing the young ladies out*, and the duty of *thinking of their establishment*” (54, orig. emphases) confirms the tenability of the doctor’s warning. It would appear that Miss Margland’s project is thoroughly successful: Indiana is obsessed with “coming out” and acquiring, by whatever artful means, a rich and handsome husband.

The narrator of *Belinda* explains that “[y]oung ladies, who have the misfortune to be *conducted* by these artful dames, are always supposed to be partners in all the speculations” (15, orig. emphasis). In the novel, Harriet Freke capitalizes on assumptions about pivotal role of the surrogate mother figure in shaping the character of a young woman, and confirms suspicions about the dubious influence of Selina Stanhope. Harriet writes to Mr. Vincent, as “A Sincere Friend,” invoking Mrs. Stanhope’s reputation as “the matchmaker general”. She warns him to “beware of connecting yourself with the lady [Belinda]. . . . She has been educated, as you may find upon inquiry, by one, whose successful trade it has been, to draw in young men of fortune for her nieces” (333). Harriet’s letter recalls Dr. Marchmont’s exhortation to Edgar not to enter into an engagement with Camilla until he is assured that she has no “sordid motives” (159). Just as Edgar Mandlebert reflects on the excellent example provided by Camilla’s mother, Belinda Portman’s prospective lover, Clarence Hervey, has recourse to the character of Selina Stanhope in forming his initial impression. Clarence’s growing admiration for Belinda’s beauty coincides with a sense of “increasing dread of being *taken in*, to marry a niece of the ‘catch-matchmaker’, the name by which Mrs. Stanhope was known among the men of his acquaintance” (15, orig. emphasis). Clarence is “prejudiced by the character of her aunt” and finds himself “most inclined to despise [Belinda] for what he thought such

premature proficiency in scientific coquetry” (15). But, just as Burney makes it clear that “[c]oquetry was as foreign to the ingenuousness of [Camilla’s] nature, as to the dignity of all her early maternal precepts” (488), Edgeworth underlines the fact that Belinda had “been inspired with a taste for domestic pleasures” and is, therefore, resistant to the artful teachings of her aunt (7).

Despite his fears, Clarence makes light of Sir Philip Baddely’s concerns about the pernicious influence Mrs. Stanhope: “Do you think I’m an idiot—do you think I could be taken in by one of the Stanhope school?” (25-6). The blithe interplay between these two men seems to bespeak a general presumption that men were impervious to the artful schemes of women. Mrs. Arlbery (*Camilla*) might inform Clarence and Sir Philip (*Belinda*) that, despite their light-hearted banter, they are in women’s “chains”. Clarence’s response belies the pervasiveness of fears surrounding the power women might wield over men, particularly if a shrewd and conniving older woman promoted the *wrong* desires in her beautiful and seemingly ingenuous younger apprentice, and provoked the sexual desires of men. As these gentlemen deride women such as Selina Stanhope and her niece, they vehemently deny, yet at the same time attest to, the potentiality of women’s power to ensnare them.

Spacks focuses on the threatening nature of women’s mercenary and sexual desires. However, what was particularly alarming to men was the possibility that women might manipulate men’s sexual desires in order to realize their own. In *Belinda*, Lady Delacour explains to her protégée how a woman might manipulate a man’s sexual desires to serve her own interests; of course she claims that such an exercise will be “for his good” (273). Lady Delacour assures Belinda that, “if you make Clarence Hervey heartily jealous, let the impediments to your union be what they may, he will acknowledge himself to be heartily in love with you” (273). In

Camilla, Miss Margland insists that, when a man “sees a young lady admired and noticed by others, he falls naturally into making her the same compliments, and the affair goes into a regular train, without his almost thinking of it” (58). As the narrator explains, Lionel takes an interest in Mrs. Arlbery when he perceives that she is “surrounded by the most fashionable men of the assembly” (74).

Like Miss Margland, Mrs. Arlbery is attuned to ways in which women might manipulate men by provoking the competitive dynamic of their relationships. In a way that parallels the efforts of men to provoke the competition between women, Mrs. Arlbery actively recruits men to enact this dynamic. Mrs. Arlbery summons Sir Sedley Clarendel to aid her scheme: “Save her now, and you serve her for life; — besides giving me a prodigious pleasure in robbing that frigid Mandlebert of such a conquest” (368). She also urges Camilla to entertain Sir Sedley’s “present propensity to wear your chains, till Mandlebert perceives that he is putting them on” (483).

Although she seems to frustrate the relationship between Edgar and Camilla, she actually decides to assist in orchestrating their union. Instead of urging Camilla to shun Mandlebert, Mrs. Arlbery proposes that Camilla then demonstrate “your power and your disinterestedness, by turning from the handsome Baronet and all his immense wealth, to mark ... since you are determined to indulge it ... your unbiased preference for Mandlebert” (483-4, orig. ellipses). However, her methods, as well as her reasons, remain objectionable. “I hate him heartily; yet he rolls in wealth, and she has nothing. I must bring them, therefore, together, positively: for though a husband ... such a fastidious one especially ... is not what I would recommend to her for happiness, ’tis better than poverty” (460-1, orig. ellipses). Mrs. Arlbery’s resolve to promote the union, driven by the conviction that it would release Camilla from

poverty, resonates with Miss Margland's mercenary remark on the "duty of *thinking of* [the young woman's] *establishment*".

The overriding fear was that a young woman's "early possession of power" over men might corrode her future relationship with her husband (*Camilla* 475). Mrs. Arlbery informs Camilla: "There is but one single method to make a man of his ruminating class know his own mind: give him cause to fear he will lose you. Animate, inspire, inspire him with doubt." (455). Later in the novel, Camilla assumes that Edgar is jealous of the Major when she perceives Edgar watching his rival convey her to her coach. This seems to support Mrs. Arlbery's projection and Camilla concludes that "the only way to a lasting accommodation was to alarm his security, by asserting her own independence" (669). This keys into a debate about the (in)compatibility of female homosocial relationships and marital ones, a debate which Edgeworth delineates in *Belinda*.

Through her relationship with Mrs. Arlbery, Camilla perceives the possibility of provoking the man she loves into taking her as his wife. As I will discuss, this corresponds with the way Lady Delacour ultimately *chooses* to reconcile with her husband, following the exhortations of her young friend Belinda. Even when the wishes of a woman coincided with those of a man, a woman's agency in realizing this mutual desire challenged the assumption that women were *naturally* passive and submissive, as well as men's control over the heterosexual economy. Mr. Tyrold explains to Camilla that, "where allowed only a negative choice, it is in your own best interests to combat a positive wish" (359). As Caroline Gonda recapitulates: "The well brought up daughter waits to be asked to love as she waits to be asked to dance" (133). Initially, Mrs. Arlbery frustrates Edgar's "*legitimate* ambitions" when she urges Camilla to spurn his attentions (Girard 11, emphasis added). However, equally vexing

for Edgar is the fact that Mrs. Arlbery ultimately encourages Camilla to pursue (or provoke) the object of her affections with the purpose of *making* him take her as his wife.

It is interesting to note that, in *Belinda*, Lady Delacour explains that she had recourse to the very strategy Mrs. Arlbery prescribes for Camilla in order to provoke the competition between men. However, Lady Delacour took this strategy to the extreme: “in hopes of provoking the man I loved,” she explains, she married another man (37). In more ways than one, she became the victim of her own manipulations. Her scheme had the adverse effect to the one she envisaged in that Mr. Percival ended up marrying one of “those *very amiable women*” (37, orig. emphases). Furthermore, her indifference towards Lord Delacour did not conduce to their mutual happiness. Reading these novels concurrently, Lady Delacour seems to answer the apprehensions expressed by Edgar Mandlbert with regard Camilla’s social celebrity, as a friend of Mrs. Berlington: “Will it not spoil her for private life; estrange her from family concerns?” (444). There is certainly a sense that it is too late for Lady Delacour to reform her ways and embrace a domestic “way of life”. She concedes that she “could not stop—I was fit for this kind of life, and for no other—I could not be happy at *home*, for what sort of a companion could I have made of lord Delacour?” (41, orig. emphasis).

Competing and Compatible Intimacies in *Belinda*

According to Edgar Mandlbert, Camilla’s “intimacy” with another woman “ought to depend” on that woman’s “manners, disposition, way of life” (198). He makes use of these broad criteria to discriminate between Mrs. Arlbery and Lady Isabella Irby, and oppugn Camilla’s “intimacy” with the former. As Claudia Johnson

observes, “the ever-strict Edgar, alarmed by [Mrs. Arlbery’s] irreverence, wants Camilla to be friends instead with women happily tethered within heterosexual disciplinary structures, women like Lady Isabella Irby” (163). It was assumed that a young woman would imitate the “manners” of her older companion and, ultimately, “follow” her “way of life” (*Camilla* 246). Aside from the mimetic dynamic that characterized intimate female relationships, in particular the customary relationship between a young woman and an older female companion, women were also in a position to actively direct each others’ desires. The fact that women had the capacity to indulge and promote, as well as dismiss, each other’s heterosexual desires was critical to a debate over the (in)compatibility of women’s homosocial friendships and their current and future conjugal relationships. A woman like Mrs. Arlbery might encourage a young woman to exercise her (sexual) power over men; however, the degree of intimacy and perceived insularity of women’s homosocial relationships was equally threatening to men’s authority over this homosocial-heterosexual dialectic.

In *Belinda*, Edgeworth registers a debate over the (in)compatibility of women’s homosocial relationships and their current and future marital relationships. This debate helps to focus and explicate the dialectical relationship between female homosociality and heterosexuality during a young woman’s “coming out” and following this critical phase. Edgeworth depicts the way women’s sentimental love for one another, as well as their efforts to manipulate each other, threatened the construction of the companionate marriage. In the novel, Edgeworth draws a direct link between Lady Delacour’s invidious “friendships” with Mrs. Luttridge and Harriet Freke, and her fraught relationship with her husband. In her account of her friendship with Harriet, Lady Delacour explains that “[t]he league of amity between us was scarcely ratified, before my lord Delacour came with his wise remonstrating face, to

beg me ‘to consider what was due to my own honour and his’” (44). Arguably, the Lady’s sentimental investment in Belinda also seems to be implicated in this marital discontent. By contrast, the relationship between Lady Percival and Belinda is compatible with Lady Percival’s relationship with her husband and, in an ideological sense, with Belinda’s future marital happiness.

In her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), Hester Chapone suggests that female friendships and marital relationships were continuous and compatible:

The highest kind of friendship is indeed confined to one;—I mean the conjugal—which, in its perfection, is so entire and absolute an union of interest, will and affection, as no other connection can stand in competition with.—But, there are various degrees of friendship, which can admit of several objects, esteemed, and delighted in, for different qualities—and whose separate rights are perfectly compatible (1: 103).

Chapone describes a harmonious hierarchy of friendships, insisting that “no other connection can stand in competition with” the relationship between a man and his wife. In terms of this assumption, women’s friendships were regarded as “second-rate, insignificant, and often preliminary to hetero-maturity,” or as “sexless, morally elevating, and no threat to male power” (Raymond 11; Donoghue 109). In *Camilla*, Dr. Marchmont insists that “those who covet in a bride the oblivion of all former friendships, all early affections, weaken the finest ties of humanity” (178). He argues that these friendships ought to be “cherish[ed], not obliterate[d]” on the assumption that they did not undermine the primary relationship between a man and his wife (179). In Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1748), the Colonel remarks to John Belford that “Marriage, which is the highest state of friendship, generally absorbs the most

vehement friendships of female to female” (qtd. Faderman, 77). Lillian Faderman reads this passage as evidence that “men generally doubted that these relationships would be very enduring” (77).

However, there were certainly concerns that some female friendships *did compete* with the “perfect” union Chapone describes.⁵ In fact, arguments that women’s relationships were “insignificant” and “sexless” might be considered in terms of an effort of dominant ideology to mitigate this perceived threat. Arguably, Faderman’s interpretation overlooks the systemic fear that the intimacy of women’s sentimental friendships might be subversive, a fear that produced as well as haunted such reassurances. Despite her acerbic criticism of the way moralists and conduct writers forwarded a model of gender reciprocity which entailed and ensured women’s mental and physical weakness, Wollstonecraft expresses her misgivings about the way women’s same-sex intimacy might undermine the relationship between a man and his wife. She insists that “women are, in general, too familiar with each other, which leads to that gross degree of familiarity that so frequently renders the marriage state unhappy” (127). Wollstonecraft remarks on a situation that haunts Chapone’s construction, even while Chapone declines to address it directly.

