Gender Debates in Literature 1683-1701: The Gould-Egerton and Sprint-Eugenia-Chudleigh Controversies

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Teresa Deirdre Boleyn

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ABSTRACT

During the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-centuries debates about issues of gender and sexual behaviour became prominent in literary discourse. These gender debates were informed by traditions of western literature such as the classical Greeks and Romans and the Bible. In two of these debates we can see the adaptations of misogynist writings to support claims of male superiority, expressions of male desire and women's inherently evil and depraved natures. In contrast, the women reassess the traditions to make room for female equality, expression and expectations.

In the work of Robert Gould, Sarah Egerton, John Sprint, "Eugenia" and Lady Mary Chudleigh, we see a crystallisation of arguments in gender debates. Each writer describes their expectations of men's and women's behaviour and voices assumptions about the sexes based on current ideologies. In the works of the women writers we can trace the development of early English feminism.

CONTENTS

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Finally I must express my love and thanks to Jeremy for his support, sense of humour, coffee, videos, popcorn and occasional water-pistols.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

The bibliographic history of *Love Given O're* is a little confused. The *DNB* claims that it was printed as early as 1680, but other sources put the first printing at 1683. The edition that I am using bears a paste-over imprint with the date 1682, but it seems that this date is false, and the actual date of printing was 1683.[1] The texts of later editions of *Love Given O're* in 1685 and 1686 have no significant textual variations. The text of Egerton's *The Female Advocate* is that of 1687.

Sprint's *The Bride-Womans Counseller* was printed in 1699, the year of its delivery as a sermon. *The Female Preacher* was first published under that name in 1699 or 1700, and then reprinted under the title *The Female Advocate* in 1700. I am using the former text. *The Ladies Defence* was first published anonymously in 1701 (bearing a dedication signed "M--y C--"). Editions of 1701 and 1710 included a substantial preface. I am using the 1709 edition.

Throughout the text all quotations have been retained with the original spelling. Letters "i" and "v" have been modernised to "j" and "u" respectively. All brackets in quotations have been standardised to round brackets. Any obvious misprints have been corrected.

Quotations from Anne Finch's "The Introduction," Jane Barker's "A Virgin Life" and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge]" are from *Minor Poets of the Eighteenth Century*, *Kissing the Rod*, and *Essays and Poems and "Simplicity: a Comedy"* respectively. All quotations from Chudleigh and Egerton not from *The Ladies Defence* or *The Female Advocate* are from Margaret Ezell's edition of Chudleigh's poetry and Roger Lonsdale's anthology *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*.

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[1] Felicity Nussbaum outlines the printing history of this edition in a little more detail in *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires On Women, 1680-1740*, (171 n.46). Langley Curtis also appears to have published an edition in 1683 (see Wing *A Gallery of Ghosts* O G 1423A).

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the seventeenth century we can observe the development of "gender debates," debates in literature between men and women about the nature of the sexes. Published literature had been almost exclusively a male domain, but from the turn of the seventeenth century, increasing numbers of women began to write and publish. Many of these new writers responded to male speculation about women's biological natures, their social functions and their relationship to men. By the late seventeenth century, the era I am investigating, there had been the better part of a century of gender discussion between both sexes in England. I will study five texts from the end of the seventeenth-century that show a distillation of the main ideas. The texts by Gould and Sprint summarise many of the current misogynist ideas, just as the texts by Egerton, "Eugenia" and Chudleigh are influenced by feminist thought of the period. All these authors draw on complex traditions in literature to support their arguments and give them credibility. Misogynist literature in particular had honed its weapons for at least two millennia, and in Gould and Sprint we can see the calluses. The scars are also visible in women's writing of the time, as they attempt to combat the new attacks and heal old wounds.

An investigation of some of the major influences on these five writers will place them within the tradition and indicate the sources of recurrent ideologies and images. In general, the misogyny most overtly influential on English satire had been that of the Bible and the Greek and Roman writers. Poets such as Euripides, Ovid and Juvenal all wrote about women who were lustful, unfaithful and bewitchingly powerful. Other sources, for example, Tacitus, also depicted women as sexually insatiable (Agrippina and Messalina) and associate them with magic and sorcery (Lucusta). Philosophers and inquisitive naturalists such as Aristotle added "scientific" assessments of the natures of men and women. Aristotle's examination of man's and woman's biology in *Generation of Animals* led to concrete scientific evidence that supported prior assumptions that the female sex was mentally as well as sexually deformed:

> Just as it sometimes happens that deformed offspring are produced by deformed parents, and sometimes not, so the offspring produced by a female are sometimes female, sometimes not, but male. The reason is that the female is as it were a deformed male; and the menstrual discharge is semen, though an impure condition.
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> . . . .
>
> In human beings, more males are born deformed than females; in other animals, there is no preponderance either way. The reason is that in human beings the male is much hotter in its nature than the female . . . . And it is due to this self-same cause that the perfecting of female embryos is inferior to that of male ones . . . . because females are weaker and colder in their nature; and we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity, though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature.
>
> (175, 459-61)

These two traditions, the satirical and the scientific, combine to produce an image of women as a poisonous, treacherous, corrupted and corruptive sex. Women's bodies are often depicted as secreting infectious evil that taints even their own offspring. Aristotle's influence is still visible as late as the mid-eighteenth century, for example, in *Man Superior to Woman*, an anonymous misogynist text of 1744, we can see a combination of assumptions about women's biology and their moral natures:

> But that they should be entitled to any Part of our Esteem, for nursing the Children they bring forth for their Pleasure, I see nothing in it. What is it they do for Infants, which would not be much better done by the *Men*, if they were not call'd away from that meaner Task, to provide for the Safety and Sustenance of them and their Mothers? . . . . And how much happier would it not be for all Infants, were they snatched from the Arms of the *Women*, in the Instant they are born! How much more healthy, wise and comely would they grow! For 'tis notorious, that the longer a Child sucks, the more weakly and stupid it turns out . . . With the Milk they suck in, they generally imbibe a Tincture of the Follies, Passions; and Imbecillities of that Sex, besides having their various Distempers entail'd upon them.
>
> (15-16)

The Bible was also used extensively to support both men's and women's arguments in the gender debate. Clergymen like Sprint could hardly fail to be influenced by the teachings of St. Paul, particularly his instructions on women's duty, and other male texts exhibit a background of biblical reference underlying many of their assumptions about women. Thus in *Man Superior to Woman* we find the author's argument supported by quotations from Genesis, Corinthians and Ephesians, among more popular myths that evince women's inferiority.[1] The creation myth is central to both men's and women's arguments in the period. Interpretations of the creation myth assign blame to either Adam or Eve or attempt to disprove the guilt of one or the other. But also in many accounts, despite arguments that men and women have free will and evil is not inherent in either, almost all commentators try to prove or disprove women's inherent evil from the moment of her creation -- that it is inherent in her nature. The creation myth has several common points that are contested; that Eve was created lustful; that in her pride, like Satan, she desired knowledge and power; that Adam was guiltless and seduced by a power too great to be resisted. Accounts also dispute the exact meaning of the term "helpmeet" and how far it encompasses woman's total subjection. The creation myth is a crucial part of a related argument, that of women's need to atone for her sin. Women tend to argue that Eve was seduced by a power much greater than herself, and that given time Adam too could have fallen, whereas the male argument generally states that Eve was born evil and that as she fell first she bears all individual responsibility for the Fall.

For women the Bible was equally important, providing them with a tradition of women who were not "good" in the way that Sprint's women are (silent, self-abnegating), but rather giving a precedent for female authority and independent action. The prophet Deborah (Judges 4-5) is used by Anne Finch, Countess Winchilsea, as an example of a woman who combines decision, reason and modesty:

> She fights, she wins, she triumphs with a song;
> Devout, majestic, for the subject fit,
> And far above her arms exalts her wit:

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[1] Genesis 3. 16, I Corinthians 11. 8, and Ephesians 5. 21-33 (*Man Superior to Woman* 5-6).

Then, to the peaceful, shady palm withdraws,
And rules the rescu'd nation with her laws.
("The Introduction" ll.46-50)

Women writers appropriate Scripture for their own ends. They concentrate on reinterpreting two crucial areas, the Creation (Genesis 1, 2-3), and the Gospels of St. Paul. They tend to emphasise the creation of man and woman as a creation of equals, and argue along the lines that "God joyns them together in his own Image, and makes no distinctions and differences as men do . . . And God hath put no such difference between the Male and Female as men would make" (Fell 3). Aemilia Lanyer in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* provocatively posits that

Our Mother *Eve* who tasted of the Tree,
Giving to *Adam* what she held most deare,
Was simply good, and had no powre to see,
The after-comming harme did not appeare:
The subtile Serpent that our Sex betraide,
Before our fall so sure a plot had laide.

That undiscerning Ignorance perceav'd
No guile, or craft that was by him intended;
For, had she knowne of what we were bereavid,
To his request she had not condiscended.
But she (poore soule) by cunning was deceav'd,
No hurt therein her harmelesse Heart intended:
For she alleadg'd Gods word, which he denies
That they should die, but even as Gods, be wise.

But surely *Adam* cannot be excus'd,
Her fault, though great, yet he was most to blame;
What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might have refus'd,
Being Lord of all, the greater was his shame:
(*Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, "Eves Apologie")

Barbara Kiefer Lewalski suggests that Lanyer "may have intended the shock [of her interpretation] to underscore the susceptibility of the biblical narratives to very different interpretations, depending on the interests involved. They had been hitherto constrained to patriarchal power, so she by a neat reversal wrenches

them to women's interests" (231-232).[2] Women's exegeses although often outrageous by conventional (conservative male) standards were not without effect. They show women's attempts to justify their belief in their equality and rationality through use of a text not hitherto notable for its feminist qualities. Margaret Fell, a Quaker (as the majority of women writers during the Civil War and the Interregnum were), interprets Scripture metaphorically, and "defended women's rights of 'speaking' as preachers and prophets, [by] ingeniously interpreting Paul's instructions as applying only to 'women that were under the Law'," from which Quaker women were free, "subject only to individual conscience and the inner light" (Pearson 5).[3]

A third major influence on the poetic tradition and gender debate was John Milton. As a representative of liberal puritanism (as represented in *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*), Milton was incalculably influential on the women writers I am studying. His position as the major poet of the day combined with his less overtly misogynist interpretations of the Bible made him a more sympathetic muse than other male writers. More often than not his presence is intangible, heard in the women poets' works in half-echoes only, but resonating more audibly at times.[4] His vision of the companionate but unequal relationship between Adam and Eve seems to have been particularly influential on Chudleigh and Eugenia. However, in comparing *Love Given O're* and *Paradise Lost* we can see that Milton too was influenced by the misogynist tradition. Gould visualises women in the guises of Eve and Sin, images which combine in *Paradise Lost* as Eve approaches her Fall. Gould also associates Eve with the personification of Sin. The author of *Man Superior to Woman* also quotes from Adam's rejection of Eve (*Paradise Lost* X ll.867-908) to support his argument.

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[2] *Writing Women in Jacobean England.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1993).

[3] Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, two Quakers who were imprisoned in 1655 for their religious dissension and preaching, also argued that the Bible must not be interpreted literally. Their interpretation of " 'women' in Paul's injunction [I Cor. 14. 34-35] is 'weakness whether male or female' " (*Women, Writing, History* 27). Bell et al also note in *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers* that Cotton and Cole recognise " 'woman' as a construct; their definition of 'woman' as a signifier of spiritual weakness in the Bible allows them, daringly, to assign the term 'woman' to their male opponents and to reject it for themselves" (258).

[4] Eugenia refers directly to *Paradise Lost*, and some of Egerton's and Chudleigh's couplets are more than a little indebted to parts of Milton's poetry.

Myriad effects of the Graeco-Roman classical authorities and a complex biblical heritage form two traditions behind gender debates of the late seventeenth-century. However, the *querelle des femmes* was forming its own traditions in England. The medieval romance had divided male and female realms and provided a platform for courtly misogynistic writings: the Renaissance began to provide women with the means to enter into the debate themselves for the first time. But a tradition of women writers was not present for women at the time. Learned women like Christine de Pisan were not translated into English very often, and other women writers and thinkers were frequently denigrated; the Dutch Anna Maria van Schurmann and the English Margaret Cavendish were seen as either foreign and religiously dubious, or aristocratic and eccentric.

In 1615 Joseph Swetnam initiated a well documented debate that continued for the better part of a century. The "Swetnam Controversy" began with Swetnam's derivative misogynist text, *The Arraignment of Lewd idle froward and unconstant women*, which sparked at least six major feminist responses.[5] The significance of these texts is partly their presence as early contributions by women to the *querelle des femmes* that show women's identification of the major arguments employed by men and their manipulations of the same arguments to attack male ideologies. During the English Civil War and Interregnum (1642-1660), the output of women writers increased dramatically. Women's greater prominence was not only increased in the field of literature as women became more publicly visible as they petitioned authorities on behalf of their absent or exiled husbands in attempts to regain land or lost revenue. Women were also liberated to an extent by Puritanism. Two well-known women preachers Dorothy Waugh and Anna Trapnel were supported by a host of printed material by women.[6]

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[5] Five pamphlets and a play, published as *Swetnam the Woman-hater arraigned by women* ([London], 1620), are the best known responses to Swetnam's pamphlet. The five feminist responses have been republished by Simon Shepherd as *The Women's Sharp Revenge: Five Women's Pamphlets from the Renaissance.* (London: Fourth Estate, 1985).