The issue of exchanging and betraying secrets provided a metonymic focus point for conduct writers anxious about the social implications of the exclusivity and insularity of female homosocial relationships. Just as Wollstonecraft criticizes the “gross degree of familiarity” between women, John Gregory warns women against sharing secrets with their female friends, particularly those regarding romantic attachments. He insists that this degree of familiarity was not “consistent with the perfection of female delicacy” (31). Gregory recommends “an early intercourse between the sexes” as an antidote to the dangers such intimate same-sex relationships

posed for women (33-4). But, while his ostensible concern relates to the fact that women might betray each other's secrets, it is reasonable to surmise that Gregory was also worried that women might deny men access to these secrets – hence the nature of the antidote he prescribes.

Jane West elaborates on Gregory's concern. West suggests that, "[w]hen we reveal our secret wishes, unbosom our private affairs, or disclose our most undisguised thoughts, we put ourselves into the power of those to whom we make these discoveries" (3: 84-85). West's comments corroborate with Rizzo's discussion on the problematic power dynamic of women's same-sex relationships. Arguably, West evokes pervasive fears that these homosocial alliances might replicate, and therefore dislodge, the hierarchical relationship between a husband and his wife. Essentially, a woman might gain power as the confidante of another, thereby undermining or at least threatening men's control of information.

Nancy Chodorow conceives the intimate relationship between a woman and her best (female) friend, as "one way of resolving and recreating the mother-daughter bond" (200). As this intimacy centred on the exchange of secrets, in particular those relating to a woman's heterosexual desires and relationships, we can see how these homosocial relationships, like the formative relationship between a mother and daughter, could threaten men's authority. Of course, with regard to the dynamics of an ideal mother-daughter relationship, the power vested in the mother, as a result of the daughter's divulgence to her, was transmitted to the father. Beyond the framework of the sentimental family, men vied to control this flow in information.

In *Belinda*, Edgeworth engages with issues surrounding *the female secret*, as it testifies to the intimacy of women's sentimental friendships; in particular, how this homosocial intimacy might replicate or replace the intimacy between a husband and a

wife. In the novel, Lady Delacour's secret reveals how women's *intimacy* and women's *power* over each other work together in troubling ways. As we have seen, Harriet Freke is threatening because of her gender transgression and, in line with Rizzo's inference, her dominance over other females. Jennie Batchelor remarks that Lady Delacour's "desire to maintain the secret of the cancer she imagines is killing her ... imprisons Lady Delacour, leaving her vulnerable to the tyranny of Marriott, Harriot Freke and Mrs Luttridge" (160). Lady Delacour explains to Belinda that Marriott "rules me with a rod of iron" (20). Belinda considers the fraught relationship between the Lady and her waiting woman: "Upon many occasions miss Portman had observed, that Marriot exercised despotic authority over her mistress; and she had seen, with surprise, that a lady, who would not yield an iota of power to her husband, submitted herself to every caprice of the most insolent of waiting-women." Belinda recalls that "[t]here had always been some mystery about her ladyship's toilette; at certain hours doors were bolted, and it was impossible for any body but Marriot to obtain admission." She concludes that "Marriot was in possession of some secret" (20). At the same time that this secret puts Lady Delacour in the power of her obstinate waiting woman, it signals and sustains the fractures in her marital relationship.

Lady Delacour distinguishes her friendship with Belinda from her earlier friendship with Harriet Freke, exalting Belinda and decrying Harriet: "Harriet Freke, even whilst she diverted me most, I half despised. But Belinda! Oh, Belinda! how entirely have I loved! trusted! admired! adored! respected! revered you!" (183) Lady Delacour expressly regrets her former friendship with Harriet, although her account indicates that her sentimental friendship with Belinda may have been more intense and intimate. As Susan Greenfield points out: "Although Harriet becomes her enemy

shortly after the novel begins, Lady Delacour continues to reserve her bosom for women only, forbidding her husband or any male doctor to enter her ‘boudoir’ and see her undressed” (*Mothering Daughters* 113). As Batchelor declares, “access to the rooms in which the heroines dress and write promises access to women’s thoughts and bodies” (165). The intimacy between Lady Delacour and Belinda crystallizes around the secret of the lady’s wounded breast, and rests on denying others, most notably Lord Delacour, access to this secret.

After a fallacious report of the growing intimacy of Belinda and Lord Delacour circulates, the jealous rage of Lady Delacour rips apart what has been the novel’s central (homosocial) relationship to this point. Arguably, the dissolution of the friendship, in particular, Lady Delacour’s inordinate reaction to Belinda’s departure, signals the intimacy of their former friendship, as it supplanted the intimacy between Lady Delacour and her husband. Rather than focusing on the rumoured disloyalty of her husband, Lady Delacour fixates on the betrayal of her friend: “it is impossible I should ever be a jealous wife: I am only a jealous friend, and I must satisfy myself about Belinda. To be a second time a dupe to the treachery of a friend, would be too much for me—too much for my pride—too much for my heart.” (189). Caroline Gonda maintains that Lady Delacour’s “jealousy is based as much (if not more) on the friendship which Lady Delacour now sees Belinda as having faked as on any concern for her husband’s doings” (215).

Belinda’s move from Harrowgate to Oakley-park, the home of the Percival family, sees her form a new intimacy with Lady Percival. In her depiction of Belinda’s relationships with Lady Delacour and Lady Percival, Edgeworth delineates this debate about the (in)compatibility of women’s friendships and marital relationships. Belinda recognizes the “domestic happiness” of the Percival family,

built around the “union of interests, occupations, taste, and affection” of husband and wife (215). This speaks precisely to Chaponne’s conception of this nonpareil friendship, as a “union of interest, will and affection”. Edgeworth’s account, when read next to Chaponne’s, evidences the crystallization and prominence of this rhetoric at this time. Whereas the relationship between Lord and Lady Delacour is undermined by the latter’s secret, with the Percivals, “there were no family secrets, nor any of those petty mysteries which arise from a discordance of temper or struggle for power” (215). Essentially, Belinda’s friendship with Lady Percival is “perfectly compatible” with this conjugal “union”.

In terms of a general assumption about women’s relationships, as an older woman modelled a particular mode of femininity (the dutiful and happy wife, for example), they indirectly informed the future marital (un)happiness of the young women they befriended. In terms of the ideological import of Belinda’s move from Harrowgate to Oakley-park, the contrast Belinda registers directs her desires and expectations away from the mode of living (for pleasure) represented by Lady Delacour and towards an ideology of domestic happiness, built around the companionate marriage. She is “convinced by this comparison, that domestic life was that which could alone make her really and permanently happy”:

Where there was so much happiness, no want of what is called *pleasure* was ever experienced. She had not been at Oakly-park a week, before she forgot that it was within a few miles of Harrowgate, and she never once recollected her vicinity to this fashionable water-drinking place for a month afterward. (217, orig. emphasis)

Belinda's physical move to Oakley-park provides a fulcrum around which this "coming out" narrative turns, as domestic ideals are manifested in a fictional, but hyper-conventional arrangement.

The conflicting modes of independence that Lady Delacour and Lady Percival espouse and seek to inculcate in Belinda, place women's homosocial relationships in definitional relation to the companionate marriage, that cornerstone of societal harmony. In *Belinda*, Lady Delacour warns her young friend that "you will be trod under foot" if "you stop to be civil and beg pardon" (29). In a similar tone, Lady Percival cautions Belinda against paying too much heed to "the opinion of the world" (246). But, whereas Lady Delacour infers that women ought to reject certain models of femininity and domestic happiness, Lady Percival implores Belinda to be wary of the world, as represented by London, and to seek a sort of independence that is, to use Claudia Johnson's term, "tethered" to a model of domestic heterosexuality. Lady Percival insists that "respect" for "the opinion of the idle and ignorant" is a "weakness" for women (246).⁶

In many respects, the "opinions" of these two women map onto the contrastive models of independence represented by Mrs. Arlbery and Mrs. Tyrold in *Camilla*. Through Mrs. Tyrold, Burney tentatively engages with issues surrounding women's independence within the companionate marriage. But, while Mrs. Tyrold's boldness and "fortitude" threatens the balance of her marriage as it is founded on gender reciprocity, it is circumscribed by the authority of her husband. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth envisages women's *domestic independence* within the private realm, which involves women's rejection of the opinions and fashions of the public realm. According to this reconstructed conception, female independence or "fortitude" is not only compatible with a principle of reciprocity, but critical to this *happy* conjugal union. This

corresponds with the argument forwarded by Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication*. She argues that “[t]o fulfil domestic duties much resolution is necessary,” and she insists that women must have “strength both of body and mind” in order to do so (68, 64).

Interestingly, Belinda’s friendship with Lady Percival comes to inform the shape of her relationship with Lady Delacour. The domestic happiness she perceives at Oakley-park inspires her to return to her former friend and offer her advice. Belinda remarks on Lady Delacour’s previous “enslave[ment] ... to dissipation,” suggesting that, “now that you find a friend in your husband, now that you know that affectionate temper of your little Helena, you will have fresh views and fresh hopes; you will have the courage to live for yourself, and not for what is called the world” (269). Belinda recapitulates the discourse of *domestic independence* espoused by her friend Lady Percival. This involves an implicit acknowledgement that the conjugal relationship is the “highest form of friendship”. Moreover, Belinda highlights the importance of female friendships in respecting and supporting the social hierarchy Chapone describes. Just as Edgeworth suggests a new conception of female independence, she also rescues the term “pleasure” from its dubious associations and plants it in the domestic realm: “Belinda was convinced that, when Lady Delacour had once *tasted the pleasures of domestic life*, she would not easily return to that dissipation which she had followed from habit, and into which she had first been driven by a mixture of vanity and despair.” (322, emphases added)

In terms of her reformation, Lady Delacour comes to renounce one model of femininity and happiness (as “pleasure”) and adopts another, one that embraces gender reciprocity as a guiding principle, as this is realized in the companionate marriage. However, even as she acknowledges and claims to break her homosocial fixation with Lady Percival, it could be argued that her sentimental investment in

Belinda remains problematic, casting a shadow over her marriage. This recalls problems surrounding the intimacy of the mother-daughter relationship, discussed in the previous chapter. Following Chodorow's argument, women's same-sex relationships might render men, including fathers and husbands, "*emotionally secondary*" in women's lives (193, orig. emphasis). Nearing the end of the novel, Lady Delacour addresses Belinda:

I respect and esteem as much as I love you, and I love you better than any thing upon earth—power excepted, you will say—power not excepted, believe me; and, if you are one of those strange people, that cannot believe without proof, you shall have proof positive upon the spot.... I will no longer contend for power over your mind, with your friend [Lady Percival] at Oakly-park.
(332)

Lady Delacour acknowledges that her fixation with and enmity towards Lady Percival has motivated and tainted her interest in Belinda's happiness, and she endeavours to prove her love for her young friend by severing this fixation. After all, Lady Delacour attributes her domestic happiness to the influence of Belinda, and she recognizes the role of the Percivals in inspiring and cementing Belinda's domestic vision. But, even while Lady Delacour celebrates her newfound domestic and marital bliss, this effusion of sentimentality, which recalls her earlier declaration of love, admiration and adoration for Belinda, retains a subversive implication. She may no longer contend for power over Belinda, but it is clear from her accounts that Belinda retains considerable sway over her, to the point that the friendship eclipses her marital relationship.

When Mr. Vincent questions Lady Delacour about the veracity of a letter he has received, which besmirches the character of Belinda, Lady Delacour defends and

exalts her young friend: “She has made my life worth saving. She has made me feel my own value. She has made me know my own happiness. She has reconciled me to my husband.” (335) As Todd explains, women’s “social friendship ... does not, like political friendship, oppose or confront society.... Since it helps a woman inside the family, the father’s or the husband’s, it strengthens patriarchy...” (*Women’s Friendship* 348-9). In terms of Todd’s definition, Lady Delacour claims that her friendship with Belinda “aids and saves” her. However, it would seem that this friendship “aids and saves” to the point that it threatens the heterosexual relationship it would seem to support. It is perhaps telling that, in the above list, Lady Delacour’s reconciliation with her husband is the last item and the happiness she invokes is expressly *her own*: she mentions Lord Delacour almost as an afterthought, and she makes no direct connection between her happiness and the reciprocity of their affection and roles.

Lady Delacour recognizes the authority of her husband, but, in a backhanded statement of submission, she announces that Lord Delacour’s authority actually bespeaks the superior command Belinda has over her mind. In the same breath, Lady Delacour addresses her friend and then her husband: “*My incomparable friend* [Belinda]...., I will now give you a convincing proof of the unlimited power you have over my mind. My lord, miss Portman has persuaded me to the step, which I am now going to take.... She has determined me to throw myself on your mercy.” (267, emphases added) Ultimately, Lady Delacour’s submission to her husband is a sign of her submission to Belinda. In fact, the conjugal “friendship” cannot even compete with the homosocial relationship: as Lady Delacour announces, Belinda is her “incomparable friend”.

Recalling Chapone's conservative picture, "no other connection can stand in competition with" the relationship between a husband and wife; however, here, Lady Delacour claims to love Belinda "better than any thing upon earth". Throughout the novel, Edgeworth marks out the rivalry between Lady Percival and Lady Delacour in terms of their relationships with Belinda, and how these contrastive relationships key into a debate over the (in)compatibility of female companionate relationships and marital ones. Here, Lady Delacour seems to invoke this debate, but in such a way that sits uneasily next to her averred commitment to her husband and her claim to terminate her competition with another woman. Just as Wollstonecraft's meditation on the "gross degree of familiarity" between women haunts Chapone's neat construction, Lady Delacour's investment in her relationship with Belinda Portman haunts her reconciliation with her husband, a reconciliation that Belinda has helped to effect.

Sedgwick's inference about the fluidity of women's *loving* relationships speaks to anxieties men had about the intensity and intimacy of these same-sex relationships both within the family and in the social arena. René Girard offers a schematic approach to considering literary representations of women's same-sex relationships through the lens of patriarchal anxiety. At the same time, Girard's approach allows for the deconstruction of enduring assumptions about women's homosocial relationships by taking into account the role of patriarchal anxieties, as evinced in the moral and pedagogical discourse of the day, in shaping them. This discursive approach to female homosociality informs the ways Burney and Edgeworth depict and deal with women's same-sex relationships in their novels, as well as how these fictional relationships were read. On the one hand, Burney and Edgeworth depict relationships between female characters in their novels in ways that summon and support prevailing assumptions surrounding such relationships. On the other

hand, these fictional representations could be seen to aggravate anxieties about female homosociality, especially as these anxieties intersected with fears about the incendiary effects of novel reading.

4. Reading Women in *Camilla* and *Belinda*

In the previous chapter, I discussed the fraught relationship between women's same-sex relationships and women's relationships with men in the social arena. In particular, I considered fears about women's independence from men, in conjunction with fears that the intimacy of women's same-sex relationships might surpass the intimacy of their current or future marital relationships. The very issues that attended women's homosocial relationships also informed fears about the implications of women's private reading practices. In analogous ways, women's same-sex relationships and women's private reading practices threatened to defy regulation from the outside. As I discussed in chapter 2, the role of the mother in the sentimental family involved mediating between father and daughter in such a way that upheld the father's authority. With respect to a young woman's socialization, female role-models played a critical role in reinforcing this paternal dynamic. This role involved directing the desires of young social initiates, as well as divulging women's secrets, and imparting information about women's reputations, to men. This chapter will consider how Burney and Edgeworth register this two-way maternal assignment with respect to superintending the reading practices of young women. I will then move onto discussing how the dubious characters, Mrs. Arlbery and Lady Delacour, allow Burney and Edgeworth to address their prospective (female) readers and negotiate the terms of domestic ideology. In *Camilla* and *Belinda*, Mrs. Arlbery and Lady Delacour present ideas about female happiness and agency, which conflict with a vision of domestic happiness and heterosexuality as it rested on women's complaisance and self-denial. They also observe and challenge the strategies deployed by men to programme women according to this vision. However, if

we consider how the novels ultimately deal with these dubious characters, it would appear that Burney and Edgeworth not only register, but succumb to, the pressure to reinforce a two-part ideological argument about women's *natural* passivity and domestic happiness.

The analogous relationship between women's homosocial relationships and reading practices can be understood in terms of the apparent effects of these *engagements* on the desires of young women. In her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), Hester Chapone recommends that "the greatest care should be taken in the choice of these *fictitious stories*, that so enchant the mind – most of which tend to inflame the passions of youth, whilst the chief purpose of education should be to moderate and restrain them" (2: 204, orig. emphases). The basic opposition Chapone invokes, between inflaming the passions, and moderating and restraining them, helps to delineate the dialectical relationship between textual and maternal mediators of young women's desires. Effectively, these agents might "inflame" or "moderate" her "passions"; concomitantly, they might reinforce or counteract/undermine the effects of each other. The model René Girard formulates in order to express the "triple relationship" between the subject, the object of desire, and the "mediators" of this desire or, rather, "rivals" for the same desired object, lends itself to considering this relationship.

William Warner's discussion of the "delusive absorption attributed to novels" accounts for the correspondence of fears surrounding novels and fascinating women (225). According to Warner, "[i]t is the idea of the *completeness* of absorption of the reader in the text—where the ideas of the novel enter the reader's brain without dilution, deflection, or mediation—that provides the novel's potential for corruption" (225, orig.

emphasis). A young woman's "absorption" in a novel, like her captivation with another woman, might corrupt her desires. Good mothers and role-models were critical in obviating or mitigating this effect.

Conduct literature helped to cultivate a semantic link between suitable reading material and role-models, as defined against dangerous and inflammatory reading material and role-models. In his *Sermons*, James Fordyce inveighs against "the influence of bad or giddy women" in the same breath that he bewails the rampant "infection of the most pestilent books" (1: 27-28). Similarly, John Gregory presses women to "shun as you would do the most fatal poison, all that species of *reading and conversation* which warms the imagination, which engages and softens the heart, and raises the taste above the level of common life" (52, emphases added). When Fordyce deplores the fact that "almost all [novels] leave the female readers with this persuasion at best, that it is their business to get husbands at any rate, by whatever means" (1: 155-56), he could be describing the preoccupation of female "matchmaker[s]," women such as Miss Margland and Selina Stanhope who insist upon "the necessity of *bringing the young ladies out*, and the duty of *thinking of their establishment*" (*Belinda* 333; *Camilla* 54, orig. emphases).

Anxieties about the dangers of the public world for "Female Youth, when straying from the mother's careful wing" correspond with and help to explain fears about the effects of novel-reading on young women (*Camilla* 645-6). Novels were seen to precipitate a young woman's socialization in such a way that did not allow for proper guidance. In his harangue, "On Novel Reading" (1778), The Reverend Vicemius Knox decries the insidious influence of novels on the young: "In vain is youth secluded from the corruptions of the living world. Books are commonly allowed them with little

restriction, as innocent amusements: yet these often pollute the heart in the recesses of the closet, inflame the passions at a distant from temptation and teach all the malignity of vice in solitude” (306). Assertions that novel reading “frequently create[d] a susceptibility of impression and a premature warmth of tender emotions” underpinned assumptions that novels, ultimately, “hurr[ied women] into marriages terminating in unhappiness” (Gisborne *An Enquiry* 217). In her *Letters on Education* (1790), Catherine Macaulay jumps to this conclusion:

Many trips to Scotland are undoubtedly projected and executed, and many unfortunate connections formed, from the influence which novels gain over the mind; and though criminal amours are in general censured in these works, yet an imprudent conduct through life, is often the consequence of an improper association of ideas formed in youth. (144)

Anti-novel discourse took shape around this fear that women might “come out” prematurely in the realm of the imagination, a sort of socialization beyond the jurisdiction of patriarchal codes. Moreover, this premature entry into heterosocial intercourse, albeit in a fictional realm, was deemed to precipitate unhappy marital establishments. Lawrence Stone recapitulates these late eighteenth-century anxieties: “Thanks to notions imbibed from this reading, young people fell headlong into the arms of whoever took their fancy, and, if their parents raised objections, they ran away to Scotland to get married in a hurry” (284).

Just as Chapone remarks on the propensity of “*fictitious stories*” to “inflame the passions,” Mary Wollstonecraft lambastes the “reveries of stupid novelists, who ... work up stale tales, and describe meretricious scenes, all retailed in a sentimental jargon, which

equally tend to corrupt the taste, and draw the heart aside from its daily [domestic] duties” (183). In terms of my appropriation of Girard’s schematic approach to desire, it is worth considering the way Wollstonecraft accentuates the conflict between these novels “draw[ing] the heart” one way and the institution of the sentimental family, which depended on women’s “hearts” being directed towards and completely committed to their domestic duties.

Following the arguments of Chapone and Wollstonecraft, Burney and Edgeworth consider a distinction between *good* and *bad* reading material with respect to how texts reinforce or undermine domestic ideology. While they invoke anxieties about the ignescent properties of novels, they infer that *some* novels might reinforce an ideological equation of female happiness and domesticity. In their *Essays on Practical Education* (1815, rev. ed.), Maria and her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, infer a distinction between reading certain (good) novels, and reading “sentimental stories and books of mere entertainment,” which “induces indifference for those common pleasures and occupations which, however trivial in themselves, constitute by far the greatest portion of our daily happiness” (1: 426). In their novels, Burney and Edgeworth invoke the social anxieties crystallizing around the emerging genre in order to unsettle the assumption that *all* novels were inflammatory and misleading. In the Preface of her first novel, *Evelina* (1778), Burney adopts the same inflammatory rhetoric used in anti-novel discourse: “the distemper they have spread seems incurable, . . . their contagion bids defiance to the medicine of advice and reprehension” (xiii). However, she makes an appeal for the approval of her work by distinguishing it from those novels condemned as sources of corruption. Burney and Edgeworth draw this distinction between works of “mere

entertainment,” which were likely to corrupt the desires of young women, and worthwhile novels such as *Evelina*. At the same time, they distinguish between irresponsible, “stupid” novelists and ethically-responsible ones like themselves.

In terms of this distinction, Edgeworth’s explicit evocation of Frances Burney’s *Camilla*, in her own novel *Belinda*, is particularly trenchant. Lady Delacour insists that Belinda dress elegantly for the birthnight celebrations and then adds: “You are thinking that you are like Camilla, and I like Mrs. Mittin—novel reading, as I dare say you have been told by your governess, as I was told by mine, and she by hers, I suppose—novel reading for young ladies is the most dangerous—” (72). Lady Delacour’s conjecture here actually works to question the foundation of these indiscriminate fears. If, for instance, it has crossed Belinda’s mind that Lady Delacour is *like* Mrs. Mittin, then her reading of *Camilla* has instilled wariness and inspired the prudent application of its precepts. We know little about Belinda’s upbringing, except that “she had early been inspired with a taste for domestic pleasures; [and that] she was fond of reading” (8). Further to this, we assume from Lady Delacour’s remark that she has read Burney’s novel. Conceivably, Edgeworth infers that Belinda’s reading of *good* novels, such as *Camilla*, has reinforced her domestic values and countered the influence of her aunt. Selina Stanhope is preoccupied with securing an “establishment” for her niece. According to Fordyce, the majority of novels fuel this same preoccupation. Here, however, Edgeworth proposes that *Belinda*, like its counterpart *Camilla*, might have the opposite effect on its readers.

In *The Rambler* No. 4, Samuel Johnson urges that the purpose of novels should be “to initiate youth by mock encounters in the art of necessary defence, and to introduce prudence without impairing virtue” (7).¹ On the one hand, women should be gradually

exposed to the menacing elements of the social world; on the other hand, their innocence and virtue should be rigorously safeguarded. Burney and Edgeworth foreground the complementary yet fraught relationship between reading and socialization in their novels. They emphasize the role of novels in providing constructive commentary to assist this initiation process; at the same time, they register anxieties about the power of novels in fast-tracking this process, and leading young women astray. In her account of the dangers which beset Eugenia Tyrold and Mrs. Berlington, Burney underscores the harmful effects of reading epic novels, romances and sentimental poetry. As she draws this connection, she implicitly distinguishes *Camilla* from these insidious genres. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth offers an account of Clarence Hervey's Rousseauian project of cultivating the perfect wife for himself. In her depiction of Rachel Hartley/Virginia St. Pierre, Edgeworth responds to fears surrounding inadequate maternal supervisors and inappropriate reading material. She also accentuates the negative implications of these fears when they motivate men to sequester young women from all intercourse with the world. Like Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth takes issue with the way men "weaken [women's] bodies and cramp their minds," as part of a programme to "domesticate" them (Wollstonecraft 64). Ultimately, Clarence's scheme backfires when he realizes that this ignorant young woman cannot make him happy.