[6] R. Valerie Lucas speculates on the effect of Puritanism on women and the family. She shows that women found Puritanism liberating in some ways, but restricting in others. For example, although Dorothy Waugh found some freedom to preach, she was punished for this by being made to wear the scold's bridle in 1655. Lucas asks "How did women view the submissive role model that preachers offered them?" (232) She concludes by using evidence that some women "actively promoted it," but others, like Katherine Chidley, questioned the doctrine of absolute

Mary Astell was also very influential on many women writers. She and Mary Chudleigh were correspondents, which probably explains the striking similarity in some of their work. Astell's first publication, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1696), posited an option for women other than marriage by proposing that women who did not wish to marry, should be able to enter a college -- a sort of secular nunnery -- in which they could pursue intellectual endeavours unridiculed by society. Astell recognised that two problems existed, that of the "spinster" and of the ill-educated woman. By providing this alternative Astell aimed at a solution to both.

Astell's approach to Scripture and its relation to feminism is heavily dependent on her critiques of biblical interpretation. Complaining of men's powers as interpreters and translators of the Bible, Astell reveals another reason for women's education in classical languages -- her desire that women may try for themselves the truth of the Bible, rather than only having access to that which "Men are pleas'd to impart in their translations" (quoted in Thickstun 151). But Astell is not a radical in all aspects, arguing in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* that while a woman may choose not to marry, "once she enters into this social contract she must honour her voluntary chosen subordination" (Thickstun 156). Like Chudleigh, Astell separates the earthly world from the spiritual and limits her arguments that women become better educated in Scripture to "their need for personal improvement," a claim which "concedes authority to men in order to negotiate for women a space in which to pursue their intellectual and spiritual development undisturbed" (Thickstun 156). Such an argument seriously compromises Astell's feminist arguments as it still allows that men have higher authority and more valid interpretations, and despite her desire for women's mental independence, she "did not suggest extending it to the practical sphere (Rogers 79).

My study is situated in the middle of this highly active literary environment. Covering a comparatively small period of nearly twenty years (from

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male authority, "undermin[ing] one of Puritan preaching's rationales for patriarchal authority, the contention that one was obliged to obey the father, husband or king because his will represented God's will on earth" (233). See "Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family" in *Renaissance Women in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, eds. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky, (USA: U of Massachusetts P, 1990).

1683-1701), the debates between Gould and Egerton, and Sprint, Eugenia and Chudleigh incorporate the main issues of misogynist and feminist debates. But these are by no means merely a repetition of outworn arguments; rather we see the talents of five innovative and intelligent writers discussing ideas that greatly concern themselves, their expression of themselves and their views of society. The main aim of my argument is to show the forms that these particular gender debates take, examining themes and new and unusual variations on old arguments that demonstrate each author's individual awareness.

Both Robert Gould's satire and John Sprint's sermon respectively follow the classical and biblical traditions outlined above. Gould exhibits a fear of his subject, a total hatred of women and their sexuality that alternately shows him desiring them and reviling them. *Love Given O're*'s misogynist discourse and creation of a fearsome female suggest that the speaker has a deep-seated unease about his relationship with women. Throughout his discourse he creates a phantasm of femininity that he attempts to control, but fears he cannot. Sprint's sermon, *The Bride-Womans Counseller*, is an apparently straightforward orthodox tract of biblical justifications for women's subjugation to their husbands. But the speaker exhibits elements of doubt in relation to his reasons for women's total subjugation to men, perhaps showing an awareness of women's often unpleasant situation in matrimony and the unreality of these outworn codes of conduct.

Sarah Egerton, Mary Chudleigh and Eugenia are initially concerned with refuting the works of the two men. Ironically, misogynist texts afforded women the opportunity to appease the "itch of being in Print" (Eugenia 2) resulting in the very expression and activity by women both men aim to suppress. Each of the three women approaches the text they engage with in different ways. Sarah Egerton attacks the main points of Gould's argument, adding her own views and elaborating on the shortcomings of men. Eugenia undermines Gould's sermon point by point, employing irony to disconcert him, and exploring relationships between men and women and the consequences of the sermon's requirements. Mary Chudleigh covers several stereotypes of men and their views of women, explores various counter-arguments to the sermon and critiques of male control

of women, and concludes with an articulate expression of independence and self awareness.

In Chapter One I will discuss Robert Gould's *Love Given O're* and Sarah Egerton's *The Female Advocate*, exploring their representations of each sex in their poetry and their adaptations of common themes such as the creation myth and male and female stereotypes. Throughout I will examine representations or images that are recurrent in misogynist and feminist traditions. These images are closely aligned to (if not the same as) stereotypes, as I will amplify in my discussion of Gould. There are two disadvantages to this approach that I wish readers to keep in mind: firstly, I do not wish to see women as a consolidated unit identified by their sex,[7] and secondly, language for these women writers is a medium open to interpretation that only conveys the author's "truth,"[8] thus making it difficult to draw generalised assumptions, or indeed any assumptions at all from their writings. This latter point is of considerable importance as it indicates the sophistication of these feminist writers and their awareness of all writers' exclusion from another's truth. While I will be basing my study primarily on "images of women" criticism, it is important to remember that the system of communication of those ideas is less than infallible.

The speaker revealed in *Love Given O're* is a pathological antifeminist, embodying all of the most virulent forms of misogyny. Egerton in *The Female Advocate*, in contrast, responds to Gould's charges systematically, dismantling his misogynist contentions and reconstructing an alternative revisionary feminism, centred on women's individuality and the expression of this through chastity. Together the two poems interact to articulate and manipulate mainstream discourses. Rather than arguing that women are better than men, Egerton begins to question the ability of men to make decisions and judgements, by undermining men's traditional authority and redefining women's expectations of relationships.

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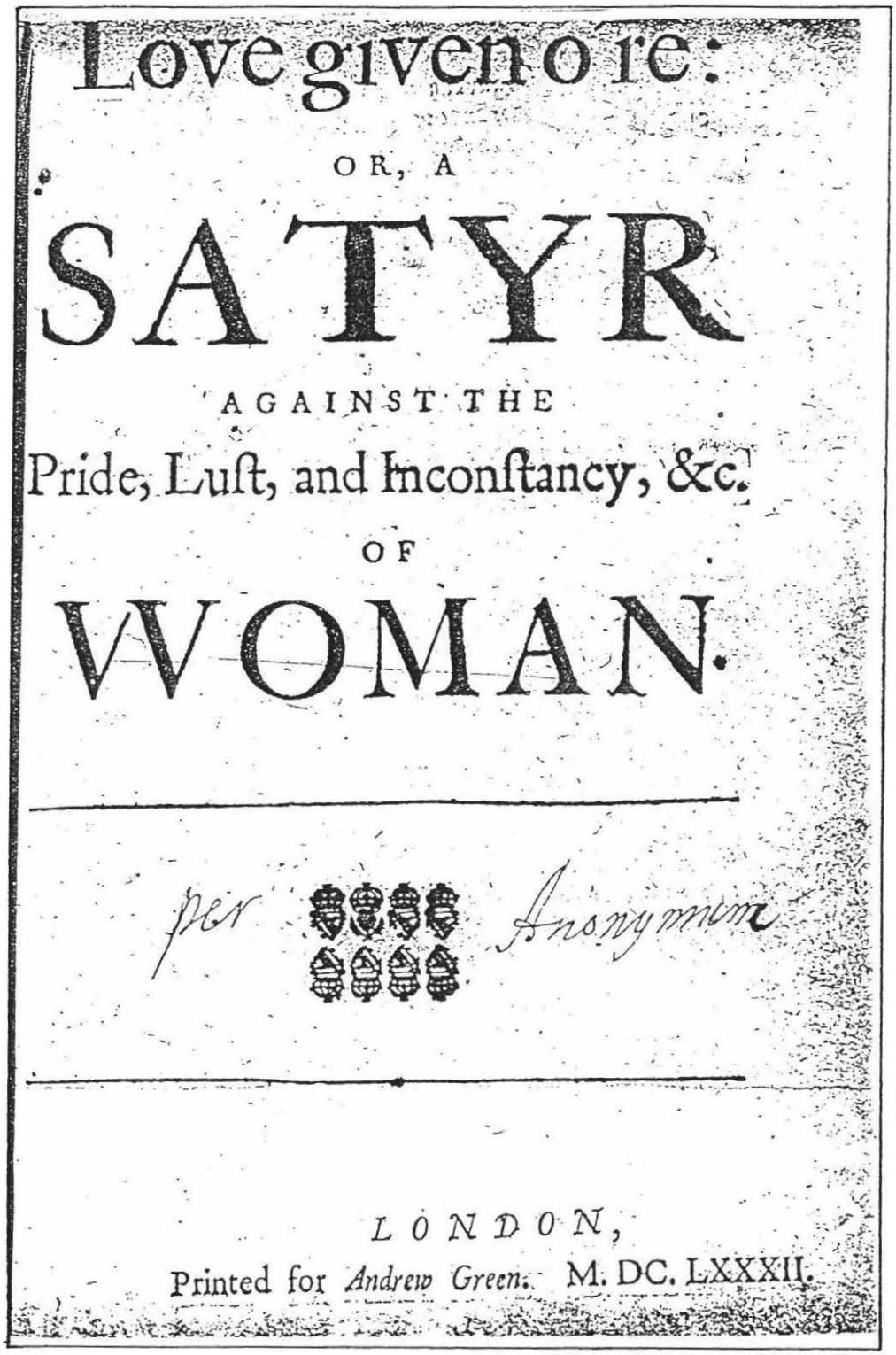
[7] Any further reading in this period will reveal numerous texts by women that conform to and support the "patriarchal order." See Pearson's *The Prostituted Muse*; Grundy and Wiseman (eds.) *Women, Writing, History*; Haselkorn and Travitsky (eds.) *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*; and Bell et al (eds.) *A Biographical Dictionary of English Woman Writers.*

[8] Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986): x-xi. I use quotation marks to indicate that these men and women, particularly the women, are aware of the subjectivity of any claims to "truth."

In Chapter Two I will be studying three texts. In *The Bride-Womans Counseller* we will see the main forms that Sprint's misogyny takes, the arguments that he uses to explain his perception of relationships between the sexes, and points where the speaker seems to indicate doubts about antifeminist assertions and their reasoning. Eugenia critiques and undermines Sprint's arguments through irony and analogy, simultaneously posing her own alternative scheme. She also reveals the identification of male authority with "God" and vigorously questions this authority and men's resultant interpretations. In my discussion of *The Ladies Defence*, Chudleigh's images of men will be investigated along with her feminism and the political agenda underlying it. Chudleigh argues that women's exclusion from education and assumptions about their intellect and rationality have resulted in loss of self-respect as well as making women more useless and therefore more contemptible to men. Like Eugenia, she notes men's authority over language and knowledge, and conceives of learning and education as an empire that should be ruled by each individual. In her conclusion, she contrives to remove men from authority and associates virtuous women in Heaven with divine beings without male intermediaries. The three women writers each offer solutions that exhibit some similarities but also individual differences. For example, all express a concern with women's hierarchical relationships to their husbands, but each develops different explanations for its occurrence and offers a different solution. Their suggestions, whether overt, implied, or oblique all add to our knowledge of textual and social interaction between the sexes in the late seventeenth-century.


Love given o're:

OR, A

SATYR

AGAINST THE

Pride, Luſt, and Inconſtancy, &c.

OF

WOMAN.

per Anonymum

LONDON,

Printed for *Andrew Green*. M. DC. LXXXII.

The title page of the 1683 edition of Robert Gould's *Love Given O're*, showing the paste-over imprint bearing the date 1682.

CHAPTER ONE

I. ROBERT GOULD:

WOMAN! THE VERY NAME'S A CRIME

The details of Robert Gould's life are hazy. As a servant to the earl of Dorset and Middlesex, Gould acquired some degree of education and began to write poetry. His first poem *Love Given O're* (1683) met with considerable success. He pursued a poetic career, but after the failure of *Poems chiefly consisting of Satyrs and Epistles* (1697) Gould was obliged to enter the service of the earl of Abingdon, moving from London to the earl's country seat in Oxfordshire. Gould continued to publish poetry, and also wrote a play *The Rival Sisters* (1695) which proved popular, featuring the actresses Francis Maria Knight and Jane Rogers as the two sisters (Howe 161). Gould's *Works* were published by his widow Martha after his death in 1708 or 1709 (*DNB*).

Gould was evidently well read and adept at adapting accounts of classical and popular misogyny to his own ends. *Love Given O're* is heavily influenced by Juvenal's Sixth Satire, evinced in common themes such as lists of unfaithful women, undressing scenes, and women's dubious choice in lovers. In particular Gould gains from Juvenal a sense of women's moral and social pollution obtained through their sexual activities: what he adds to this is his association of sexual activity with physical and spiritual death.