Eugenia, Mrs. Berlington and Virginia St. Pierre

In *Camilla* and *Belinda*, Burney and Edgeworth continually evoke and respond to anxieties about the effects of novel reading on young women.² According to Warner "the antinovel discourse is haunted by the specter of the erotically aroused (usually female)

body, absorbed in novel reading” (211). In this climate of anxiety, novelists like Burney and Edgeworth fretted about how their works might be received. At the same time, they “made the female a metaphor of the mis-reader—gulled by narrative into improper excitements, released by the private experience of a text into a realm of otherwise prohibited fantasy” (Mullan 97).³ Burney and Edgeworth invoke this discursive figure in order to distinguish between romance novels that induce this state of “delusive absorption,” and their own novels. As John Mullan insists, this registration of the female imagination fuels the “myth of the disreputable text, a text which is always other than the one being written” (97). The characters of Mrs. Berlington and Virginia St. Pierre provide images for the “absorbed” reader. However, as Michael McKeon articulates, the reader-within-the-narrative “facilitates narrative pedagogy, the instruction of the reader by the author-narrator” (678). By extension, this figure supports the author-narrator’s engagement in a polemic on novels and women’s reading practices.

In the case of Eugenia, Burney explains that she has never read any novels (315). Burney implies that novels, rather than precipitating Eugenia’s unhappy situation with regard to Alphonso Bellamy and leading her to Gretna Green, might have provided Eugenia with tools to mitigate the influence of the epic romances and histories she has been brought up on. When Bellamy declares his love for her, Eugenia is no better equipped to perceive his ulterior motive for wanting to marry her than the illiterate servants, Molly Mill and Tommy Hood, who convey his letters. Burney indicates that:

Having read no novels, her imagination had never been awakened to scenes of this kind; and what she had gathered upon such subjects in the poetry and history she had studied with Dr. Orkborne, had only impressed her fancy in proportion as

love before the character of heroism, and the lover that of a hero. Though highly therefore romantic, her romance was not the common adoption of a circulating library: it was simply that of elevated sentiments, formed by animated credulity playing upon youthful inexperience. (315)

The distinction Burney delineates between romance of the “common adoption,” and romance of “animated sentiments,” allows her to distinguish *Camilla* from both sources of romance. She proffers *Camilla* as a novel of social experience and education.

Burney invokes another misreading figure in order to distinguish *Camilla* from these two sources of romance. In many respects, Eugenia Tyrold and Mrs. Berlington are antithetical figures. However, both see the world through a particular lens, tinted by the material they read. Eugenia Tyrold reads the world according to an epic formula, expecting “nobility and absolute honor” from everyone (Doody 243). Similarly, Mrs. Berlington perceives the world through a romantic lens: “whatever was most noble or tender in romance, she felt promptly in her heart, and conceived to be general” (487). As Burney figures it, Mrs. Berlington’s penchant for reading romances nearly leads her to committing adultery. Just as Eugenia is duped into believing Bellamy is truly in love with her, and not after her fortune, Mrs. Berlington convinces herself that her liaison with Bellamy is in no way compromising, because she is already a married woman.

In her description of Mrs. Berlington, Burney summons fears associated with women’s unbridled imaginations: “to all that was thus most fascinating to others, she joined unhappily all that was most dangerous to herself; an heart the most susceptible, sentiments the most romantic, and an imagination the most exalted” (487). Like Mrs. Berlington, *Camilla* has “an imagination that submitted to no control” (84). In terms of

their excessive sensibilities, Burney aligns these two young women. However, she highlights the differences in their upbringings as if to measure and document the “triple relationship” between reading material and maternal influences. Despite her ardent imagination and youthful capriciousness, Camilla’s desires are kept in abeyance, according to the maxims of her father and the example of her mother. By contrast, Mrs. Berlington lacks the influence of parents and role-models to regulate her behaviour and mitigate her desires.

Mrs. Tyrold leaves Camilla at the moment of her entering the world. However, in her absence, other characters frequently invoke her name, and this reminds Camilla of the domestic values she embodies. For example, Edgar warns Camilla about Mrs Berlington: “At present, unexperienced and unsuspecting, her dangers may be yours. You are too young for such a risk. Fly, fly from it, my dear Miss Camilla! ... as if the voice of your mother were calling out to caution you” (476).⁴ In contrast with Camilla, Burney points out that Mrs. Berlington “had been an orphan from earliest years, and left, with an only brother, to the care of a fanatical maiden aunt, who had taught her nothing but her faith and her prayers” (487). Mrs. Berlington has no recourse to an earlier relationship with her mother to obviate such dangers. Furthermore, the influence of this surrogate maternal figure is highly suspect. While Camilla’s imaginative propensity has been channelled according to the “pure and practical tenets of her exemplary parents,” Mrs. Berlington’s fanatical aunt has not even provided “the smallest instruction upon the practical use of her theoretical piety” (52, 487). Furthermore, Mrs. Berlington has had no-one to supervise her leisure reading and regulate its effects on her desires and values.

In addition to learning her catechisms, Mrs. Berlington has had access to “some common and ill selected novels and romances, which a young lady in the neighbourhood privately lent her to read,” as well as the works of “the Poets” provided by her romantic brother, Melmond. Burney highlights the fact that Mrs. Berlington reads these “ill selected novels and romances” in “private” and can only enjoy these poems “in secret” (487). In terms of Mrs. Berlington’s early and unhappy marriage to Lord Berlington, Burney implies that the material she reads, rather than precipitating this marriage and dragging her to the altar, simply fail to reveal to Mrs Berlington: “how essential to [her] own peace was an amiable companion” (487, 425). Lord O’Lerney remarks that she “was carried straight from the nursery to the altar, and, I fear, not very judiciously nor happily” (417). O’Lerney’s remark anticipates Dr. Marchmont’s comment about the necessary protection afforded to young women by the “maternal wing” (646). Orphaned and left to a fanatical aunt, Mrs. Berlington has no-one to shelter and guide her and no model of a happy marriage to graft her expectations on to.

As Burney registers the fraught relationship between female role-models and reading material in terms of directing the desires of young women, she foregrounds the tension between seclusion and socialization, innocence and experience. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth addresses this same tension in her story about Rachel Hartley/Virginia St. Pierre. Virginia’s isolation from and ignorance of the world is mirrored structurally in the separation of her story from the novel’s primary narrative, which, ostensibly, canvasses the “coming out” of Belinda Portman. Edgeworth registers common fears surrounding inadequate maternal supervisors and inappropriate reading material. However, she emphasizes the negative implications of these fears when, with the object of safeguarding

their innocence, men sequester young women from all intercourse with the world. On one level, Edgeworth inveighs against the ignescent and misleading tendency of romances. On another, she parodies and impugns the pathetic, indeed romantic, efforts of men to cultivate the perfect wife according to the pedagogical approach outlined in Rousseau's "Sophy, Or Woman".⁵

Clarence Hervey is struck by the simplicity and ingenuousness of Sophy, in contrast with those "women of the world" whom he deplures, and he decides on a plan to cultivate an ideal wife for himself according to Rousseau's model (*Belinda* 362). Rachel Hartley appears to be a "proper object for his purpose". She is beautiful, ignorant and ingenuous, with "a heart wholly unpractised, yet full of sensibility" (362). The girl's grandmother, who has been responsible for her upbringing following the death of her mother, emphasizes that she has been vigilant in secluding Rachel from the world: "In this cottage she has lived with me, away from all the world. You are the first man she ever spoke to.... She is innocence itself!" (366)⁶ However, Clarence comes to realize that this artless young woman cannot make him happy. On the contrary, her ignorance can only conduce to his misery. Following Wollstonecraft's animadversions, Edgeworth derides Rousseau's approach to the education of women. Edgeworth suggests that, while men prize women for their ignorance and docility, these "negative virtues" are conducive to both women's and men's unhappiness (Wollstonecraft 58). Following this argument, Clarence falls in love with the prudent Belinda Portman and comes to regret his investment in Rachel/Virginia.

In *Camilla*, Dr. Marchmont advises Edgar to "forget her wholly as Camilla Tyrold, [and] think of her only as Camilla Mandlebert" (160). While Edgar holds onto

this vision of Camilla as his future wife, the novel focuses on his suspicions about Camilla's character and his jealousy of her friends. Burney foregrounds a process whereby men *determined* the characters of young women, by reflecting on both the nature of the material they read and the characters of their mothers/role-models. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth reverses this process. Having found a "proper object," Clarence renames the young woman Virginia St. Pierre, effectively claiming her as his future wife. He then proceeds to cultivate the ideal he envisions by regulating these maternal and textual influences.

His first priority is to find an ideal maternal figure to superintend her upbringing. Mrs. Ormond combines the qualities, as well as the limitations, essential for this position. Clarence perceives that "she was not a woman of superiour abilities, or of much information; but her excellent temper and gentle disposition won affection, though she had not any talents to excite admiration"(370). Clarence recruits Mrs. Ormond on account of her loyalty and docility, believing that she "would exactly comply with his directions" and that "her want of literature and ingenuity could be supplied by his own care and instruction" (370).

Although Virginia is without immediate family, we can read her relationship with her surrogate mother, Mrs. Ormond, and (paternal) master, Clarence, in terms of the parental-filial dynamics of the sentimental family. Within the family, young women were encouraged to *choose* their mothers as their *friends* (West 3: 76). Of course, mothers were not chosen by daughters; rather, daughters were encouraged to relate to them in this way. As the "chosen companion" of her daughter (West), the mother was elemental in guiding the young woman's reading practices. In *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous*

(1793), Mary Hays encourages mothers to “[a]ccustom your daughters by a cheerful and amiable frankness, to do nothing without consulting you; let them read with you, and let the choice of their books be free” (qtd. *Analytical Review* 383). Hays recommends that mothers relinquish control in such a way that demonstrates their confidence in the prudence of their daughter. However, she reassures her addressee that this gesture will actually ensure her influence.⁷

Clarence insists that Mrs. Ormond preclude his innocent subject from reading “common novels”. However, as Edgeworth notes, he “made no objection to romances: these he thought, breathed a spirit favourable to female virtue, exalted the respect for chastity, and inspired enthusiastic admiration of honour, generosity, truth, and all the noble qualities which dignify human nature” (380). Interestingly, Clarence’s assumption corresponds with that of Dr. Orkborne who encourages Eugenia Tyrold to read epic romances that might inspire “elevated sentiments”. The romances Virginia reads “awaken her curiosity” about another realm of experience beyond the confines of her own, leaving her with an “insatiable” “appetite for books” (380). Virginia finds a volume of *Paul and Virginia*, written by Jacques Henri Bernadin de Saint-Pierre, in Mrs. Ormond’s room and her curiosity reaches fever pitch: “She knew, that her own name had been taken from this romance; Mr Hervey had her picture painted in this character; and these circumstances strongly excited her curiosity...” (380). Mrs. Ormond monitors Virginia’s reading of this romance and observes her deepening “absorption” in it (Warner).

In an unobtrusive manner, Mrs. Ormond makes her presence felt and asks, rather than demands: “Will not you let me read over your shoulder, along with you? Won’t you let me share your pleasure?” (380). Virginia experiences a tension comparable to that

which Camilla Tyrold experiences when her parents probe her about her sudden return to Etherington. Just as Camilla registers the pressure to divulge her feelings to her parents (219), Virginia feels compelled to acquiesce with Mrs. Ormond's request and she "resign[s] the book reluctantly" (380). Mrs Ormond reads the following passage from *Paul and Virginia* and then uses it to enter into discourse about Virginia's situation and feelings:

She suddenly left the dangerous shades, and went to her mother, to seek protection against herself. She wished to reveal her distress to her; she pressed her hands, and the name of Paul was on her lips; but the oppression of her heart took away all utterance, and, laying her hand upon her mother's bosom, she only wept.
(Belinda 381)

Mrs. Ormond then invokes her maternal authority: "And am I not a mother to you, my beloved Virginia?" (381) In response, Virginia embraces Mrs Ormond. She "laid her head upon her friend's bosom, as if she wished to realize the illusion, and to be the Virginia of whom she had been reading" (381). Virginia's response demonstrates how the affective (surrogate) mother-daughter bond encouraged young women to confide or confess.

In spite of her misgivings about the Virginia's reading practices, Mrs. Ormond "indulge[s] her taste" for these romances (380). Ultimately, these romances eclipse the presence of Mrs. Ormond, as well as Virginia's domestic values: "Reading, indeed, was now almost her only pleasure; for Mrs Ormond's conversation was seldom entertaining, and Virginia had no longer those occupations, which filled a portion of her day at the cottage" (380). As Edgeworth demonstrates in this fictional example, this sort of

“absorptive” reading of romances was seen to “induce indifference for those common pleasures and occupations” and, ultimately, threaten an ideology of domestic happiness.

Virginia’s isolation, coupled with her rapacious appetite for romances, also skews her perception of the world and, in particular, stifles her capacity to understand men. In *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools* (1797), Erasmus Darwin infers that “young women, who are secluded from the other sex from their infancy” are unable to “form any judgment of men,” unless they are “assisted by such books, as delineate manners” (34). Mrs. Smith, “a plain farmer’s wife,” presumes to opine on Rachel’s upbringing under the care of her vigilant, somewhat fanatical, grandmother: “But there, I thought, she was quite wrong; for seeing the girl must, sometime or other, speak to men, where was the use of her not learning to do it properly?” (368-9) Later in the novel, Edgeworth reveals the prescience of this remark. As a result of her seclusion from the world, coupled with the restrictions placed on the material she reads, Virginia has no capacity to *read* or interact with men if they do not fit with the model represented by Clarence Hervey or that of the chivalric knight. When Sir Philip Baddely and Mr Rochfort scale the wall to catch glimpse of Clarence’s mistress, she is stunned:

they seemed to her a species of animals, for which she had no name, and of which she had no prototype in her imagination. That they were men she saw; but they were clearly not *Clarence Herveys*: they bore still less resemblance to the courteous knights of chivalry. Their language was so different from any of the books she had read, and any of the conversation she had heard, that they were scarcely intelligible. (384, orig. emphasis)

This is exactly the problem Eugenia Tyrold faces. She is proficient in the Classical languages of Greek and Latin, and conversant with the conventional formula of epic romances; however, she has no precedent for reading the dubious motivations of the man by whom she is beset.

In *Belinda*, Mr. Percival ruminates on the effects of poetry or romance in terms of shaping young people's "early ideas of love, before they have actually felt the passion". He insists that "the image which they have in their own minds of the *beau ideal* is cast upon the first objects they afterward behold" (255).⁸ In Burney's novel, Mrs. Arlbery describes this effect:

Every damsel, as she enters the world, has some picture ready painted upon her imagination, of an object worthy to enslave her: and before any experience forms her judgment, or any comparison her taste, she is the dupe of the first youth who presents himself to her, in the firm persuasion of her ductile fancy, that he is just the model it had previously created. (366)

Mrs. Arlbery perceives that, for Camilla, Edgar represents the "hero" (366). It would appear that the novel purports to examine and expose this sort of fixation, rather than perpetuate it. Mrs. Arlbery takes it upon herself to "open [Camilla's] eyes, which have now a film before them, and to let her see that Mandlebert has no other pre-eminence, than that of being the first young man with whom she became acquainted" (367).

Through the pregnant observations of this character, Burney challenges the way romances channel the desires of young woman, and, also, the way men control the heterosexual economy and deny women the right to pursue their own desires. At the end

of the novel, Camilla gets her “hero,” but, as I will discuss, Mrs. Arlbery’s subversive commentary haunts this conventional denouement.

In her story about Virginia, Edgeworth challenges the way romances channel the desires of young women, as well as the way men control women’s desires and insinuate themselves into the position of the hero. These romances channel Virginia’s desires and she fantasizes about a figure she sees in a painting. It is clear to Virginia that Clarence wants her to be his wife—“it had been betrayed, as plainly as looks could speak” (375)—and Virginia feels torn between her duty to her master and her captivation with the heroes she reads of. In her confusion, she confides to Mrs. Ormond: “I love some of them better than I do him” (383). Mrs. Ormond recapitulates Mr. Percival’s observation: “Well, if you had seen more pictures, you would not see this so often [in your dreams]. It was the first you ever saw, and very naturally you remember it.” (383) Admittedly, Mrs. Ormond refers to an actual picture that Virginia has seen, but she seems to infer that romances present the same picture over and over again. Like Burney, Edgeworth infers that a novel such as *Belinda* might serve to “open [the young woman’s] eyes” to this process of inculcation. Burney and Edgeworth comment on the way romances fuel the desires of young woman, as well as the way moral and pedagogical literature attempts to reclaim and regulate women’s desires in accordance with domestic ideology.

Clarence charges Mrs. Ormond for leading him and Virginia to “the brink of misery” (470). However, Edgeworth imputes Virginia’s predicament to her diet of reading romances instead of novels, as prescribed by Clarence. At the same time, considering the role of the maternal figure in mediating this effect, Edgeworth does attribute some responsibility to Mrs. Ormond. Edgeworth asserts that, although Mrs.

Ormond had “the best possible intentions,” she “had not that reach of mind and variety of resource, necessary to direct the exquisite sensibility and ardent imagination of Virginia” (379). Mrs Ormond’s incapacity to be “entertaining,” coupled with her “want of literature” is implicated in her failure in this maternal role (380, 370). This brings to bear on an association between maternal influences and literary influences, as Burney and Edgeworth engage with issues surrounding reading and pleasure and, as female novelists, negotiate and experiment with different approaches to their young female readers within this fraught polemical terrain.

According to Michael McKeon, the figure of the reader-within-the-narrative “facilitates narrative pedagogy, the instruction of the reader by the author-narrator” (678). Arguably, Burney and Edgeworth depict these characters in order to caution their own readers against this delusory engagement, at the same time that they summon maternal figures to preclude this situation. A fictional character such as Eugenia Tyrold, “unpractised ... in those discriminative powers, which dive into their own conceptions to discover the latent springs, the multifarious and contradictory sources of human actions and propensities,” serves to support and legitimate Burney’s endeavour to register, however faintly, man’s “perverseness of spirit” (271, 7). Alphonso Bellamy might “injure” Eugenia. However, this “mock encounter” might serve as a caution to young readers to be on their guard. Through the characters of Eugenia Tyrold, Mrs. Berlington and Virginia St. Pierre, Burney and Edgeworth engage in a polemic on women’s reading practices. They acknowledge and seem to confirm arguments levelled against novels. However, they are also interested in defending their own projects. Burney and Edgeworth

proffer their own novels as valuable reading material for young women, because, in Samuel Johnson's terms, they provide "mock encounters in the art of necessary defence".

Mrs. Arlbery and Lady Delacour

In reading the figure of the (mis)reader as she appears in both *Camilla* and *Belinda*, we can see how Burney and Edgeworth engage with a polemic on novel-reading, and how they register the dialectical relationship between reading material and maternal supervisors in such a way that, implicitly, defends their own novels as well as their own role in directing the desires of their young readers. This section considers the ambiguous female homosocial relationships discussed in the previous chapter as manifestations of a projected relationship between the novelists and their imagined readers, and how these textual relationships allow Burney and Edgeworth to negotiate polemical ideas about female desire, happiness and independence through the dynamic of women's homosocial relations.

In *Camilla*, the simple notion of a young woman learning "English" is fraught with conflicting ideological and pedagogical imperatives. As such, it provides a way of thinking about issues surrounding appropriate reading material and appropriate role-models. While Dr. Orkborne teaches Eugenia the Greek and Latin languages, her Classical education is implicated in her ignorance of the world. Like her preceptor, she has never "mingled with the world," and her English is wholly unexercised in the social arena (271). Orkborne's insistence that "any body can teach her English" is rendered sharply ironic (122). In the novel, Mrs. Arlbery attempts to bridge the spheres of experience and instruction. She represents a mode of "English" that she believes the

young woman should learn. This alternative discourse centres on questioning the axiomatic teachings of Mr. Tyrold whose homiletic address to Camilla reads like a chapter in a conduct book. Instead of blind adherence to a doctrine of female self-denial, the young woman should acknowledge and, then, pursue her desires.

In *Camilla*, the antithetical characters Mrs. Arlbery and Dr. Marchmont recognize the need for “Female Youth” to have appropriate female role-models, “when straying from the mother’s careful wing” (645-6); and they remark on the inadequacy of Mr. Tyrold in conducting his daughters in the world. However, the ideological positions that produce these assessments are very different and this sets up the central rivalry in the novel between Mrs. Arlbery and Edgar Mandlebert. Speaking to his pupil, Edgar, Dr. Marchmont points out the deficiencies of Mr. Tyrold: “All that belongs to religion, and to principle, he feels, and he has taught; but the impediments [women] have to encounter in a commerce with mankind, he could not point out, for he does not know.” He insists that, just as a baby cannot “go alone in the nursery,” a young woman cannot be left unsupervised “in the world” (646). Mrs. Arlbery also infers that the limited purview of Mr. Tyrold renders him unqualified to conduct his daughters in this pivotal and precarious stage of their lives. Approaching the issue gently, so as not to offend Camilla, Mrs. Arlbery remarks on Mr. Tyrold’s unfamiliarity with social conventions: “Your father, my dear, is a very wise man, and a very excellent preacher: but what does he know of Tunbridge Wells? ... [T]he sole knowledge he has ever obtained, is from some treatise upon the mineral waters.... [F]or the regulation of a country dance, be assured he will do much better to make you over to Sir Sedley, or to me.” (415)

When Mrs. Arlbery nominates herself as an ideal candidate to supervise Camilla's "coming out," Burney presents a new perspective on the requirements of this critical role. Dr. Marchmont conceives that the ideal female role-model is committed to an ideology of domestic happiness and, most importantly, receptive to men's commands. Mrs. Arlbery neither aspires nor makes pretensions to the sort of feminine ideal Dr. Marchmont envisages. Arguably, she is much more aware of the "impediments [young women] have to encounter in a commerce with mankind" because she is not confined to this domestic framework. Mrs. Arlbery repeatedly reminds Camilla: "I speak but as a being of the world I live in: though I address one that knows nothing about it." (780). Her charisma and social prowess seem to recommend her for this assignment; however, in the eyes of Dr. Marchmont, these "qualities" render her unsuitable and threatening.

The evolving relationship that Burney registers between Mrs. Arlbery and Camilla allows her to simultaneously indulge and displace her ambition to be listened to. Mrs. Arlbery declares that, when women's "youth and beauty ... begin to be somewhat on the wane," "our ambition, then, is how we are listened to" (779). The very project of writing announces the same ambition in Burney. Through the words of Mrs. Arlbery, Burney seems to claim that she has something important to say about the happiness of young women: "I am really uneasy to talk with you; not, believe me, from officiousness nor impertinence, but from a persuasion I may be able to promote your happiness." (454) However, as Margaret Doody notes, Burney is reluctant to make any definitive statements about "the human heart" (220). According to Doody, Burney's stance on "philosophic ignorance" is disappointing to those readers who expect the "story to give a straight rendering of conduct-book maxims" (220). Burney's reluctance to challenge

these maxims in explicit terms and offer an alternative statement about female happiness reflects the pressure exerted by dominant discourse on this subject. Through Mrs. Arlbery, Burney not only questions, but refutes, the assumption that women were *naturally* passive and submissive, an assumption which underpinned an ideology of domestic happiness. However, she seems to dissociate herself from this character in order to rehearse anxieties about dubious female role-models and novels.

Hester Chapone enjoins women to “avoid everything, both in books and in conversation, that conveys impure ideas, however neatly cloathed in decent language, or recommended to your taste ... by elegance or stile, or force of wit or genius.” (79). Similarly, John Gregory urges women to “shun ... that species of reading and conversation which warms the imagination” (52). In *Camilla*, Mrs. Arlbery embodies these coextensive fears. The frivolous and somewhat satirical tone of her conversation seems to resonate with concerns associated with the triviality and apparent innocuousness of novels. As Burney describes: “She then spoke of the ball, public breakfast, and raffle; chatting both upon persons and things with an easy gaiety, and sprightly negligence, extremely amusing to Camilla.” (247)

In this characterization, Burney merges fears about the magnetic power of captivating women and the “absorptive” power of an attractive text (Warner). Camilla becomes “wholly engrossed” as she watches this woman (74). When Camilla goes to visit, Burney emphasizes Mrs. Arlbery’s capacity to “absorb” her guest: “in the course of the many hours they now spent completely together, she was set so entirely at her ease, by the good humour of Mrs. Arlbery, that she lost all fear of her wit.” (247) Burney evokes fears about the attractiveness and adroitness of Mrs. Arlbery, as she personifies,

both, the frighteningly independent woman *and* the dangerously captivating text. The tension that Burney faces is that, while she seems to distance her own writing project from the sort of narcissistic pursuit Mrs. Arlbery engages in, she too wants to attract her readers and this character seems to be critical in achieving this.