Love Given O're is prefaced with disclaimers standard in satire, such as the author's desire to "lash the Rebellious Times into Obedience" and to enforce good morals by pinpointing "Woman, the Original and Mischief" (Preface), excusing his virulent attack on women as a moral obligation. The poem proper begins with an explanation of Gould's recent animosity towards women -- his mistress Silvia has been "faithless" and has thus proved herself unworthy of his

adoration.[1] Gould then proceeds to catalogue the origins of women's unfaithfulness from their creation to the present day, and to trace their main faults. He considers three main defects of pride, lust, and inconstancy in detail and illustrates them with biblical, classical, and contemporary examples. Gould reveals a pathology about his and women's sexuality in the form of a series of vicious stereotypes of women. The poem concludes with a warning to men to take heed of his evidence. But *Love Given O're* is more than a mere catalogue of women's crimes; it can also be read as a record of male sexual insecurities and a process of constructing a female monster.

Gould's stereotyping of women as monstrous may be explained by the relationship of pathology to stereotypes. In *Difference and Pathology*, Sander Gilman outlines his theory of stereotyping and its relationship to an individual's expression of him / herself.[2] The theory is based on Freudian explanations of the development of the infant human; namely, that as the infant begins to realise itself as a separate entity from his / her surroundings some of the infant's demands on the world will be denied, so s/he becomes anxious about the "perceived loss of control over the world" (Gilman 17). In an attempt to control the world and maintain the perceived relationship of the self to that world, the child's sense of self divides into two: a "good" self, and a "bad" self. The "good" self is the child's view of the relationship between self and world where the child is in control of the world; the "bad" is the self that loses control of the world and becomes subject to anxieties. "With the split of both the self and the world into 'good' and 'bad' objects, the 'bad' self is distanced and identified with the mental representation of the 'bad' object" (Gilman 17). Thus the self is maintained as a complete unit, and is no longer torn between perceived "good" and "bad" aspects of itself. Stereotypes "perpetuate a needed sense of difference between the 'self'

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[1] Throughout the poem I will refer to the speaker or persona as "Gould." This is not because I associate the author completely with his poem, but rather because Gould does not seem to set any deliberate distance, ironic or otherwise, between himself and the narrative voice.

[2] I am indebted to Sander Gilman's discussion of the process of stereotyping and possible motivations behind it. For a full account see *Difference and Pathology: Stereotyping of Sexuality, Race and Madness*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP., 1985). Although his book is angled towards the mentality behind nineteenth-century perceptions of sexuality in women and other than European races, the general outline in the Introduction is illuminating and provocative (15-35).

and the 'object,' which becomes the 'Other' " (Gilman 18). Of course the distinction between what is good and bad is not static, and therefore, although the distinction between the Self and Other remains absolute, the stereotypes alter in order to maintain a continuous Self / Other division.

In Gould's poem we will see the process of projection of internal fears or anxieties about relationships of self and world onto external "Others," in this case, women. In Gould's images and stereotypes we will see his self-image both reflecting and shaping his mental representation of the world and shaping it as well. Gilman argues that the pathological personality does not develop the ability to "distinguish the 'individual' from the stereotyped class into which the object might automatically be placed" and does not overcome its anxiety, as a consequence of which s/he continues to be aggressive toward the "objects to which the stereotypical representations correspond" (Gilman 18). In *Love Given O're* we continually see the speaker projecting his anxieties onto women, thus externalising the threat and regaining his self-image (Gilman 20). He has totally projected that which women come to signify. Gilman identifies three categories of stereotypes, all of which are relevant here: those generated by the centrality of sexuality, our sense of mutability (often depicted as illness), and "our necessary relationship to some greater group" (23). The first two are of most import; the third in Gould's case can be seen in his constant identifications with men (not-woman) and fear of effeminacy.

In my discussion of *Love Given O're* I will show Gould's stereotyping of women as monstrous by moving through three stages, the first being his images of women and their sexualisation, the second the power that this confers on women, and the third Gould's fear of the spectre that male discourse has created.

In the opening lines we see Gould indulging in a fairly conventional statement of the anguish of finding that his mistress is unfaithful. Gould expresses his relationship in terms of courtly love themes such as ties, chains, bondages, and the rejection of emotional bonds that result in his freedom:

> At length from Love's vile Slav'ry I am free,
> And have regain'd my ancient Liberty:
> I've shook those Chains off which my bondage wrought,

> Am free as Ayr, and unconfin'd as thought;
> For faithless *Silvia* I no more adore,
> Kneel at her feet, and pray in vain no more:
> No more my Verse shall her fled worth proclaim,
> . . . .
> I've banish'd her for ever from my Breast,
> Banish'd the proud Invader of my rest,
> Banish'd the Tyrant Author of my woes,
> That robb'd my Soul of all its sweet repose . . .
>
> (ll.1-7, 11-14)

The imperial images show him as a freeman who has finally exiled an unwelcome invader. But the vocabulary "the proud Invader" and "the Tyrant Author" suggests that Silvia is more powerful than the speaker realises. She is an active invader, who has the power to "author" his woes. Gould's choice of words suggests that Silvia *is* "authoring" him, making him feel a certain way. But Silvia's role as Other suggests that what at first seems to be her "authoring" is Gould's own. His desire for her gives her the power to become his author through his projection of his lack of control and fear onto her. In her role as his author, she also becomes the "authority" figure. Generally speaking, authority is associated with male discourse as a manifestation of male power. Edward Said, defining "authority" outlines these ideas. Authority is

> "a power to enforce obedience". . . or "a power to influence action". . . a connection as well with *author* -- that is, a person who originates or gives existence to something, a begetter, beginner, father, or ancestor, a person also who sets forth written statements.
>
> (Said's emphasis, quoted in Gilbert and Gubar 4)[3]

In writing poetry about women, the author risks his poem being "blasted and debauch'd" like that of the Creator at the mere thought of woman, as the evil power of woman permeates his verse. Gould links women to Satan, who tried to usurp God's authority and so was banished from Heaven. Women, in Gould's version of the Creation myth, are banished from earth to Hell for their rebellion

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[3] The relationship of men to authority is also expressed by Milton in *Paradise Lost* (III ll.372-74).

(ll.33-60). Silvia's usurpation of Gould's rightful inheritance and creativity forces him to banish her; her exile makes it possible for him to pursue his poetic endeavours.

Vilification of women by men goes very deep. Women's power to corrupt male creativity and breed their own sin is recurrent in English anti-female literature. Edmund Spenser's images of Error and Duessa in Book I of *The Faerie Queen* are prime examples of women's monstrous hidden natures (I, i,13-26; viii, 46-50). Male fear seems closely linked to two aspects of women -- generation and death -- both of which become associated with women's sexual power through the man's "inability to control his own physical existence" (Gilbert and Gubar 34) and his inability to control his anxiety that inevitably becomes expressed through a complex series of sexual relations. Women's attractions are viewed ambivalently by Gould, their charms simultaneously "deluding" (l.16) and a "snare" (l.421). Images of witchcraft, although never a central image in the poem, are constant, expressing Gould's continual attraction / repulsion to women. Women's arts allow them to "both seduce and to steal male generative energy" (Gilbert and Gubar 34). It is no wonder Gould constantly links women's over-sexuality to his impotence and therefore eventual physical and spiritual death.

The creation story is a common feature of misogynist satire. Broadly speaking, in the misogynist tradition the myth views all women as daughters of Eve and therefore as creators of chaos and death (Nussbaum 20, 102-103). Egerton complains about stereotypical views of women's creation in *The Female Advocate*:

> You do describe a Woman so . . .
> As if at her strange Birth did shine no Star
> Or Planet, only Furies in Conjunction were . . .
>
> (ll.381, 383-4)

Other poets of the time saw Eve as toad-like, as is evident in the anonymous satire *Misogynus: Or a Satyr Upon a Woman* (1682) which claims that "Whate're was left unfit in the Creation / To make a Toad, after its ugly fashion, /

Of scrapings from unfinished Creatures had, / Sure was the body of a Woman made" (quoted in Nussbaum 24). Richard Ames' *The Folly of Love* (1691) also follows these traditions, describing the creation as instrumented by "some Spirit" who "came and stole [Adam's] Rib away" to make a "*crooked shapeless* thing," "The *World's great Plague*, and did it Woman name" (2).[4]

Gould's version of the creation describes women's seductive power and views woman's evil natures as a manifestation of female corruption in the "crook'd" rib:

> Sure Heav'n it self (intranc't) like *Adam* lay,
> Or else some banish'd Fiend usurp't the sway
> When Eve was form'd; and with her, usher'd in
> Plagues, Woes, and Death, and a new World of Sin.
> The fatal Rib was crooked and unev'n . . .
>
> (ll.35-39)

However, Gould's speculations on Eve's creation at this point are largely a rhetorical conceit, as later we find him describing Eve as a good creation who (like Lucifer) wilfully chose to pursue Sin (ll.403-410). The language of the passage serves to emphasise the physical manifestation of women's propensity for evil. The metaphor of the "fatal Rib" has a plethora of connotations, among them that the rib Eve was created from was a fatal choice by the Creator, linking women's creation with a foreshadowing of her impending death. In this conceit woman's malignant evil overpowers even the power of the Creator.

In the following passage in which women's free choice is propounded, we also discover that women are sexualised through their action: "O *Lucifer*, thy Regions had been thin, / Were't not for Womans propagating Sin" (ll.42-43). Women's sexualisation takes place explicitly in relation to Sin. The phrase "propagating Sin" combines the connotations of reproduction in both words. In "Sin" it is present in the sexual connotations of the word from the biblical background in which Eve's Original Sin led to knowledge, including knowledge

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[4] Ames' poem, influenced I think by both *Love Given O're* and *The Female Advocate*, also describes marriage as "slavery," lists "Lap-Dogs and D----s" as satisfying women's amours, describes women explicitly as the Devil, desires that men should propagate without women, and cites examples of contemporary faithless women and their methods of seduction.

of nakedness and sexuality. The word "propagating" also connotes sexuality, both active and descriptive: the word functions both as a verb and as an adjective describing Sin.[5] The implicit connection between woman and Sin, and Sin and Satan links women to Satan's spontaneous creation of evil. An interesting counterpoint to women's propagation of Sin is that Gould desires that men have "Some other way to propagate our kind" (l.62).[6]

But "sexualisation" is more than just evidence of woman's sexuality. "Sexualisation" is Gould's process of constructing women as *solely* sexual beings. Their lives, deaths and all aspects of any interactions with men revolve around sexual activity. Sexualisation of women alters throughout the poem. Early in the poem the idea that women are lustful and inconstant is introduced in descriptions of the "lewd sex" (l.22) who are repositories of lust, folly, falsehood, luxury and pride (l.27). Gould intends to "unvail" women and reveal the truth "to ev'ry vulgar Eye, / And in that shameful posture let 'em lie" (ll.29-30). But by the end of his poem we have reason to doubt the motivations behind his intentions as; his language ("unvail," "shameful posture") suggests his interest in women's crimes falls short of a dispassionate desire to help them and is, instead a method of satisfying his own prurient curiosity.

Unintentionally, Gould's sexualisation of women confers considerable power on them. Three ways they are sexualised are in images of women's insatiable lust, the association of sexual intercourse with death, and their inconstancy. Women's lust is shown in many ways, including "apple" imagery, the image of the sluice, and the comparison of all women to "Rome's Emperial Whore." Throughout my discussion of lust it is important to keep in mind that Gould's continual construction of a sexualised Other whom he shows as negative, fearsome and uncontrollable results in an apparently accidental empowerment of women, during which his control of his discourse appears to be lost.

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[5] See *Paradise Lost* Book II, ll.724, 727-1055. The teeming spectre of Milton's Sin and sexual knowledge looms over all women. Sin's birth from the head of Satan is a grotesque parody of the birth of Athena, goddess of knowledge, from the head of Zeus. In the Christian world the birth of Sin / knowledge is a birth of disaster anticipating the Fall, and (in Gould's poem) sexual knowledge.

[6] Note the separation of women and men ("our kind"), indicating men and women are almost a different species.

The apple image combines several evocative ideas in one. The three most important are Sin, appetite and death. These three images are linked to Eve through the apple.

> For whatso'ere those All-discerning Pow'rs
> Created sweet, Wife! Nauseous Wife! Turn'd sow'r;
> Debauch'd th' innocent, Ambrosial meat,
> And (like *Eves* Apple) made it Death to eat . . .
>
> (ll.63-66)

Gould seems to be saying that women are sweet until tied with men in matrimony, whereupon they become "sow'r." Woman, the "Ambrosial meat" of marriage (perhaps, punningly, the "help*meet*") becomes corrupt and "debauch'd" leading the man to death. Both the "Wife" and "*Eve's* Apple" are objects of consumption; further comparison indicates that both provide sexual knowledge and death for men.

Later the apple is more explicitly sexual and sinful, its attractive "alluring" outside deliberately tempting the man with "baits" that conceal a rotten interior.

> True Sir say I ---- so were those Apples too,
> Which in the midst of the first Garden grew;
> But when they were examin'd, all within,
> Wrapt in a specious and alluring skin,
> Lay the rank baits of never-dying Sin.
>
> (ll.255-59)

Woman's duplicitous power is revealed as she becomes the apple, ripe with knowledge and death, waiting to be eaten by the unwary man. Gould inverts the appearance / reality dichotomy of courtly love tradition, arguing that nothing in "those vile Mansions [women's breasts] does reside, / But rank Ambition , Luxury, and Pride" (ll.197-98).

A second image of insatiability is that of the "sluce." In one of the more complex passages in the poem Gould combines multiple images to explore the extremes of women's sexuality, men's inability to fulfil women's desires, and reasons for his rejection of marriage.

But if the Tyde of Nature boist'rous grow,
And would Rebelliously its Banks o'reflow,
Then chuse a Wench, who (full of lewd desires)
Can meet your flouds of Love with equal fires;
And will, when e're you let the Deluge flie,
Through an extended Sluce strait drain it dry;
That Whirl-pool Sluce which never knows a Shore,
Ne're can be fill'd so full as to run ore,
For still it gapes, and still cries ---- room for more!
Such only damn the Soul; but a damn'd Wife,
Damns that, and with it all the Joys of Life:
And what vain Blockhead is so dull, but knows,
That of two Ills the least is to be chose.

(ll. 76-88)

Gould advises men that if they cannot resist the sexual urge, they should "chuse a Wench" who invites coition, rather than taking a wife who damns all the "Joys of Life." The "Tyde of Nature" is man's sexual desire, which men should only indulge if they cannot resist it, but should not marry in order to do so. All the images of wetness ("tyde," "banks," "o'reflow," "flouds," "Deluge," "sluce," "whirlpool," "shore" and so on) are orgasmic, but no matter how great the man's ejaculation, the whore can consume it all and more. Gould transfers his fear of sexual inadequacy onto the woman, turning her into a figure of insatiable carnality. Women's sexuality, here represented forcibly by Gould in a series of repellent images, is promiscuous, unrestrained and corrupting. But while a whore may sexually satisfy a man, a wife will not. She is a "damn'd" sluice who will not allow her husband the "Joys of Life" because she dams the "Tyde of Nature." The wife, like all women, remains a sluice, but she will (in another pun) doubly "damn" him, by denying him sexual fulfilment and by damning his soul because of her promiscuity and association with Satan. Although sexual contact with a woman is undesirable, her diseases are only deadly if she is a "Nauseous Wife," in contrast to non-fatal sexual intercourse with single women. Gould's argument that "wenches" are not so harmful to male vitality is confirmed in his conclusion, in which he stresses that it is in "the wild, rocky, matrimonial sea" that men drown (l.454).

Women's "unbounded Lust," begun in the image of the "Whirl-pool sluce," continues in the passage on Messalina.

> True, I confess that *Rome*'s Emperial Whore,
> (More Fam'd for Lust, than for the Crown she wore)
> Aspir'd to Deeds so impiously high,
> That their immortal Fame will never die:
> Into the publick Stews (disguis'd) she thrust,
> To quench the raging Fury of her Lust:
> Her part against th' Assembly she made good,
> And all the Sallies of their Lust withstood,
> And drain'd 'em dry; exhausted all their store;
> Yet all could not content th' insatiate Whore,
> Her C--- like the dull Grave, still gap't for more.
>
> (ll.96-106)[7]

In addition to lust, Messalina's activities are fired by pride and ambition. The "Emperial Whore" burning from the "raging Fury of her Lust," finds that she cannot satisfy her desires, her appetite is unslaked, her fire unquenched. In this passage women's sexuality is portrayed as aggressive, for example when Messalina "thrust" into the whorehouses and clientele and "all the Sallies of their Lust withstood," and her vagina "gap't for more." Earlier the whore's genitals were described as the "sluce" with connotations of the sewer, but now her sexual organs are described as her "part," and "her C---," and are likened to the "dull Grave" in their ongoing consumption of all men. Gould's vocabulary is mixed,

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[7] The "Emperial Whore" is almost definitely Messalina, the Emperor Claudius' first wife and the mother of Britannicus. See Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome* Book XI: esp. 237, 245-251. Juvenal's Sixth Satire is the inspiration for this passage:

> . . . that whore-empress -- who dared to prefer the mattress
> Of a stews to her couch in the Palace, called for her hooded
> Night-cloak and hastened forth, alone or with a single
> Maid to attend her. Then, her black hair hidden
> Under an ash-blonde wig, she would make straight for her brothel . . .
> She took an all comers, for cash, without a break.
> Too soon, for her, the brothel-keeper dismissed
> His girls. She stayed till the end, always the last to go,
> Then trailed away sadly, till with a burning hard on,
> Retiring exhausted, yet still far from satisfied, cheeks
> Begrimed with lamp-smoke, filthy, carrying home
> To her imperial couch the stink of the whorehouse (131).

combining her aggressive sexuality with repellent and offensively fascinating descriptions of her activities and genitals.

But the bawd Bewley is far worse than Messalina. Gould uses Bewley as a symbol of the total degeneration of modern times, as well as a culmination of the worst excesses of lust. Martial imagery is added to the embryonic combative vocabulary used in association with Messalina (for example "sallies"), and to the recurrent images of oceans and flooding. The important factor in the passage, is again, not *man's* lustfulness, which is validated by their sex and innocent helplessness, but *woman's* "boundless Lust" which more than matches his. In the passage below Gould unites complex martial imagery with double-entendres of the physical bodies of men and women and sexual activity. Again, he corrupts courtly love themes (a common device of misogynist satire) to turn the military attack from a conceit in which the lover besieges his mistress' stronghold to one in which the war-machine-woman annihilates all.[8] In addition to this, he consoles himself with an inverted *carpe diem* as he imagines time wearing Bewley down and disease eating her body. His poem is evidently a vengeful forecast of Bewley's future demise.

> Whole Legions she encounter'd, Legions tir'd;
> Insatiate yet, still fresh Supplies desir'd.
> Illustrious Bawd! Whose Fame shall be display'd,
> When Heroes Glories are in Silence laid,
> In as profound a Silence, as the Slaves
> Their conqu'ring Swords dispatch'd into their Graves.
> But Bodies must decay; for 'tis too sure,
> There's nothing from the Jaws of Time secure.
> Yet, when she found that she could do no more,
> When all her Body was one putrid Sore,
> Studded with Pox, and Ulcers quite all o're . . .
>
> (ll.126-136)

Gould's poem immortalises Bewley as an "illustrious Bawd" in a manner usually reserved for glorious heroes. Disease seems to be a physical manifestation of

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[8] Examples are easy to find in Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, for example, XXIX, XXXVI. See Gerald Bullet (ed.) *Silver Poets of the Sixteenth Century*, (London: J. M. Dent, Everyman, 1989): 183, 186.

Gould's pathology. In this passage two of the three primary fears that generate stereotypes outlined by Gilman are present. The centrality of sexuality is evident, here closely linked to Gould's sense of mutability. His fear for his sexual and physical existence can be seen in the way he envisages Bewley's diseases which symbolise *her* voraciousness and *his* imminent death.

Gould's obsessive linking of women's genitalia with death and the grave extends beyond the "little death" of Elizabethan and metaphysical poetry: the woman's womb becomes only reproductive of Sin, signifying death for men. Once again, the creative, reproductive woman is the "bad" Gould, embodying his fear of death. The womb comes to signify women's power and creativity -- her difference from and threat to men. There are several explicit references to women's genitals and death. The first has already been noted above (l.106), showing Gould's "logical" conclusion that sexual relations will lead him to the hungry grave. The womb is a dark crevasse that encloses and entombs men. Gould associates the womb with blackness and night (l.290) a place where woman the witch-fiend dwells hidden, unrevealed. Gould's previous images of unveiling and exposure contrast greatly with the woman's physical body which remains unseen and unknown. Again sexual imagery, comparisons of women's genitalia and death are intertwined in the passage on Bewley.

The womb and cunt are hungry with appetites that cannot be assuaged, both are described as "gaping" (l.106, 168). This image combines activity, greed and space. The spatial image is a significant manifestation of Gould's pathology. In it we can see a relationship between men and women in which women are shown as a space that cannot be filled. Gould's claim to know women as a negation or lack immediately casts himself as a positive or solid substance. But throughout the poem we can sense Gould's dilemma -- what to do with this lack of substance, how to fill it? We can see that he cannot fill it, and in creating it as a space, or lack, there is no longer anything that he can control either.

Gould's third complaint against women, that they are totally inconstant, is expressed in many images. We have already seen their promiscuity, and their deceitful natures, but Gould also envisages women's inconstancy in terms of the wind, storms, the sea, darting birds and fluttering leaves. Women's

uncontrollability threatens the orderly male world and may well reflect "men's fear of women's autonomy" (Nussbaum 28). Women's inconstancy is something that Gould cannot understand. Women seem to have a set of rules that men do not and cannot expect to understand. Gould complains that "all Religious Vows, and Oaths they break, / With the same ease and freedom as they speak' (ll.319-20), and treats women's language as inherently untrustworthy and alien to the patriarchal order. Gould's women are totally anarchic, conforming to none of the rules and codes that he accepts. Marriage too, although earlier reviled because it results in damnation, is now upheld as a once-desirable state,

> (. . . . which musty Drones affirm to be
> The tye of Souls, as well as Bodies! nay,
> The Spring that does through unseen Pipes convey
> Fresh sweets to Life, and drives the bitter dregs away!
> The Sacred Flame, the Guardian Pile of Fire,
> That guides our steps to Peace! nor does expire,
> Till it has left us nothing to desire!)
> Ev'n thus adorn'd, the Idol is not free
> From the swift turns of their Inconstancy.
>
> (ll.322-330)

Although the reader may doubt the authority of the "musty Drones" in this mock panegyric to marriage, Gould contrasts the present state of marriage due to women's infidelity to the ideal state it has been in the past. He also ridicules the platitudes that accompany marriage, mocking the wife as "the Peace that Crowns a Matrimonial Life" (l.355). Gould ironically elaborates on the ideal state of marriage that will give men "Fresh sweets to Life," that do not "expire, / Till it [marriage] has left us nothing to desire!" (ll.325, 328), and is only inexhaustible to the extent of the husband's love / lust. Women are never idealised as "The Peace," "the Sacred Prize," or "the Supporter" of married life. Gould's cynical portrayal of marriage shows women's inability to be faithful to their marriage vows. Although inconstancy is in part sexual, it is not sexual alone, but is also a rejection of male control and order. Women's world is the inversion of men's.

> In which, so many various ways they move,

They now inconstant in their Follies prove,
Ev'n as inconstant as they do in Love:
Nor is't alone confin'd in those to range,
Their Vices too themselves admit of change,
Their dearest darling Vices, Lust, and Pride,
With all they promise, think, or dream beside:
O how inconstant then must Woman be,
When constant onely in Inconstancy?

(ll.380-88)

Thus there is a pattern in women's behaviour, but it remains labyrinthine, maze-like and undetectable to the male eye. Gould complains that women's inconstancy extends so far that "their Vices too themselves admit of change," making it impossible for men to predict women's behaviour. Gould's attempts to disclose his perceptions of the labyrinthine aspects of women's sexuality only serve to show his pathology as he catalogues its manifestation. The maze seems emblematic of women's secret natures, their ability to confuse and deceive. Their inconstancy extends beyond their sexual lives to all aspects of their thought, not just their sexuality.

Women's collusion against men is absolute. Women like Bewley and Cresswold are procuresses who tempt other women to follow in their footsteps. But Gould shows women as not only unfaithful with other men, but their husbands are also displaced by dildos and lapdogs. In the private world of women's closets where

flaming Dil----s does inflame desire,
And gentle Lap-d---s feed the am'rous fire:
Lap-d----s! to whom they are more kind and free,
Than they themselves to their own Husbands be.
How curst is Man! when Bruits his Rivals prove,
Ev'n in the sacred bus'ness of his Love.

(ll.159-164)

A veritable Noah's ark of "Men, Dogs, Lions, Bears, all sorts of Stuff" share men's sexual experience of women (l.169). Men's displacement by dildos and dogs can be seen as a product of a long tradition going back to Juvenal's accusations that women use donkeys when "men are in short supply" (Juvenal

139), and would "gladly sacrifice / Their husband's life for their lapdogs," (Juvenal 151). Gould in turn anticipates Belinda's attachment to Shock in the *Rape of the Lock* and the privileged position of pets in women's lives (*The Rape of the Lock* ll.115-116).[9] The passage combines Gould's main concern, inconstancy, with another specific example of women's depravity, namely bestiality. Women will betray men with anything.