In *The Rambler* No. 4, Samuel Johnson considers the current taste for works of fiction (novels) whose “province is to bring about natural events by easy means” and, thereby, “exhibit life in its true state” (6). Johnson suggests that “these familiar histories may perhaps be made of greater use than the solemnities of professed morality, and convey knowledge of vice and virtue with more efficacy than axioms and definition.” (7). In *Camilla*, Mrs. Arlbery’s arch commentary provides a counterpoint to the “solemnities of professed morality” Johnson evokes (7). However, Mrs. Arlbery claims that her project is not dissimilar to that of the sage:

‘I pass, I know,’ continued she, ‘for a mere creature of whim; but, believe me, there is no small touch of philosophy in the composition of my vagaries.

Extremes, you know, have a mighty knack of meeting. Thus I, like the sage, though not with sage-like motives, save time that must otherwise be wasted; brave rules that would murder common sense; and when I have made people stare, turn another way that I may laugh at them.’ (246)

Mrs. Arlbery’s blithe tone allows Burney to downplay the subversive import of this comment. At the same time, this equivocal claim, embedded deep in the narrative and articulated by a dubious female character, might be read as an announcement of Burney’s project. Burney seems to question the way young women came to follow “brave rules” that, ultimately, conduced to their unhappiness.

In *Camilla*, Mr. Tyrold explains that Camilla is “allowed only a negative choice,” and, therefore, must “combat a positive wish” (359).⁹ He exhorts his daughter to “[s]truggle ... against yourself as you would struggle against an enemy. Refuse to listen to a wish, to dwell upon a possibility that opens to your present idea of happiness.” (358) Mrs. Arlbery challenges this crippling “rule” when she urges Camilla to “[t]ake your own way, follow your own humour” (246). Through this discursive opposition, Burney confronts not only women’s pursuit of social pleasures and their defiance of an ideology of domestic heterosexuality, but also a doctrine of female self-denial, as espoused by Mr. Tyrold.

Edgar insists that Camilla relinquish her relationship with Mrs. Arlbery as a way of demonstrating her capacity for self-restraint. When Mrs. Arlbery invites Camilla back to her house, Edgar asks her to decline, deeming it inappropriate that her uncle, with whom she is living, knows nothing of this new acquaintance. Reading this passage, Doody argues that “Edgar ... needs some sign of his power over Camilla, and the arbitrary imposition as law of his wish that she not visit the lady will do” (249). It is apparent that Edgar associates female self-denial with male agency and authority. When Camilla complies with his entreaty, he praises her in such a way that testifies to centrality of women’s self denial to the mode of happiness he envisages: “Amiable Camilla.... this is a self-conquest that I alone, perhaps, expected from you” (108). By implication, Edgar associates Camilla’s relationship with Mrs. Arlbery with self-indulgence or, at least, a sort of independence of a dominant model of female happiness.

As I have discussed, Edgar also requires proof of Camilla’s exclusive partiality for him (179). Camilla’s effort to satisfy an imperative to “repress, repress ... [her] strong

feelings” sits uncomfortably next to the efforts of other characters to ascertain and extract her desires (881-2). The incompatibility of Dr. Marchmont’s advice to Edgar and Mr. Tyrold’s advice to his daughter “exposes the contradictions of female heterosexuality as it is constructed in the period” (Gonda 133). As Mrs. Arlbery recognizes, the “brave rules” espoused by Mr. Tyrold and Dr. Marchmont do indeed “murder common sense”. Camilla cannot reveal to Edgar how she feels about him and, as a result, Edgar cannot offer his hand. According to Claudia Johnson, “[e]njoined by her father to soldierly self-command over the same somatic signs of sensibility (tears, fainting spells, blushes, starts) that Edgar requires on the grounds that they bypass faculties of artful self-control, Camilla is brought to an impasse towards the end of the novel, and death and madness are her only ways out.” (158). Despite the novel’s conventional (happy) ending, Burney emphasizes the crippling effects of eighteenth-century courtship conventions (Zonitch 91).

Burney seems aware of the delicate nature of her project, as she oscillates between the prescriptive voices of Mr. Tyrold and Dr. Marchmont, and the ironic commentary of Mrs. Arlbery. Speaking through this character, Burney endeavours to defend Mrs. Arlbery’s motives, even though these differ from that of the sage. Mrs. Arlbery acknowledges that her approach may be threatening, but she entreats Camilla, just as Burney entreats her readers, to set aside her distrust and disapprobation: “Never judge the heart of a wit ... by the tongue! We have often as good hearts, ay, and as much sense, as the careful prozers who utter nothing but what is right, or heavy thinkers who have too little fancy to say anything that is wrong. But we have as pleasure in our rattle that cruelly runs away with our discretion.” (780) Interestingly, Burney has the

upstanding nobleman, Lord O'Lerney, defend Mrs. Arlbery and, effectively, endorse a favourable *reading* of her. He extols Mrs. Arlbery as “one of the first women I have ever known, for wit and capacity. She has an excellent heart, too; though her extraordinary talents, and her carelessness of opinion make it sometimes, but very unjustly, doubted” (471). Through a neat contrivance of plot, the distrustful Edgar overhears this favourable appraisal. As Burney points out, “[a] good word from Lord O'Lerney quieted many [of Edgar's] fears” (471). It would seem that, through this appraisal within the text, Burney looks to placate readers of this character and of the novel generally.

Huang Mei considers the significance of Burney's “lively” female characters. Mei reads Mrs. Arlbery, like Mrs. Selwyn in *Evelina*, as “an extra *addition* to the story, a tentative ‘What if’ appended to a fully completed sentence: *what if* a woman chooses to be a Selwyn or an Arlbery?” (50, orig. emphasis). Mei suggests that these characters are “free, dangling, capable of doing something strange and outrageous” and, as such, they are “not incorporated into either the plot or the ‘moral’ design of the novel” (50). Ultimately, Burney removes this questionable character from the narrative, and reassures her readers that Camilla does not choose to be “an Arlbery”. Following the “precepts” of her father and the “example” of her good mother (362), Camilla *chooses* to be a Mrs. Mandlebert, or, rather, she allows herself to *be chosen*. Burney invokes Mrs. Arlbery's presence only briefly in the closing pages of the novel, noting that Mrs. Arlbery realized “the error of her judgment, as to the means of attaching Mandlebert” and hastened to congratulate Camilla on her marriage (910). Mrs. Arlbery is forced to acknowledge Camilla's right to “[t]ake [her] own way”. Of course, Camilla's newfound (domestic) independence and happiness is limited to the home and circumscribed by the authority of

her husband. As Elisabeth Gruner notes, Burney “inscribes Camilla’s happiness in (an advantageous) marriage, and in accepting Edgar’s authority” (34).

Ideologically, as Caroline Gonda notes, “the successful construction of female heterosexuality is a delicate balancing act” (34). Arguably, the reunions at the end of *Camilla* enact this balance. Gruner describes the end of *Camilla* as an “orgy of domesticity” (32). Camilla’s reunion with her mother signifies her internalization of those domestic precepts her mother exemplifies. Her reunion with Edgar marks the promise that these maternal and domestic values will be reproduced as a result of her marriage. As Camilla embraces this model of female happiness, she renounces her relationship with a woman who embodies and promotes female independence and self-indulgence. Camilla realizes the “danger, for one so new in the world, of chusing friends distinct from those of her family” (903). Camilla’s reflection, here, recalls Edgar’s earlier advice that she should not enter into a friendship with a woman who is unknown to her family (108). Camilla puts herself under the “protection” of her “beloved Mother” and, then, in the final pages of the novel, she puts herself in the “lasting possession” of new husband (895, 908). Burney insists that Camilla makes this choice, and she sidelines Mrs. Arlbery in order to allow for this normative reading.

We can read the conclusion of Maria Edgeworth’s novel, *Belinda*, in terms of upholding this normative construction of domestic heterosexuality as well. Just as Camilla is inspired by the domestic happiness of her parents, Belinda is inspired by domestic happiness of Lord and Lady Percival, whose marriage is founded on mutual affection and respect. In her depiction of their marriage, Edgeworth forwards a Wollstonecraftian model of domestic relations. Mr. Percival’s wife is “the partner of his

warmest affections” and “also the partner of his most serious occupations” (216). But, while the novel follows the socialization of Belinda Portman, it focuses primarily on the resocialization of Lady Delacour. Edgeworth characterizes Lady Delacour as “the most dissipated and unprincipled viscountess in town” and, as such, a dubious role-model for the young Belinda (333). At the end of the novel, Lady Delacour reforms her ways, reconciles with her husband and, finally, reunites with her estranged daughter, Helena. As in *Camilla*, the mother-daughter relationship and the marital relationship are reaffirmed at the end of the novel. On a superficial level at least, the “delicate balancing act” is realized.

In *Belinda*, Lady Delacour sees herself embroiled in an ontological and ideological struggle with the *good* Lady Percival, and grapples with these oppositional models of femininity and the adverse conceptions of happiness and heterosexuality they entail. Whereas Edgar invokes and deploys an opposition between *good* and *bad* femininity, between self-denial and self-indulgence, in order to oppugn Camilla’s friendship with Mrs. Arlbery and counter her efforts to provoke the competition between men, it is Lady Delacour who invokes and comes to internalize this opposition in Edgeworth’s novel. This permutation speaks directly to the efforts of men to streamline women’s aspirations by extolling a feminine ideal and by promoting women’s surveillance and censure of each other. Essentially, Lady Delacour’s efforts to excoriate the model of femininity/happiness represented by Lady Percival recoil on her, and her fixation with her another woman engenders her own internal conflict. Whereas Mrs. Arlbery signals the possibility that a woman might live (happily) outside this normative

framework and, as such, exercises considerable sway over the plot of *Camilla*, Lady Delacour seems to represent women's impuissance in the face of this dominant narrative.

Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that "[t]he intolerable awareness of internal division is a dominant feminine experience" ("Ev'ry Woman" 36). In *Belinda*, Lady Delacour epitomises this conflicted condition. Belinda recognizes that:

Abroad and at home, lady Delacour was two different persons. Abroad she appeared all life, spirit, and good humour—at home, listless, fretful and melancholy; she seemed like a spoiled actress off the stage, over stimulated by applause, and exhausted by the exertions of supporting a fictitious character. (10-11, emphases added).

By invoking these physical coordinates, Edgeworth distinguishes between a normative model of domestic happiness represented by the home, and the possibility that women might find happiness outside of this structure. Arguably, Lady Delacour's internal conflict bespeaks the central tension of the novel, as it negotiates these opposing ideas.¹⁰

The chapters, "Jealousy" and "Domestic Happiness" chart the movement of Belinda as she leaves the Delacours at Harrowgate, having accepted an offer to live with the Percival family at Oakley-park (198-210; 211-224). Moreover, these chapter titles encapsulate the structural and ideological import of this movement to the narrative as a whole, and provide keys to discussing the intersecting relationships between Lady Delacour, Lady Percival and Belinda. In many respects, Belinda's move is reminiscent of Mr. Percival's former rejection of Lady Delacour and his subsequent marriage to another woman. In addition, it is a salient reminder to Lady Delacour that her daughter, Helena, is also in Lady Percival's care. This history of rejection informs the transferral of Lady

Delacour's jealousy from Belinda, who, apparently, attracted the attentions of Lord Delacour, to Lady Percival, who seems to have replaced Lady Delacour in the esteem of the young woman she "loved! trusted! admired! adored! respected! revered...!" (183). As Lady Percival replaces Lady Delacour as Belinda's female companion and role-model, a transferral which evokes Lady Percival's adoption of Helena, the exemplary mother figure comes to replace the beautiful young woman in the jealous attention of Lady Delacour.

Ostensibly, the primary narrative follows the "coming out" of Belinda Portman. However, Edgeworth is more concerned with the resocialization of Lady Delacour in line with the discursive narrative that the "pattern woman" Lady Percival articulates and embodies (121). Lady Percival suggests that Lady Delacour's rejection of her domestic role and her compulsive pursuit of pleasure might be understood as a temporary glitch in an overarching and ineluctable narrative, a case of arrested development or, rather, a protracted "coming out" period: "This is only one of the transformations of fashion—the period of her enchantment will soon be at an end, and she will return to her natural character" (105).