Women's inconstancy is also evidence of their fraudulent behaviour and hypocrisy. Gould links women's inconstancy to death in his portrait of the Ephesian Matron. In this story, a woman whose husband had just died entered his crypt with his body to mourn "extoll'd" as "the Best of Womankind:"

> But see the World's mistake; and with it, see
> The strange effects of wild Inconstancy!
> For she her self, ev'n in that sacred Room,
> With one brisk, vigorous on-set was o'ercome,
> And made a Brothel of her Husband's Tomb:
> Whose pale Ghost trembl'd in its sacred shrowd,
> Wond'ring that Heav'n th' impious act allow'd;
> Horror in Robes of Darkness stalk't around;
> And through the frighted Tomb did groans resound.
> The very Marbles wept; the Furies howl'd;
> And in hoarse Murmurs their amazement told.
> All this shook not the Dictates of her Mind,
> But with a boldness, bold as was her Crime,
> She made her Husband's Ghost (in Death, a Slave!)
> Her necessary Pimp, ev'n in his Grave.
>
> (ll.339-353)

The Ephesian Matron's corruption of her husband's grave is shown as evidence of her true nature, which until now has been successfully hidden from the world. Implicit in this image is an assertion that each woman only belongs to one man, the one to whom they are married, an idea current in Egerton's poem in the image of the phoenix. But here Gould stresses the impiety to the dead, the outrage accorded her husband and his memory. Again we see an *apparently* innocent woman revealed as grossly sexual and knowing. Gould extends the misogynist tradition to show women out of the control of Heaven ("Wond'ring

[9] See also the "Appendix to *The Rape of the Lock*" (l.122).

that Heav'n th' impious act allowed;") and the classical world ("The very Marbles wept; the Furies howl'd"), satisfying their own lusts at the expense of all others.

As we have already seen, considerable power is conferred on women through Gould's sexualisation of them. Women become sexual beings through Gould's descriptions of them as unrelievedly lustful, bestial, faithless, promiscuous, actively sexual and sinful. His spectre of femininity has no polar opposite, no angelic counterpart to the monster. Later eighteenth-century literature tends to describe one type of woman in contrast to another, thus the angel is offset by the she-devil.[10] Pope's "Epistle to a Lady" shows Martha Blount as an angelic exception, an alternative to the debased women at the other end of his spectrum.[11] Like Gould's women in *Love Given O're*, Pope shows many more varieties of bad women than good. Martha Blount herself is finally described in a series of juxtapositions ("Reserve with frankness, art with truth allied . . ." [l.277]), which make her 'a Softer man" and an "exception to all general rules" (l.275) who avoids the extremities of her sisters Atossa and Rufa. But for Gould's women there is no redemption, they are unrelievedly inconstant, lustful and morally repugnant. Like Pope's women who have "no characters at all," however, Gould's women in fact have too much personality so his construction of the feminine becomes an uncontrolled spectre of monstrosity inspiring fear in its creator. We can see that although he has attempted to control women as stereotypes, Gould's constructions have made them more vivid and monstrous than ever.

Gould rejects any aspect of men that can be conceived of as remotely feminine or even sympathetic to women, revealing both their attraction and their threat. He ridicules the Gay-Fop, who is such a nonentity that he deserves neither Gould's "Love nor Fear" (l.235) and shows that any female sympathies are a "weakness" (l.236) and a "wound which he shou'd strive to heal" (l.237). But Gould's rejection of the Gay-Fop's ideas shows that he is determined to maintain his interpretation of women as wilfully deviant and monstrous. Gould fears his

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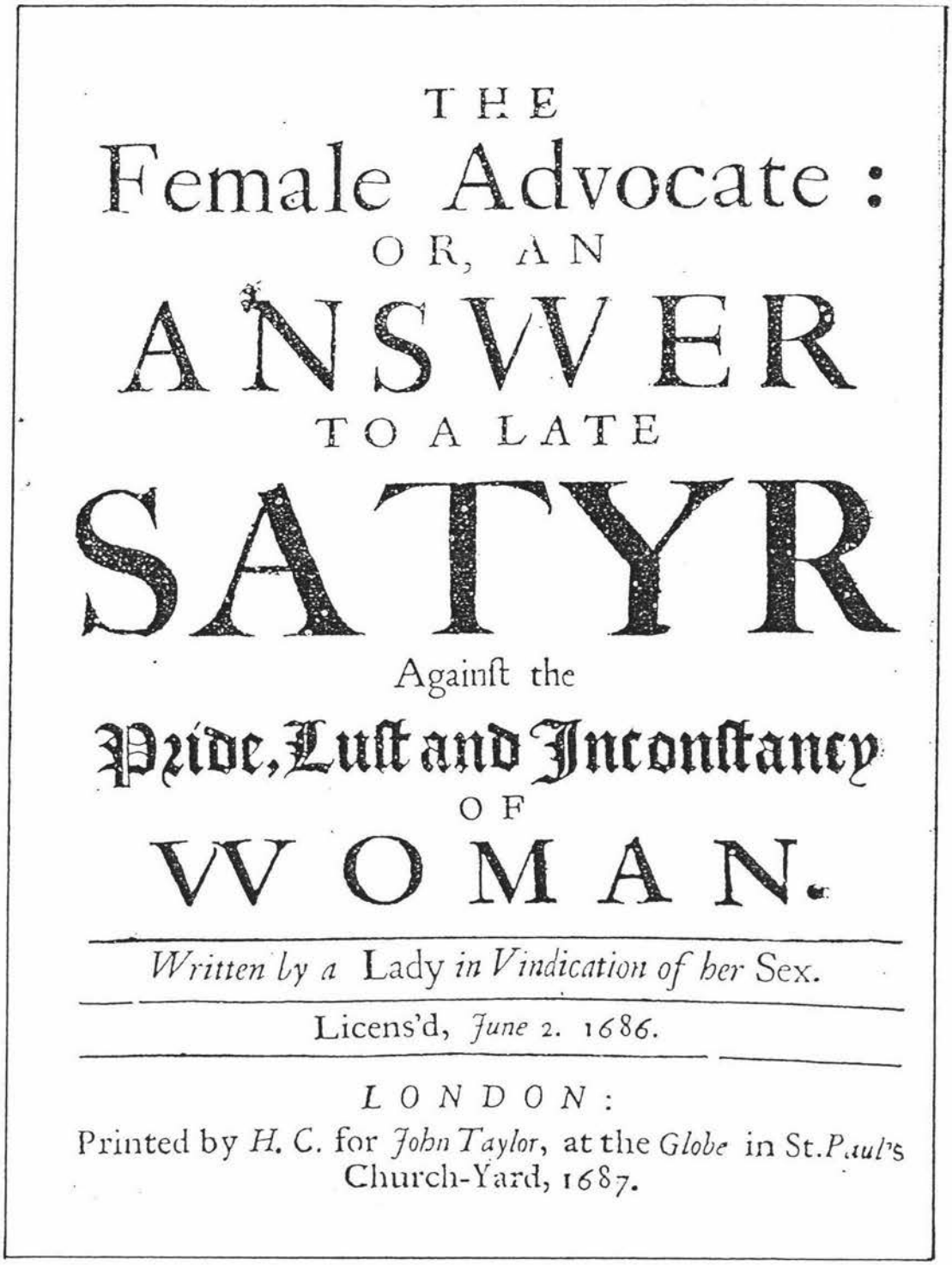
[10] This opposition proved popular on the Restoration stage. See Howe, in particular Chapter 7, "The angel and the she-devil".

[11] See Nussbaum, Chapter VIII.

attraction to women which is so strong that just a "kind look" from Silvia could "save" him from "despair," but he warns that this kind of attraction to women will ultimately betray men as all women prove "false perjur'd, and unkind" in the end.

The main feature of Gould's construction of women is the conglomeration of images that create them. The images begin as images of power (Tyrant Author, proud Invader) and images of women who have the power to captivate and deceive men (the witch, the apple) and progress to metaphors that equate women's death-bringing powers with her creativity (the Womb / Tomb). Her ability to conceive and confer death turns her from consumable into the consumer. How far Gould uses the satirical misogynist tradition to illuminate his arguments and to what extent his arguments develop from these images is hard to estimate. Like women in the misogynist tradition, Silvia, Bewley and the Ephesian Matron are unfaithful and lustful. Gould's exploration of the theme of women's lust and inconstancy portrays women as spontaneously evil from the moment of their creation. This depiction of women places women outside men's control, an object, but an object of infinite fascination that gradually takes on a life of its own.

In the next chapter we will see Sarah Egerton objecting to Gould's portrayal of women as inherently and solely sexual. To combat Gould's stereotypes of women who have no goodness or rationality Egerton insists that men too are subject to uncontrollable lusts and unadmirable actions. Gould's satire succeeds in refining many images of women current in satire and concentrating them into repellent pictures that defy redemption. Gould's misogyny may aim to define and confine women and to endorse patriarchal ideology, but it also unleashes the author's sexual fantasies in an uncontrollable creation, Woman.



THE

Female Advocate:

OR, AN

ANSWER

TO A LATE

SATYR

Againſt the

Pride, Luſt and Inconſtancy

OF

WOMAN.

Written by a Lady *in Vindication of her* Sex.

Licens'd, *June* 2. 1686.

LONDON:

Printed by *H. C.* for *John Taylor*, at the *Globe* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, 1687.

The title page of Sarah Egerton's *The Female Advocate* (1687).

II. SARAH EGERTON:

"A HATED OBJECT, YET A STRANGER TOO"

Sarah Egerton, as she says in the Preface, could not let Gould's poem pass without comment. But she also complains that she received a lot of criticism for responding to *Love Given O're*: "I find the main objection is, That I should answer so rude a Book, when, if it had not been against our Sex, I should not have Read it" (Preface). Her defence of women and attack on Gould had severe personal consequences when her father discovered *The Female Advocate* in print. For this "teenage indiscretion" her father sent her from London to live with relatives in the country (Lonsdale 26).

The Female Advocate reverses several features of misogynist debates, so that we read again of the creation myth, then of catalogues of proud and faithless men, and examples of men's inconstancy, pride and ambition which show that Gould's views about women and men are biased and superficial. Moreover, throughout her poem Egerton demonstrates her awareness of Gould's categorisations of women and shrewdly suggests motivations behind their construction. While not terming them as such, she identifies and rebels against stereotypes of women that limit all women to the archetypes of Lust and Pride (Jezebel and Eve).

Egerton's awareness of Gould's stereotypes of women is augmented by her awareness of the fact that masculine and feminine behaviour is to a degree determined by social expectations, or what she terms "Custom." In contrast to his ideology of women's sexual iniquities in their interactions with men she offers her own views on what women consider important and how they can best achieve independence. Strong views expressed about chastity as a commendable (and possibly the best) option for women also indicate that Egerton had a fairly astute view of sexual politics and like other women of the period was offering her own alternatives.

Egerton refutes Gould's satire in several ways. I will concentrate on her version of the creation myth, her rebuttal of women's pride, lust and inconstancy,

her development of new stereotypes of men to combat Gould's, and a satirical outline of the conclusions Gould's suggestions would lead to. Finally, she creates a new kind of stereotype and explains her own conclusions and reasons for them.

Before exploring and refuting Gould's attack on women, Egerton's creation myth resurrects God as the supreme Deity:

> Blasphemous Wretch! How canst thou think or say
> Some Curst or Banisht Fiend Usurpt the Sway
> When *Eve* was Form'd? For then's deny'd by you
> God's Omnipresence and Omniscience too . . .
>
> (ll.1-4)

Following the opening passages which outline woman's creation and the trials she faces from men, Egerton satirises men, accusing them of being more ambitious, proud and unfaithful than women. The conclusion of the poem is that men will enter Hell for their corruption and women ascend to Heaven as a just reward for their virtue. Her assumption that men and women are in principle morally and intellectually equal leads her to criticise men vigorously for their failure to develop their natural virtues and to contrast women favourably with them.

The Preface to *The Female Advocate* is important in setting the tone of the poem. We find troubling comments about the essential nature of women, implying -- if not stating -- that women are in essence better than men. These comments are troubling because they undermine Egerton's other argument, that men and women are equally rational. The most problematic thing about these essentialist arguments is that they assert that one sex is superior to another -- an inversion of many male arguments of the time. Egerton argues that women are considered "more essentially Good than Men" but also that they are created equal with men by Heaven:

> *because they are more essentially Good than Men; for 'tis observed in all Religions, that Women are the truest Devotionists, and the most Pious, and more Heavenly than those who pretend to be the most perfect and rational Creatures; for many Men, with Conceit of their own Perfections, neglect that which should make them so . . . . But that Heaven should make a Male and Female, both of the same Species, both indued with the like rational Souls, for two such differing Ends, is the most notorious Principle . . . .and I shall never*

> *take it for an Article of my Faith, being assured that Heaven is for all those whose Purity and Obedience to its Law, qualifies them for it, whether Male or Female; to which Place the latter seem to have the justest Claim, is the Opinion of one of its Votaries.*
>
> (Preface)

But "essentially" does not mean "essentialist" as we understand it today, not as an "essence" or an immutable given state, but rather as a rhetorical conceit used to contrast women and men. When used with such words as "devotionist," "pious," and "heavenly," it seems clear that virtue is not "essential" but must be cultivated and developed, just as those who neglect perfection and pretend to be rational creatures show humanity's mutable state. On the whole, the predominant idea in the poem is men's and women's equality, and Egerton generally shows that "the female sex should not be universally damned any more than men should be universally praised" (Nussbaum, 31). This results in the gradual breakdown of the patriarchal order as Egerton "thwarts the force of satire against women by assaulting the assumption that one sex is superior to the other; she undermines the assumption of patriarchal authority" (Nussbaum, 33). Egerton's assertion of women's equality is the first part of her own creation myth. In arguing for women's equality she undermines men's basic premise for their dominance, opening the door to the rest of her poem in which she outlines women's strengths and men's weaknesses. Her political ingenuity also means that she shows men and women born equal and thereafter making their own choices as to how they behave. Women are shown as more inclined towards piety and devotion, whereas men "never follow the Rules which lead to Salvation" (Preface). Nussbaum says that Egerton "ingeniously argues that neither sex is innately superior to the other, but the failure of men's moral education makes the male sex *seem* inferior" (31, her italics).

From the outset Egerton sets about proving that men behave just as badly as Gould claims women do, and she shrewdly recognises that what motivates Gould in *Love Given O're* may have nothing to do with reality, that Gould has created an imaginary sex. Although Egerton argues that Gould's "female sex" is not real, she recognises the power of male myth making. She argues that Gould's woman is an "imagin'd Fiend" (l.683), a product of his deranged imagination, a projection of his own carnality. For example, she gleefully suggests that Gould

was himself in love with the whorish world that Bewley represents which is why he dwells so on her promiscuity and diseases (ll.299-304), and that Gould's spite shows his "horror of his own carnal contingence which [man] projects upon [woman]" (Simone de Beauvoir, quoted in Gilbert and Gubar 34). Thus she says he accuses women of being whores, but it is he who makes them so, whether in word (reputation) or actuality:

> But 'cause [virtuous women] hated your insatiate Mind,
> Therefore you call what's Vertuous, Unkind;
> And Disappointments did your Soul perplex,
> So in meer spight you curse the Female Sex.
> I would not judge you thus, only I find
> You would adult'rate all Womankind,
> Not only with your Pen; you higher soar,
> You'd exclude Marriage, make the World a Whore.
> . . . .
> And 'cause you have made *Whores* of all you could,
> So, if you durst, you'd say all Women would;
> Which words do only argue guilt and spight:
> All makes you cheap in ev'ry Mortals sight.
>
> (ll.85-92, 293-296)

Both passages emphasise the role of language in Gould's corruption of women. The words "Pen" (l.91), and "words" (l.295) align Gould's view of women with the status of an invention, a literary creation, but one which can nonetheless damn and "adult'rate" women (l.90). In both of the passages quoted the word "spight" is cited as an important factor. In refuting his description of women Egerton emphasises Gould's "spight' and "guilt" (l.295) and his dangerous use of the phallic pen (that can "adult'rate" women) which is given credibility by male discourse. In her refutation, Egerton also identifies Gould's attempts to transfer *all* his guilt to women: "But you'd perswade us that 'tis we alone / Are guilty of all crimes, and you have none" (ll.263-264).

Egerton portrays women trapped by the sexual double standard. Men seduce women and make them whores and then blame women for succumbing to them, but those who resist are accused of unkindness. The term "the double standard" refers to the existence of a different standard of behaviour applied to men than that which is applied to women. Keith Thomas traces the origins of the

double standard in England to a variety of sources, including the male desire for legitiamte offspring, but the one that he concludes is most significant is "the view that men have property in women and that the value of this property is immeasurably diminished if the woman at any time has sexual relations with anyone other than her husband" (210). Women's proven chastity was a vital part of patriarchal economic exchange as the value of a marriage and all the property that came with her hand was dependent upon her chastity. The different expectations placed on the sexes became institutionalised to the point where it was evident in law as well as just opinion. The practise is most evident in sexual relations in which men are uncensured when indulging in behaviour that would be condemned as promiscuous and unpardonable in a woman. Above we saw Egerton's argument that men should not be excused from promiscuous behaviour, and her argument that the double standard arises out of spite when the would-be lover is rejected by the woman. Later in *The Female Advocate* we will again see the importance of the double standard in the example of Lucretia. The law of *feme couverte* meant that a woman did not own her sexuality, and therefore in effect her body, a point that the three women in this study object to in their discussions of the extent of male authority in their relationships with women. As Thomas suggests, "the double standard . . . was but an aspect of a whole code of social conduct for women which was in turn based entirely upon their place in society in relation to men" (Thomas 213). Thus the sexual double standard is an elaborate mechanism for retaining male power and wealth, a consequence of which is women's entrapment in the patriarchal economy.

Egerton's retelling of the creation myth is the creation of a myth of her own as she explains the actual events of woman's creation and what they symbolised.

> The World being made thus spacious and compleat,
> Then Man was form'd, who seemed nobly Great.
> When Heav'n survey'd the Works that it had done,
> Saw Male and Female, but found Man alone,
> A barren Sex, and insignificant,
> Then Heav'n made Woman to supply the want,
> And to make perfect what before was scant:
> Surely then she a Noble Creature is,
> Whom Heav'n thus made to consummate all Bliss.

> Tho' Man had Being first, yet methinks She
> In Nature should have the Supremacy;
> For Man was form'd out of dull senseless Earth,
> But Woman had a much more Noble Birth:
> For when the Dust was purify'd by Heaven,
> Made into Man, and Life unto it given,
> Then the Almighty and All-wise God said,
> That Woman of that Species should be made;
> Which was no sooner said, but it was done,
> 'Cause 'twas not fit for Man to be alone.
>
> (ll.15-33)

Like Milton, women writing in this period tend to emphasise the incompleteness of the pre-Eve man as "A barren sex and insignificant," and that Heaven made Eve because " 'twas not fit for man to be alone" (l.33).[1] They challenge the misogynist myth's claim of autonomy and there is a subtle attack on Gould's expressed wish for the ability to propagate alone. The "spacious and compleat" world is contrasted to Man "who *seem'd* nobly Great" (ll.15-16, my emphasis). However, his greatness is in reality barrenness and insignificance while he is alone. The completion of humanity requires the creation of a woman. The vocabulary of incompleteness ("barren," "want," "insignificant," and "scant") shows Adam as an unfinished creation without Eve, as she fills a need in him.[2] Egerton shows Eve as a "Noble Creature" and argues inventively that she had the "more Noble Birth" because she was not formed from dust and is thus a higher creature than Adam. Phrases such as "Whom Heav'n thus made to consummate all Bliss" (l.23) look forward to the marriage of Adam and Eve. Her function within marriage of making Adam "perfect" is echoed later in the poem also in association with fallen man's resistance to regulation in marriage and his libertine propensities: "one wont do, / He must have more, for he doth still pursue / The Agents of his Passion; 'tis not Wife, / That mutual Name, can regulate his Life" (ll.489-492).

In *The Female Advocate* men are represented almost entirely negatively as sources of vice and lust. Although they have the opportunity to attain virtue if

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[1] See Genesis 2. 18. And the Lord God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him.

[2] Compare to Milton's Adam who feels that he is incomplete without a human mate (*Paradise Lost* VIII. ll.422-425). The anonymous author of *Two Great Questions Determined* also uses the argument of Adam's incompleteness to support his case for divorce by describing the perfect state of marriage and arguing that anything less than this perfect union is not a real marriage.

they wish, they prefer to ruin women and ridicule the good. Like women in *Love Given O're*, men in *The Female Advocate* choose to fall, to descend into evil.

In the lengthy last third of her poem Egerton demolishes Gould's arguments that Eve and Jezebel are stereotypes that represent all women:

> And that to *Eve* and *Jezebel* was given
> Souls of so great extent, that Heav'n was driven
> Into a straight, and liberality
> Had made her void of wanting, to supply
> These later bodies, she was forc'd to take
> Their souls asunder, and so numbers make,
> And transmigrate them into others, and
> Still shift them as she finds the matter stand.
> 'Tis 'cause they are the worst makes me believe
> You must imagine *Jezebel* and *Eve*.
>
> (ll.380-389)

Egerton calls Jezebel and Eve by name, having concluded that these are the stereotypes of women that Gould has in mind. She continues to say that she does not follow Pythagoras' theory of transmigration of souls, and reinforces this with her own experience:

> I do not find our Sex so near ally'd,
> Either in disobedience or in pride,
> Unto the 'bove-nam'd Females (for I'm sure
> They are refin'd, or else were alwaies pure) . . .
>
> (ll.394-398)

Rather than argue that Eve and Jezebel were not proud and disobedient (Egerton has already argued that Eve did not fall from Pride but by the wiles of Satan [ll. 40-55]), Egerton places trust in her own experience and divides women into different categories. Her division of women into "good" and "bad" is used to highlight the *choice* that all women have to be virtuous (ll.400-402). She then creates a stereotype of woman's goodness ("She's all divine" [l.418]) that illuminates and "outshines" her stereotypes of men's "pride" and "luxury" (l.421). Throughout her argument about "Man's pride, ambition and his falsehood"

(l.429) she outlines a "History" that is an attempt to combat his portrayal of all women as bad.

Women's writing in this period frequently turns to establishing a tradition of "good" women in an attempt to contextualise their arguments and gain evidence and strength from a reference source that combats and is recognised by the male source. Bathsua Makin, Anne Finch, Margaret Fell and Mary Chudleigh are among the women who actively seek a tradition from which they are not automatically excluded and silenced. Catalogues of famous virtuous women in these authors' works are contrasted by Egerton's catalogue of bad men which includes Ptolemy, Brutus, Lais and Sisyphus. Egerton also graphically portrays male ambition by describing a perverted succession of monarchs who gain power after the unnatural deaths of their parents, siblings and friends. She dwells briefly on men's pride, and then explores fully men's inconstancy and infidelity, shown in their lust that "at best, is but Beastiality" (l.484), although it is legitimised in their legal systems so it "might have a shrow'd, / And there might be *Polygamy* allow'd" (ll.493-494). She identifies men's hatred of marriage, but their awareness of its necessity to "have a Child legitimate" (l.499).

The vice Egerton targets most particularly is "Hypocrisie" (l.548). She views men as liars (a variation of Gould's theme of women's duplicity) and shows their word and oath to be as treacherous as they claim women's is: "And Men do catch [*Bewley's* Pox] by meer phantasie. / Tho' they seem chaste and honest, yet it doth / Pursue them, while they swear it with an oath . . ." (ll.519-521). But men believe that if they successfully conceal their crimes it will be as though they had not occurred. She compares men to "shadows" who are impossible to capture, to substantiate, as untrustworthy and transparent as their words (ll.597-599).

Egerton develops male stereotypes in much the same way that Gould does. She takes a vice and finds a well-known historical figure who corresponds with it, enlarging upon an individual's iniquity until it encompasses all men's actions. Consequently she takes "*Egypt's* false King *Ptolomy*" who combines a well-known place, Egypt, with ideas of kingship (that Egerton has already shown are stained with patricide) and of falseness, and makes Ptolemy an evil and untrustworthy figure (ll.600-611). Egerton describes Ptolemy's victim Pompey as

"luckless," and enlarges upon Ptolemy's treachery. The word "snare" (l.603) links us back to Gould's accusations against women (*Love Given O're* l.421), which Egerton associates with a worse intention:

> He was inconstant too, or else design'd
> The same at first, so alter'd words not mind,
> Which is much worse, for when that one doth speak
> With a full resolution, for to break
> One's word and oath, most surely it must be
> A greater crime than an inconstancy . . .
>
> (ll.606-611)

The expressed intention behind Egerton's stereotypes is to prove man's greater guilt. By arguing that man "more false than Woman is, / Far more unconstant, nay perfidious" (ll.626-627) she shows the ridiculous nature of Gould's arguments against women. Earlier, Egerton argued that while some women are virtuous, many are not (ll.399-402).

In the final part of the poem Egerton shows she knows how Gould's technique of stereotyping develops:

> All Pride and Lust too to our charge they lay,
> As if in sin we all were so sublime
> As to monopolize each hainous crime;
> Nay, Woman now is made the Scape-goat, and
> 'Tis she must bear the sins of all the land:
> But I believe there's not a Priest that can
> Make an atonement for one single man,
> Nay, it is well if he himself can bring
> An humble, pious heart for th' offering;
> A thing which ought to be inseparable
> To men o'th' Gown and of the Sacred Table:
> Yet it is sometimes wanting, and they be
> Too often sharers of Impiety . . .
>
> (ll.632-644)

The image of Woman as the Scape-goat is striking. We can see Egerton's recognition of what Gould's poem does to women. The metaphor of the scape-goat originated in the Bible, and I believe that Egerton probably intends the association with the biblical connotations of the word to be made. "And the goat

shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in wilderness" (Leviticus 16. 22) is perhaps an accurate description of Woman the scape-goat, who "must bear the sins of all the land," sins which are placed on the *terra incognita* of the women's body and are then carried by her into the chaotic wilderness. Egerton further emphasises the biblical connotations by her reference immediately afterward to the Priest, who she strongly identifies as a fallible *man*, not a god-substitute. Egerton realises that as a woman, to Gould she is a scape-goat, an 'imagin'd Fiend," "a hated object, yet a stranger too."

In the following investigation of other aspects of Egerton's feminism, we will see how she takes another stereotype, this time one of a chaste woman and uses it as a symbol of woman's self expression and liberty instead of an imposition by male culture. I have chosen to look almost exclusively at the image of Lucretia, because its complexity illuminates other feminist arguments in the poem. Many images in the complex network of reference within *The Female Advocate* can be read in a similar way. To begin with, Egerton shows the importance of the individual's responsibility for their own virtue.