While the novel ostensibly reinforces an assumption about women's "natural character" and "real happiness," Edgeworth seeks to expose the strategies deployed by men to propagate this two-part ideological equation (105, 362). Lady Delacour disdains "pattern women" and rejects the way such an appellation is bestowed upon women as a reward for fulfilling their *natural*, apparently "saintly" role (Badinter 190). She endeavours to denigrate Lady Percival's "kindness to Helena," emphasizing that "it all goes under the head of obedience" (121). Lady Delacour explains that "her ladyship is

paid for it by an accession of character—she has the reward of having it said, ‘Oh, lady Anne Percival is quite a pattern woman!’ I hate pattern women,—I hope I may never see lady Anne, for I’m sure I should detest her beyond all things living” (121). Through this comment, Lady Delacour indirectly challenges the standards that women are exhorted to aspire to and according to which their femininity is judged. Furthermore, she seems to question Lady Percival’s brand of femininity, suggesting that she is too perfect and somewhat unrealistic. At the same time, Lady Delacour indirectly challenges the assumption, as expressed by Clarence Hervey, that women who did not embrace this domestic, maternal role, women “whose tastes were perverted, and whose feelings were depraved, were equally incapable of conferring, or enjoying real happiness” (362).

Arguably, Lady Delacour repudiates the myth of “maternal instinct, or the spontaneous love of all mothers for their children” (Badinter 117), at the same time that she buys into, or simply cannot evade, this pervasive ideology. Lady Delacour’s fixation with another woman displaces as well as evinces her own “internal division,” as she rejects and covets the model of femininity and domestic happiness exemplified by Lady Percival. In Girardian terms, she is “torn between two opposite feelings toward [her] model—the most submissive reverence and the most intense malice” (10). Her “secret admiration” of this woman generates self-hatred, as much as hatred towards the Other (Girard 11).¹¹ In terms of the perennial antagonism between male and female homosocial relationships, Lady Delacour’s fixation with Lady Percival reveals how women might come to discipline their own independence, or, rather, how patriarchal discourse envisaged and encouraged this (competitive) function of female homosociality. Lady

Delacour's outburst against "pattern women" reeks of envy and betrays her desire to fit this model and have it said that *she* "is quite a pattern woman!"

Towards the end of the novel she lectures her daughter: "do not throw away your life as I have thrown away mine, to win the praise of fools. Had I used but half the talents I possess, as I hope you will use yours, I might have been an ornament to my sex, I might have been a lady Anne Percival" (298). Lady Delacour appears to play out her desire to be this didactic "ornament to [her] sex" and, in particular, a role-model for her daughter. In many respects, Lady Delacour becomes an instrument in supporting what seems to be the novel's didactic argument. As she reflects on and regrets her past, Lady Delacour becomes more than simply a "spoiled actress" or a "fictitious character" in a novel, that erring woman who is lead astray by her dubious female friend (11). As she discusses her past with Belinda, and, then, advises her daughter Helena about the importance of *good* female friends, she becomes an agent in reversing this trend (289).

It would appear that the didactic argument of the novel follows the reformation of Lady Delacour. While Edgeworth seems to set up this normative reading, she is decidedly ambivalent about the way dominant discourse incorporates such characters. Lady Delacour acknowledges her didactic role in the novel, at the same time that she confronts this reading. She explains to Belinda that she was once open and generous: "You see how the best dispositions may be depraved! What am I now? Fit only to 'point a moral, or adorn a tale'. A mismatched, misplaced, miserable perverted being." (266)¹² Lady Delacour's comment anticipates and vaguely protests the way she will be read by other characters in the novel (such as Clarence), as much as it works to direct this normative reading. She imagines how she might be incorporated into moral and

pedagogical discourse, as the counterpoint to the “pattern woman”. While she questions this assimilative reading, it is apparent that she cannot see herself outside of this dichotomous formulation of *good* and *bad* femininity. When she asks, “What am I now?” she seems to impugn the way this discourse attaches these appellations to women, at the same time that she seems to rely on this process in order to understand herself.

In *Camilla* and *Belinda*, Mrs. Arlbery and Lady Delacour present ideas about female happiness and agency, which conflict with a vision of domestic happiness and heterosexuality as it rested on women’s complaisance and self-denial. At the same time, they observe and challenge the strategies deployed by men to programme women’s conduct and desires according to this vision. In *Camilla*, Burney casts Mrs. Arlbery in discursive opposition to Dr. Marchmont and Mr. Tyrold, an opposition which underpins the overt rivalry between Mrs. Arlbery and Edgar Mandlbart, the pupil and ward of these two men respectively. Mrs. Arlbery seems to demonstrate to Camilla, and to readers of the novel, the possibility that women might defy the prescriptive definitions of female happiness propounded by men such as Dr. Marchmont and Mr. Tyrold. In conflict with a dominant assumption of female passivity, and in defiance of men’s strategies for disciplining their desires, women might find happiness by indulging and pursuing their sexual and mercenary desires, and by provoking the sexual desires of men. Instead of simply “allow[ing] the [marital] exchange to take place,” women might undermine, even usurp, men’s control over the heterosexual economy (Lévi-Strauss). In addition, women might find happiness without men in their lives.

In *Belinda*, Edgeworth places the coquettish and effete Lady Delacour in opposition to the domestic paragon Lady Percival, and focuses on women’s

internalization of this ideological construction of femininity. Through the reformation of Lady Delacour, the novel seems to reinforce a circular bio-social assumption that the “natural character” of a woman was passive and complaisant, and that “domestic life ... alone” made a woman “really and permanently happy” (105, 217). According to this normative argument, Lady Delacour’s rejection of her domestic role and her compulsive pursuit of pleasure represents a temporary glitch in an overarching and ineluctable narrative. Seen in this way, Edgeworth accentuates a connection between self-indulgence and self-delusion. Lady Delacour is “enchanted” to the point that she is blind to what will make her truly happy (105).

In apparent contrast with Mrs. Arlbery, Lady Delacour seems to represent the impossibility of defying this twofold ideological assumption. However, Lady Delacour’s impuissance in the face of this domestic narrative does not work simply to affirm it. Instead, the reformation of Lady Delacour signals the pressure exerted by domestic ideology on this character and on the novel generally. Through the commentary of Lady Delacour, Edgeworth highlights the inherent inconsistencies of an ideological programme that sought to cultivate women’s *natural* characters, and deny, as well as discipline, their desires. At the same time, she emphasizes the inexorable nature of this ideological programme, as it reclaims or, rather, subdues the desires of Lady Delacour and, ultimately, places her under the authority of her husband.

Burney and Edgeworth are aware that their novels will be read in terms of a polemical debate about female desire, happiness and independence. They also anticipate the ways this reading will be shaped by conservative assumptions about the inflammatory effects of novel-reading on the desires of young women. Arguably, the evolving

relationships between Mrs. Arlbery and Camilla, and Lady Delacour and Belinda, chart the virtual relationships between the two novelists and their imagined readers. As a result of this apparent analogy, Burney and Edgeworth attempt to incorporate these ambiguous relationships into a dominant narrative of domestic heterosexuality, as a way of justifying both their depiction of these relationships, and also their project of addressing impressionable young women.

At the end of *Camilla*, Burney removes Mrs. Arlbery from the narrative to allow for Camilla's reunion with Mrs. Tyrold and with Edgar. In this narrative manoeuvre, Burney seems to subscribe to an assumption that the relationship between two women, when compared to the marital relationship, is trivial and inferior (Raymond 11). Barbara Zonitch notes that "Burney is willing to compromise the incipient possibilities in women's friendship or the development of a fully autonomous heroine for the ideological power she finds in the image of a modified aristocratic patriarchal family." (111)¹³ Claudia Johnson also notes that Burney "articulate[s] subversive counterpossibilities, but these are always left suspended in outlying areas, while the central composition affirms dominant values" (163-4).

However, much as Burney reassures her readers that Camilla does not choose to be "an Arlbery," she still allows this dubious character to present alternative, somewhat subversive, arguments about female happiness and self-denial, which come to haunt the novel's tidy dénouement. Burney steers the novel away from the dangerous idea of female independence, and towards a model of domestic happiness, based on women's ostensible independence and authority *within* the domestic sphere. However, through this dubious female character, the novel still presents the subversive ideas: that men promise

women domestic happiness in order to ensure women's subordination; and, that women might reject this promise and *take their own way*. Burney asks the "What if" question. Her answer satisfies the imperatives of domestic ideology and novelistic "plausibility," and it must be read in terms of these constraints (Miller); but, it does not efface the question.

At the end of *Belinda*, Edgeworth attempts to reconcile the female homosocial relationship between Lady Delacour and Belinda Portman with a dominant narrative of domestic heterosexuality. In response to concerns about the conceivable equivalency of intimate female friendships and marital relationships, dominant ideology accommodated the term "romantic friendship," defining it as "sexless, morally elevating, and no threat to male power" (Donoghue 109). Edgeworth seems to ask that the relationship between Lady Delacour and Belinda be read in this light. However, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Lady Delacour's sentimental investment in this friendship looks to challenge the primacy of her relationship with Lord Delacour, even after the couple are happily reconciled.

In two seemingly contradictory ways, the reformation of Lady Delacour seems to reveal Edgeworth's ambivalence about this conventional ending. A critic for the *Monthly Review* (1802) wrote that "Lady Delacour reformed, (however favourable to the moral effect of the work this reformation may be) ... is a ... flat and vapid creature" (qtd. Batchelor 175). Arguably, Edgeworth registers, and accentuates, the insuperable pressure of domestic ideology, as this character is brought *home*, reconciled with her husband and, effectively, subdued. At the same time, Edgeworth seems reluctant to retell the story of women's passivity and domestic subordination. As a reformed "pattern woman", Lady

Delacour has a sort of *legitimate* authority over the *domestic* plot. However, as she orchestrates the somewhat contrived ending of the novel, and as she announces, with great vehemence, that she is reformed, she is anything but modest and retiring. She tells her husband to “embrac[e]” her to demonstrate that they are reconciled. However, it is significant that, in the final paragraph of the novel, she is still ordering him around “the stage” (478).

In her examination of women’s fiction, Nancy Miller argues that, “[t]o build a narrative around a character whose behavior is deliberately idiopathic ... is not merely to create a puzzling fiction but to fly in the face of a certain ideology (of the text and its contents), to violate a grammar of motives that describes while prescribing, in this instance, what wives, not to say women, should or should not do” (340) As they engage in a polemical debate about female desire, happiness and independence, Burney and Edgeworth register the insuperable pressure to affirm dominant values. As Burney removes Mrs. Arlbery from the narrative, and as Edgeworth reforms Lady Delacour, the novelists reaffirm dominant assumptions surrounding femininity, and female happiness and heterosexuality. In short, they endorse a bio-social definition of female happiness and heterosexuality, which rested on the assumption that women were domestic and passive *by nature*. Like Lady Delacour, Burney and Edgeworth register the pressure to *be* “pattern women,” as they address their sex. However, reading *Camilla* and *Belinda*, we get the sense of the novels “chafing” against a male-dominated “*hetero-reality*” (Miller 357; Raymond 7, orig. emphasis). Burney and Edgeworth register, and implicitly challenge, the fact that dominant discourse: defines women as passive, prescribes women’s happiness in domestic terms, regulates women’s relationships with other

women, and circumscribes, even penalizes, women's attempts to articulate their experiences.

Notes

Chapter 1

¹ Mr. Tyrold's insistence that Camilla quell her desires, combined with Dr. Marchmont's insistence that Edgar wait for proof of Camilla's love before asking for her hand, creates the central tension in the novel. Margaret Doody observes how Burney foregrounds the "incongruous rules" which define "contemporary propriety and courtship". Considering the rules outlined by Mr. Tyrold and Dr. Marchmont, Doody applies game theory and concludes that the logical result is a stalemate. She argues that Burney "treat[s] the courtship of Edgar and Camilla as a serious, absurd, and pernicious game, indicating the lack of fit between social controls and the hidden, unutterable feeling" (Doody 230-33)

² As Elizabeth Wahl argues: "During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in medical, legal, satiric, and pornographic texts, a largely male set of writers delineated a model of female homosexuality that associated female-female desire with the extreme of social hierarchy, attaching the idea of lesbianism to the decadent aristocrat at one end of the social scale and to the amoral working-class woman at the other" (250)

³ Emma Donoghue notes that, in her work, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, Lillian Faderman defines "romantic friendship" against "lesbian love," thereby upholding an eighteenth-century construction of these categories (Donoghue 109; see Faderman 20)

⁴ In her study on the function of the early periodical in both facilitating and circumscribing women's entrance into print during the eighteenth century, Kathryn Shevelow notes that periodicals tended to uphold this construction, whether they were written by men such as Joseph Addison or Richard Steele, or women such as Eliza Haywood. Haywood's *The Female Spectator* (1744) is thought to be the first periodical written by a woman. In a postscript, Shevelow suggests that, as a logical next step, it would make sense to examine the role of the novel in the construction of feminine subjectivity. Shevelow posits that the novel had the potential to offer challenging, indeed subversive, representations of women; however, the novel also tended to continue the normative project of the periodical (193-4)

⁵ In the years following the publication of *Camilla*, Mr. Tyrold's sermon was excerpted, reprinted and anthologized widely. Between 1809 and 1816 it went through

five re-printings and was bound with Gregory's popular exposition (Epstein 127-8). While Julia Epstein agrees with Burney's editors, Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D Bloom, that Mr. Tyrold's sermon encapsulates dominant social ideology surrounding the roles of women, she argues that it also represents "the language of the patriarch that Camilla must learn to translate, to speak herself, and, finally, to erase" (129). Betty Rizzo notes that Mr. Tyrold's letter was "supposed to be the work of a beneficent clergyman of Gregory's type" (16). However, Rizzo argues that it should be read as "an example of the oblique technique forced upon women writers and as a parody of Gregory" (18).