> But yet their faults only thus much infer,
> That we're not made so perfect, but may err;
> Which adds much lustre to a vertuous mind,
> And 'tis her prudence makes her soul confin'd
> Within the bounds of Goodness, for if she
> Was all perfection unto that degree,
> That 'twas impossible to do amiss,
> Then heaven, not she, must have the praise of this.
>
> (ll.400-407)

The women praised in this excerpt are those who have practised virtue. Prudence, like piety, is a virtue, a part of chastity that is not an absolute that people are given by God. Oblique instances of free will such as this have important implications for women's chastity and self-respect. In the Miltonic view of free will in *Paradise Lost* the Father meditates on the fate of Adam and Eve, of which he has foreknowledge. His permissive will means that they may err if they choose: "I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (III, ll.98-99). Egerton also takes this view of people's behaviour; they can err or be

virtuous as all have the capacity for virtue or sin. Women's ability to act independently of men through free will is an important factor in their personal development. Popular arguments of the day about women's duty nearly always included a discussion of the Gospel of St. Paul, on which women's subordination to their husbands is founded. Despite this emphasis by male interpreters on women's subordination to their husbands, Egerton argues that *all* people have free will, that virtue is a matter for the individual, and that women should not be guided by men morally or spiritually. By insisting on free will for all persons, she allows women to explore ideas that are important to them.

The theme of chastity or virtue in the poem is an integral part of Egerton's feminism. Chastity, or more broadly "Vertue," in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was an important commodity for women. Or at least the appearance of chastity was.[3] Chastity was a marketable commodity for women (sometimes the only one). "Another very different aspect of courtship outside the upper classes was the role played by chastity. As Samuel Johnson made clear, 'confusion of progeny constitutes the essence of the crime', and where the inheritance of an estate was concerned a man needed to know that the children born to his wife were his own" (Hill, 180). The value of the appearance of chastity for the upper class women cannot be underestimated.

Historically, life for single women was grim. Spinsters were generally dependent entirely on the charity of their brothers or fathers, and were often confined to working as unpaid housekeepers and nannies for relatives (Hill 232-238). In a young women virginity was attractive, in an older it became undesirable, evidence as it was of a woman outside the patriarchal economy. In "A Virgin Life" Jane Barker argues that virginity and remaining unmarried is labelled severely, but it does not mean a useless life, although it is often a life more confined than it need be:

> Since gracious Heven, you have bestow'd on me
> So great a kindness for verginity,
> Suffer me not, to fall into the power,
> Of mans, allmost omnippotent amour.

[3] By "chastity" I mean faithfulness to one's spouse or a practitioner of monogamous relationship. Chastity, more broadly, can also extend to serve as an indication of a person's moral character.

But in this happy state, let me remain,
And in chast verse, my chaster thoughts explain.
Fearless of twenty-five and all its rage,
When Time and beauty endless wars ingage,
And Fearless of the antiquated name,
Which oft makes happy maid turn helpless dame,
The scorn fix'd to that name our sex betray,
And often makes us fling ourselves away . . . .
Her whole lives business, she drives to these ends
To serve her god, her neighbour and her friends.
("A Virgin Life" ll.1-12, 35-36)

Spinsterhood in the late seventeenth century presented few attractions to women. Unmarried women had few means to support themselves, and often resorted to marriages that Wollstonecraft regraded as tantamount to "common and legal prostitution" (Noyes 189) if they were unable to find work. Hill adds that "single women of the middle class were not merely deprived of their ability to work, but of any recognised usefulness in society . . . It was not just the disgrace and the shame of failing to get a husband, but their denial by society of any identity . . . . They were also regarded as in some way a challenge to male authority, in particular the authority of husbands" (299). Egerton's attitude is close to that of some twentieth-century feminists in her vision of the single life and virginity as self-expression and identity, an enviable state.[4] She never shows the spinster as sexually voracious, hypocritical or jealous of other women as other literature by women in the eighteenth century frequently did.[5] Neither does she present it as a state of repression. For Egerton chastity (in this case specifically virginity) is very important. It is to be kept *out* of the marketplace because it is always bought or stolen by the unworthy. Chastity is an admirable virtue that must be constantly practised even though it is ridiculed by men who portray virtuous women as foolish:

She that takes pious Precepts for her Rule,
Is thought, by some, a kind of ill-bred Fool;
They would have all bred up in *Venus*-School.

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[4] Margaret Whitford, Ed., *The Irigaray Reader*, 208.

[5] See Jean B. Kern "The Old Maid, or "to grow old, and be poor, and laughed at"," and Deborah Downs-Miers "Springing the Trap: Subtexts and Subversion" in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists 1670-1815*, eds., Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski, (London: Ohio UP), 1986.

> And if that by her speech or carriage, she
> Doth seem to have sense of a Deity,
> She straight is taxt with ungentility . . .
>
> (ll.175-184)

Chastity becomes a significant part of Egerton's women's identity. It was the only way for women to turn the sexual double standard to any advantage.

The story of the noble and chaste Lucretia who committed suicide after she was raped by "proud *Tarquin*" would have been common knowledge to most readers of the time. In Egerton's poem, Lucretia is used to show that chastity is so much a part of a woman that its loss must result in death.[6]

> Ther's none can number all those vertuous Dames
> Which chose cold death before their Lovers flames.
> The chaste *Lucretia*, whom proud *Tarquin* lov'd,
> Her self she slew; her Chastity she prov'd.
>
> (ll.114-117)

The myth of Lucretia is problematic because Lucretia's suicide can be favourably interpreted in either of two ways: by killing herself she succeeds in negating the pollution of the rape and reverses her disgrace; or by committing suicide she deflects disgrace from falling on her husband (Donaldson 11). The former interpretation means that chastity is an internal necessity that holds such emotional and external import that its loss is equivalent to death. The latter view shows the power of men's social standing, and that a woman's life is subordinate to their honour. In the latter interpretation women signify the honour and virtue of their husbands. Egerton uses Lucretia's suicide as "the ultimate sign of her innocence, her crowning act of virtue" (Donaldson 22), which "like a religious sacrifice . . . seems to cleanse the effects of pollution, and to restore lost purity and innocence" (Donaldson 25).

To the same end, Egerton uses the metaphor of the phoenix. Indian women must kill themselves after their husbands die, but, like the phoenix, their chastity and reputation rise from the ashes. Again, we have the idea that chastity

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[6] Livy 81-5, Ovid *Fasti* 109-119, and Cassius Dio Cocceianus 83-91 all contain accounts of the death of Lucretia, each with different emphases. All, however, seem to agree that her suicide redeemed her chastity and proved her high moral state.

can be proven or regained by voluntary death, and that the women's self-identity is cleansed and preserved by this act.

> For where is there that Husband that e'er dy'd,
> Or ever suffer'd with his loving Bride?
> But num'rous trains of chast Wives oft expire
> With their dear Husbands, wrapt in flaming fire;
> We'd to the same if Custom did require.
> But this is done by *Indian* Women, who
> Do make their Constancy immortal too,
> As is their Fame; while happy *India* yields
> More glorious *Phoenix* that th' *Arabian* Fields.
>
> (ll.140-148)

In male verse of the same period, the phoenix is used as a metaphor for the woman "who is an exception to her sex who . . . sets a standard against which to judge the horrid ladies of antifeminist satires" (Nussbaum 27). Egerton instead argues that all women are in a sense the phoenix, as the phoenix is a symbol of the value all virtuous women place on their chastity.

Egerton's conclusion to the problems that men beset chastity with is that women should remain single. She states that women would live alone in darkness rather than become unchaste. Egerton's satirical picture of the world in which Hymen, God of Marriage is no longer revered also shows women's belief in the importance of marriage:

> Sure a strange world, when one shall nothing see,
> Unless a Bawdy-house or Nunnery.
> For should this Act e'er pass, Woman would fly
> Unto dark Caves to save her Chastity.
> She only in a Marriage-Bed delights,
> The very Name of *Whore* her Soul affrights:
> And when that Sacred Ceremony's gone,
> Woman I'm sure will chuse to live alone.
>
> (ll.106-113)

The two extremes of woman, the whore and the nun, would result from the "dull Custom" of no marriage. Her image of "woman fly[ing] / unto dark Caves to save her Chastity" shows the importance of chastity for women. The image also

combines the idea of the cave as a place of refuge for women with the womb. For the woman the womb signifies safety, whereas for Gould it was a place of death. Egerton presents living alone as preferable to becoming a whore, but the single life at this stage in the poem is not presented as the most desirable option except under these circumstances. Women will only live alone "when that Sacred ceremony's gone" (l.112). But later in the poem her view moves further towards rejecting men entirely.

Egerton's emphasis on the single life suggests a certain repulsion in the physicality of sexual intercourse with men. Again, the images of pox-ridden whores that men frequent does not auger well for a healthy married life. Her general rejection of sexual intercourse is evident when she argues

> Nor do I think there's a necessity
> For all to enter Beds, like *Noah*'s Beast
> Into his Ark . . .
>
> (ll.273-275)

The subtle link between necessity, beds and Noah's beasts is made through alliteration and assonance that combine the idea that to enter a bed is to succumb to bestial emotions. The obvious allusion in the passage is to the pairing of couples who enter beds two by two; an allusion that is rejected as not suitable for some women. Egerton would

> . . . have some releast
> From the dear cares of that same lawful State;
> But I'll not dictate, I'll leave all to Fate.
> Yet do I think a single life is best
> For those that love to contemplate at rest:
> For then they're free from trifling Toys, and may
> Uninterrupted Nature's works survey.
>
> (ll.275-281)

The single life is shown as a life of contemplation and rest in contrast to the "dear cares" when a wife is required to obey her husband. Liberty is linked to peace and meditation and the idea that woman can find herself in relation to the world ('Nature') unworried and undistracted by a husband and offspring is

implicit. Egerton places women's intellectual pursuit and desire for freedom before their biological function in marriage. Chudleigh too expresses her desire for time alone:

> I freely can with my own Thoughts converse,
> And cloath them in ignoble Verse,
> 'Tis then I tast the most delicious Feast of Life:
> There, uncontroul'd I can my self survey
> And from Observers free,
> My intellectual Pow'rs display,
> And all th' opening Scenes of beauteous Nature see . . .
> Then from my self, to Books, I turn my Sight,
>
> ("To Clorissa" ll.23-29, 34)

The single life is one in which women can please themselves rather than being tied to the stresses of catering for others.

Egerton's response to Gould's overblown images of women as solely sexual beings is to deny women sexual expression at all. While she agrees with marriage in principle, her images of it are not inviting. Marriage in the post-lapsarian world is tainted by lust and bestiality. While it would be unfair to say that Egerton "dodges" the issue of sexuality, she does not show women as particularly sexual. I do not simply wish to write this off as a reaction against Gould's portrayal of women, but Egerton's avoidance of any mention of reproduction, mothering and children is notable. Her few mentions of children occur in the tainted portraits of marriage in which wives and children are mere legal necessities that are forced to live in misery and poverty in contrast to the lifestyle of the husband and his mistresses. It would be unusual to find a serious debate from the eighteenth century in which a woman argued for greater sexual freedom. Women in this period tend to argue for more "chastity for men, not greater freedom for women" (Browne 153).

Egerton argues that women are worthy of individual respect and need not be tied to men in marriage in order to validate their existence. Her picture of women refraining from marriage implicitly attacks her society's conception of women's role. Egerton's argument privileges women's own needs for independence and self-development over their usefulness to others. The closing

couplet recognises Gould's visualisation of women and their inseparability from men:

> When Woman, your imagin'd Fiend, shall live
> Bless'd with the Joys that Heaven can always give.
>
> (ll.683-684)

Egerton has argued against Gould's accusations of women's pride, lust and inconstancy by developing stereotypes of men who are also guilty of these vices, and shows men's *choice* to fall rather that be virtuous. She has argued that women can be virtuous, that their creation does not determine them as lustful fiends, and that relationships with men tend to be doomed to destroy women. Even the virtuous single woman cannot avoid ridicule by frightened men.

Egerton's recognition of the power of myths and methods that Gould uses to create his stereotypes allows her to do the same. Perhaps the most eloquent recognition of this is in the quotation that I have used for my chapter heading where Egerton identifies that for Gould, and for all men, women are insubstantial, scapegoats for male emotion, but still strangers, alien and unknown.

THE

Bride-Womans

COUNSELLER.

BEING A

SERMON

PREACH'D at a

WEDDING,

May the 11*th*, 1699, at *Sherbourn*, in *Dorſetſhire.*

1 COR. Chap. 7. Ver. 34.

But ſhe that is Married careth for the things of the World, how ſhe may pleaſe her Husband.

By *JOHN SPRINT.*

London: Printed by *H. Hills*, in *Black-fryars*, near the Water-ſide. For the Benefit of the Poor.

The title page of *The Bride-Womans Counseller* (1699) by John Sprint.