⁶ See *Camilla* 471-2, 669, 777-8; *Belinda* 10-11. Jennie Batchelor points out that *Belinda* was initially titled "Abroad and at Home" (159). In the novel, Edgeworth concentrates on the re-socialization of Lady Delacour and deploys this particular phrase to register the internal conflict of this character (Greenfield, "Abroad" 214). When she is "abroad," Lady Delacour appears full of "life, spirit and good humour"; but, when she is "at home," she is "like a spoiled actress off the stage" (*Belinda* 10-11).

⁷ See also Fordyce, *Sermons* 1: 143-44.

⁸ This is not the story Edgeworth presents in *Belinda* when she emphasizes the failure of both Selina Stanhope and Lady Delacour to inflame the ambitions of Belinda and shake her domestic convictions.

⁹ Fordyce expresses this same concern in his Sermon "On Female Virtue, Friendship and Conversation (1: 165).

¹⁰ According to Margaret Doody, "women's hatred of other women is useful to the most antipathetic concerns and desires of males. A woman condemning any other woman may reflect male hatred and support masculine irrational control over all mankind." (55) Of course, as Betty Rizzo notes, a woman's dominance over another woman could also threaten masculine control.

¹¹ In her essay, "'Reform or Ruin': A Revolution in Female Manners," Mitzy Myers highlights the overlap in the arguments of More and Wollstonecraft, noting that both women "dwell on the disjunction between functional education for ethical living and the current 'frenzy of accomplishments' geared merely to seduce success in a disadvantageous marriage market" (Myers, 202).

¹² In order to write these passages, Burney researched medical journals. In the same year that *Camilla* was published, Burney's son Alex was inoculated also (Epstein 145). Refer to explanatory note, *Camilla* 931-32.

¹³ As G. J. Barker-Benfield notes, "[p]ublic challenges by woman writers were a dangerous game in the eighteenth century, when the stereotype of the Amazon laid in wait" (351). Barker-Benfield offers an explanation of the myths surrounding the Amazonian woman (351).

¹⁴ Refers to the Rev. Richard Polwhele's poem, "The Unsex'd Females" (1798).

¹⁵ Jennie Batchelor also considers the ambiguity of Edgeworth's argument, as she rejects "radical feminist politics," at the same time that she seems to argue with Wollstonecraft that "culturally constructed notions of sensibility, fashion and reputation force women into a state of self-tyranny that threatens female virtue and the integrity of the domestic household" (171).

¹⁶ In her psychoanalytical and sociological work, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Nancy Chodorow emphasizes the intrapsychic dynamic of the mother-daughter relationships, which lends itself to a discussion about the role of mothers in the eighteenth-century sentimental family. Caroline Gonda's observation that the sentimental family relied on the propagation and reproduction of a "particular kind of female heterosexuality" is also critical in framing this discussion (30).

Chapter 2

¹ As I will discuss in my final chapter, Maria Edgeworth attributes the malaise of Lady Delacour, as well as her jealousy of Lady Percival, to the fact that she is estranged from her daughter, Helena.

² Kathryn Shevelow discusses the way eighteenth-century moral periodicals addressed women in these regulatory categories. In addition to this rhetorical gesture, Shevelow notes that periodicals such as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, proclaimed that the *natural* differences between the sexes actually placed women above men, and maintained that women had the capacity for reason (96).

³ *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* was published in 1797, a year after the publication of Burney's novel. Conservative writers like Thomas Gisborne vigorously sought to bolster the traditional hierarchies that organized society, and silence radical arguments that posed a threat to this "harmony". Gisborne's argument

focuses on the dynamics of the sentimental family, and, in particular, on the relative and subordinate status of the wife, and on her role in modelling this submissiveness to her daughters.

⁴ Of course, Burney takes this invisibility to the extreme when she removes Mrs. Tyrold from the narrative. Arguably, the absence of Mrs. Tyrold reveals the significance of this exemplary figure in the lives of her daughters. According to Susan Greenfield, the predictability of the mother-daughter plot in novels of the period reflects the cultural preoccupation with the figure of the mother: “In novel after novel, the mother’s absence highlights her indispensability; the daughter’s pain bears witness to her love.” (*Mothering Daughters* 13)

⁵ Dr. Marchmont insists that Edgar project his evaluations of Camilla’s character into a vision of his future wife: “Whatever she does, you must ask yourself this question: ‘Should I like such behaviour in my wife?’” He urges Edgar to “forget her wholly as Camilla Tyrold” and “think of her only as Camilla Mandlebert” (159-160).

⁶ Julie Park argues that this transition “demands a subtler hermeneutics that simultaneously perceives its object’s ability to withhold information, thus turning the allegedly public or transparent subject into a private one”. At the same time, the *private* subject was constantly under sympathetic interrogation, as parents endeavoured to make *public*, albeit within the family, her innermost thoughts and desires.

⁷ In his study of eighteenth-century sentimentalism, John Mullan posits that the body is a “corpus of irrepressible signs” (113). He observes that “virtuous femininity is legible most when unable to speak” (88). Throughout *Camilla*, the heroine struggles with the conflicting imperatives to repress and confess her desire for Edgar. Here, this struggle manifests itself on her face for her mother to detect.

Chapter 3

¹ James Thomson’s *Seasons* was first published in 1730. The poem was revised and then republished in 1746. The final form of the poem comprises some 5500 lines.

² *Spring* ll. 1162-64.

³ In her work, *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels*, Patricia Meyer Spacks concentrates on the novels of the period that

“contain *characters* who plot—*bad* characters. Plotting makes things happen within the narrative, but it does not alone determine outcome.” (176, orig. emphases) In her reading of *Camilla*, Spacks’ considers Dr. Marchmont a “plotter” who endeavours to “control persons and events to produce desired outcomes” (189). However, we can also read Mrs. Arlbery and Edgar, in their relationships with Camilla, in this way, as they construct plots or at least attempt to block the plots of each other.

⁴ As I will discuss in my final chapter, Edgeworth comes to demonstrate the futility of this pretension, as Lady Delacour’s *natural* (maternal) feelings seem to overcome her efforts to repudiate them.

⁵ Later in the novel, Dr. Marchmont explains his own unhappy experiences in marriage, and vents his suspicions about the influence of women’s friends. The happiness of his first marriage is not threatened by his wife’s female friends, but, rather, by “an early passion, never erased from her mind”. Yet, as he vents his misogynistic attitudes about women generally, he charges his late wife’s friends for encouraging the match, when they knew their friend was partial to another (643).

⁶ In his homiletic address to his daughter, Mr. Tyrold insists that women’s “discretion” is “the bond that keeps society from disunion; the veil that shades our weakness from exposure” (361). As Betty Rizzo notes, Mr. Tyrold observes the social imperative that “women play submissive roles throughout life and that women’s deviation from this role will be labeled as exactly what it is not—‘weakness’” (Rizzo 17). Essentially, Mr. Tyrold’s argument indicates how women’s submissiveness was re-presented to women as a sort of *strength* or *independence*, under the rubric of gender *reciprocity*. Lady Percival’s evocation of women’s “weakness” demonstrates how women came to internalize and perpetuate this ideology of domestic independence.

Chapter 4

¹ In her Preface to *Evelina*, Burney invokes Samuel Johnson’s argument. As part of her appeal for her novel, she proposes that “surely all attempts to contribute to the number of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least *without injury*, ought to be encouraged rather than contemned” (xiv, emphases added).

² In her study of *Women’s Reading Practices in Britain, 1750-1835*, Jacqueline Pearson points to the problem with reading readers *within* the narrative as analogous to real historical readers. She notes that critics often uphold contemporary

stereotypes about women's reading practices, and fail to recognize the "vested interests" that these stereotypes may have originally served (10).

³ As Caroline Gonda notes, the figure of the female reader was continually evoked by moralists, educationalists, pamphleteers, conduct-book writers, dramatists, poets and novelists. Gonda catalogues some of the constant features of this figure, irrespective of the genre or setting in which she appeared: "She was usually young, still unmarried; living at home, often in her father's house; she was not usually poor. She belonged to the middling ranks of society. And she was terribly susceptible to fiction." (25)

⁴ Burney notes that "the name of her mother rendered [Edgar's lesson] awful" (476). Camilla's mental response corresponds with James Nelson's insistence that by a child's love for their parents will ensure the lasting authority of the parents even after the children have ventured out into the world: "This Love in Children to their Parents, will naturally make them fly to them on every Emergence; and thus Obedience will become a Pleasure" (qtd. Gonda 31).

⁵ While Clarence is so concerned about the influence of novels on his subject, *his* imagination and ego has been worked upon by Rousseau, whose "declamations produced more than their just effect upon an imagination naturally ardent" (362), and the French novelist Jacques Henri Bernadin de Saint-Pierre. Clarence's reading of Rousseau and Saint-Pierre, and his conflation of the idealized Sophy and the fictional heroine, Virginia, plays out the very fears he has about the influence of women's reading practices.

⁶ Later in the story, Edgeworth accounts for Rachel's grandmother's paranoia. When we meet Mr. Hartley, Rachel's estranged father, Edgeworth relates the story of these young lovers in such a way that rehearses fears about the tendency of novels to lead young women astray: "She was scarcely sixteen, when he ran away with her from a boarding-school; he was at that time a gay officer, she as sentimental girl, who had been spoiled by early novel-reading" (407-8). This tragic story informs the grandmother's resolve to ensure that her granddaughter does not follow the same course as her daughter. In particular, it accounts for her aversion to boarding schools and novels (366).

⁷ Mary Hays' recommendation that mothers should "let the choice of their [daughters'] books be free" resonates with Gisborne's insistence that "whatever she

peruses in her most private hours be such as she needs not be ashamed of reading aloud to those whose good opinion she is most anxious to deserve” (*Enquiry* 214). Gisborne and Hays envisage the same result: through imagining disapprobation and censure, young women would regulate their own reading practices.

⁸ This was one of the principal arguments levelled against novels. In the moral periodical, *The Female Mentor* (1793), the narrative persona, Amanda, leads a discussion as to whether novel-reading should be permitted. She identifies one key problem: “There is always one hero, on whom the heroine fixes her inclination. The girl who is conversant with this species of composition will *expect to find such an hero* in the world; the first man who pays her any particular attention, will soon make an impression upon her *already-prepared heart*; and she will conclude, that her partiality is founded on a laudable object.” (113-114, emphases added).

⁹ Doody labels this rule “Richardson’s Orthodoxy” after Richardson’s famous exposition on female desire in *The Rambler* No. 97: “That a young lady should be in love, and the love of the young gentleman undeclared, is an heterodoxy which prudence, and even policy, must not allow.” (qtd. Doody 232)

¹⁰ Jennie Batchelor comments on the exchange between Julia and Caroline in *Letters for Literary Ladies* in which Edgeworth uses this phrase to “describe woman’s unachievable desire to dominate both the social and domestic spheres”. According to Batchelor, “[t]his cautionary tale against fashionable excess closely prefigures *Belinda*” (159).

¹¹ This inner struggle might be considered in terms of conflicting notions of women’s sensibility, “between a sensibility governed by reason and a sensibility dangerously given over to fantasy and the pursuit of pleasure”. As G. J. Barker-Benfield points out, “this had been a dynamic that characterized the culture of sensibility all along, two parts of wished-for selves...” (361-2). In *Belinda*, Lady Delacour’s ambivalent attitude towards Lady Percival, torn between “the most submissive reverence and the most intense malice,” is symptomatic of her struggle to reconcile these “wished-for selves”.

¹² From Samuel Johnson’s “The Vanity of Human Wishes” (1749), l. 221.

¹³ However, Zonitch argues that Burney “brings her third heroine to the precipice of death” in order to emphasize the crippling effects of the contradictory “rules” surrounding female heterosexuality (111).

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