CHAPTER TWO

I. JOHN SPRINT:

PREACHING GREAT FRIEND RELIGION FOR THE HAPPINESS OF MAN

Initially a sermon, *The Bride-Womans Counseller* was published by John Sprint in 1700. John Sprint is known for little else. His writings are conservative, arguing an orthodox line of religious thought. In *Christian Loyalty Revived* (1693), a text in which Sprint's ideas about the relationship of subjects to their king are expressed, Sprint bases his argument on I. Peter. 2. 17, "Honour the King," and as might be expected from such a starting point, views the monarch as the parent of a family in which his subjects are his children, each of whom owe the other respect and responsibility. Another sermon by John Sprint, published as *The Christian Mourner Comforted* (1692), discusses appropriate expressions of grief on the advent of deaths of friends or family, and consoles the mourners by assuring them that the dead will ascend to Heaven and eternal life. *The Bride-Womans Counseller* too is conservative, arguing that women should be subjugated to their husbands. But Sprint's insistence on women's subjugation is disrupted at points where his words or metaphors are open to multiple interpretations -- if they do not actually maintain a secondary message. We can read the subtext as a subversive text that questions and critiques the surface text.[1] His views seem the epitome of traditional patriarchal conservatism, but underlying his justifications of male dominance is a hesitant recognition of the difficult position that women are in and the way in which men can abuse the privileges that Sprint advocates. His text is in some senses grimly traditional: in others it seems

[1] In using the term "subtext" I am following Tilottama Rajan, who defines a "subtext" as a second text which is not entirely under the speaker's control. This is as opposed to a "counter-" or "co-text," which is a deliberate alternative message intended by the speaker. The subtext in *The Bride-Womans Counseller* emerges in part through the ambiguous view that the speaker has towards women, and in his uncomplimentary portrayal of husbands (Rajan 21 n.13).

to revert to tradition because its author fears the alternative (women in power) and refuses to contemplate other suggestions.

Sprint's arguments and methodology are influenced by scientific discourses of the period. The structure of *The Bride-Womans Counseller* reflects this by following a brief hypothesis with clearly defined premises and evidence. It is also different from many scholarly arguments in including numeration to structure it. Both Sprint's aforementioned works (in particular *The Christian Mourner Comforted*) also follow this structure. Sprint's discussions are supported entirely by evidence from his own experience, biblical and contemporary sources. His methodical discussion is intended to support the base premise adopted from St. Paul: "She that is Married, careth for the things of the World, how she may please her Husband (Corinthians I. 7. 34: 3)." Sprint's interpretation of this assertion is that it is a wife's "Duty Incumbent" to please her husband. After attempting to convince the reader that women are inferior, Sprint elaborates on the behaviour required of wives towards their husbands in order to redress Eve's sin. The second section of the sermon is devoted to "shew[ing] how and which way married Women must endeavour to please their Husbands" (5) based on the marriage vows "to Love, Honour and Obey." Sprint's descriptions of suitable behaviour are based on contemporary social practice, so it is not surprising that he quotes from contemporary commentaries to support his reasoning. The final part of the sermon is advice to husbands and married men, and "the Improvement of this Doctrine" (14). Despite attempts at logical analysis, the sermon's argument is validated by the circular argument based on the Bible: one cannot criticise the Bible because it is the Word of God, but proof that the Bible is the Word of God is found in the Bible. This circularity validates most of the reasoning in the sermon.

Themes in the sermon that I will explore are: the importance of the Fall and its significance for women's roles and position, images of women and marriage, men's authority over women, and the "gaps" in Sprint's argument that suggest the presence of a subtext. Within these categories I will explore a variety of images in connection with the main ideas.

Sprint argues that women should atone for Eve's corruption of Adam's nature. Culpability for the Fall determines men's and women's roles in present society. Many of his recurrent ideas and arguments are effectively illustrated by a lengthy quotation:

> Because of the Woman's Occasion the Man was ruined and undone, (I. *Tim.* 2.14.) *And Adam was not deceived, the Woman being deceived was in the Transgression*; That is, *Adam* was not at first deceiv'd immediately by the *Serpent*, but only enticed and deceived by the Woman, who was the Tempter's Agent; so as that she was both first in the Transgression, in order of Time, and also the Principle, in contributing to the Seduction of Man; therefore 'tis but fit and just, that she, who hath been so greatly instrumental of so much Mischief and Misery to Man, should be actively engaged to please and comfort him: And indeed we find that God imposed this Task upon her, as a punishment for seducing her Husband, (*Gen.* 3. 16.) *And thy desire shall be to thy Husband, and He shall rule over thee*: Wherein is implied, not only Subjection to him, in obeying his Commands, but it reacheth farther to the bringing under unto him the very Desires of the Heart to be regulated by him so far, that it should not be lawful for her to will or desire what she her self liked, but only what her Husband should approve and allow; even before the Fall, the Will of the Husband was to have been the Woman's *Directory*, as is evident from the foregoing Reason, her Compliance with which had been easy and pleasant; but since the Fall, Man is grown more humoursome, and hard to be pleased, and Woman less able and willing to do it; which being so thro' her own means, it was but just and righteous with God to impose a Work upon her, which her self made so hard and difficult; and therefore 'tis not the Woman's pleading, that her Husband is hard to be pleased, that will excuse her Negligence herein: This may, indeed, be a *Momento* to her of her Original Guilt, but 'twill by no means excuse her from the performance of her present Duty; nay, rather it should be a Motive of her greatest diligence.
>
> (6)

Sprint's retelling of the Fall pursues many of the same ideas that Gould has expressed but in a more covert form. All women, according to Gould, "envy Eve the glory of the Fall" [*Love Given O're* l.55] which is where they get their pride and ambition from, but Sprint shows Eve in collusion with the Devil, as "the Tempter's Agent" contributing "to the Seduction of Man." His version, like Gould's, ignores any direct description of Eve's seduction by the Serpent. By

placing the emphasis on Eve's interaction with Adam, and leading the reader through a logical development ("so as to that," "therefore," "And," "Wherein" etc.) following the consequences of Eve's action, Sprint can conclude that she deserves a greater punishment then Adam. However, the image of men in this passage should not be ignored -- represented as grumpy and spiteful, with no inclination to charity or forgiveness.

The argument that women have to be submissive to their husbands in the fallen world as a form of poetic justice for Eve's transgression is expressed very forcefully. Her exercise of free will in the Garden of Eden was so devastating that God placed restrictions on her in the Fallen World: namely that "thy desire shall be to thy husband . . ." (Genesis 3. 16), which Sprint interprets as "bringing under unto him the very Desires of the Heart." Moreover, women are blamed for the things they complain of in men. Sprint says that men are "grown more humoursome, and hard to be pleased, and Woman less able and willing to do it," thus undermining any arguments from women that men are unreasonable, as he has shown that it was they who made them so. The "humoursome" nature of men becomes women's fault, women's punishment for Original Sin, women's memento of the Fall, and, it is to be hoped, the "motive for her greatest diligence." The use of the term "Directory" tells us of the manner in which a husband's authority is regarded by Sprint. A directory in this context is a religious guide or rule-book to a person's conduct.[2] In this instance, the woman is to see her *husband* as her guide to her conduct, a book that she must study minutely in order to live as she should. Later we will see an added significance to Sprint's notion of the man as the woman's directory when we examine the extent of the husband's authority in relation to Sprint's interpretations of another biblical passage.

In many tracts of the time feminist writers were defending Eve and women from being blamed for the Fall. Most feminists objected to the idea that Eve's sin

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[2] "Directory" had a wide variety of meanings in this period, but the one most likely to be relevant here are the notion of a Directory as a religious guide, "Something that serves to direct; a guide; esp. a book of rules or directions. **1691-8** NORRIS *Pract. Disc.* 76 At a time when God had not given any express Directory for the Manners of Men (*OED* 439).

was transferred particularly to her daughters (if it could be transferred at all),[3] and emphasised the Virgin's role in compensating for women's part in the fall by giving birth to Christ. Much of the sermon is based on the definition of women's and men's part in the Fall, and their behaviour after the Fall. Having established Eve -- and therefore all women -- as the main instigators of the Fall, Sprint emphasises women's need to make atonement.

Implicit in pre-Fall Eden is the idea that whether or not Eve had free will, she should not have exercised it without her husband's knowledge: explicit in the fallen world is the idea that Eve does not deserve the responsibility of free will. However, this does not mean that she actually does not have free will, and although women are continually advised not to act contrary to their husband's wishes, and it is Sprint's opinion that "it should not be lawful for her to will or desire what she herself liked" (6), Sprint seems to be trying to advise women to *choose* to submit to their husbands. For example, after arguing that women should atone, should be motivated to perform their "present Duty," and should remember Eve's guilt, Sprint argues paradoxically that they can gain freedom by obeying their husbands: "*He Rul'd, and she Obey'd; yet she / Did, in Obeying, Rule as well as he*" (7).

In *The Bride-Womans Counseller* we find the same confusion over essentialism and learned behaviour that we saw in Egerton. Nature and duty are confused in the sermon. To begin with there is an apparent distinction between nature and duty. The former appears to be what is God-ordained such as instincts that people are born with in the post-lapsarian world, whereas duty is derived from custom or is prescribed by God through Scripture as a guide in the fallen world. In the fallen world, Scripture must serve as a more reliable directory than instinct; "*God would have the Wife's Love to her Husband to proceed not so much from an Instinct of Nature, as from Obedience to Scripture*" (10). Women now must be taught and learn that which in Eden would have been instinctive.

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[3] Hallissy, in *Venomous Woman*, states that "blaming Eve for the entrance of sin and death into the world is a tradition as old as the Genesis story, as is the proclivity of Eve's daughters to cause the Fall to be repeated in the life of the individual man" (15), and "this manipulative and deceptive behavior is not peculiar to Eve but characteristic of her daughters as well" showing that women are held responsible for the fall although both sexes have Original Sin (16, see also 89 and 126).

Accordingly, while certain character traits are natural to women, and they have not lost all instinct, their natural impulses must be supplemented with additional learnt habits. Furthermore, as can be seen in the phrase "*not so much from . . . as from*," Scripture is intended not just to supplement affection, but to be the main motivation behind an action.

Because women are regarded as generally inferior and undisciplined, it is inevitable that images of women in the poem show them as chaotic and threatening to divine order. The biblical justifications for controlling women support and are supported by stereotypes of women reproduced in the sermon. These stereotypes include those of the "Good Wife" and the "Bad Wife," the latter appearing in the sub-categories of the scold and the unruly and tempestuous woman. The Good Wife appears as a submissive partner making her husband love her through her obedience; the bad wife drives her husband to his death through her uncontrolled behaviour. These two images tell us of notions of womanhood, particularly in relation to ideas about restrictions of speech and self-expression.

Good women are hardly mentioned in the poem, as though their silence absorbs them into the male world making them unworthy of comment. Their image is appropriated as the positive stereotype against which all other women appear negative. Thus Good Wives are "modest Matrons" who have no objection to Sprint speaking for them. The bad women become, in contrast, "vile Strumpets" (Preface), or undutiful and unruly women.

An extreme image of the Good Wife is that of the mirror.

> *A good Wife*, (says one) *should be like a Mirrour which hath no Image of its own, but receives its Stamp and Image from the Face that looks into it: So should a good Wife endeavour to frame her outward Deportment, and her inward Affections according to her Husband's; to rejoyce when he rejoyceth, to be sad when he mourns, to grieve and be troubled when he is offended and vexed . . .*
>
> (7)

The first image of importance here is the idea that women are the 'Stamp' of their husbands, that women are a soft and malleable material. The woman becomes nothing more than a flat object that reflects the male image and psyche. The

second, related, metaphor of the mirror, expands the first idea to encompass a woman being empty and characterless before a man looks into it. Obviously the above quotation heavily supports Sprint's argument that women must be under the dominion of their husbands, but it also demonstrates a fear that makes men desire to construct women's characterlessness as obligatory in a Good Wife. The woman not only cannot speak, but she also only reflects the male visage. The image of the mirror means that men may entirely confine and interpret women as they wish, to inscribe their own feelings on them. A recent feminist theorist equates the mirror with women's role as "Other" to men. Irigaray's image of the woman as a mirror for masculinity is "the specific role that women are expected to play. A woman is the flat surface that is supposed to reflect the male subject" (Braidotti 71). Sprint's phrase "receives its Stamp and Image from the Face that looks into it" simply privileges the male gaze as the "dominant model of representation" (Braidotti 71). Initially the mirror seems to be an image of sameness rather than difference, having no "image of its own," looking only like "the face that looks into it," but on closer inspection it is a creation of another image of the man as he wishes to see himself. In *Love Given O're* we saw Gilman's development of stereotypes and the "bad" image of himself that he sought to distance and control; in Sprint's mirror metaphor we see a like impression as the man attempts to visualise himself and his appearance in the features of the woman-mirror.

Bad Wives occupy the greater part of specific examples of women throughout the sermon. Whereas positive images of women in the poem are grounded in ideas of passivity, silence and obedience as attributes, the negative images are those of the seductress and the scold. As with Gould, Sprint shows his own anxieties through his metaphors. In *Love Given O're*, the women threaten all men, their sexuality and male autonomy: in *The Bride-Womans Counseller*, the focus is more on the challenge to God's intended order, to men's positions of authority in society and their power to reason, read, and ascribe meaning. The two texts both try to encode and define women, but they use different techniques to try to achieve their goal.

The image of the nag or scold is common in literature of the period. In *The Arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women* Swetnam claims that "a froward woman will never be tamed" (2). The taming that he desires becomes a taming of her speech and mind: "no spur will make hir goe, nor no bridle will holde hir backe, for if a woman holde an opinion no man can draw hir from it" (2). Women's words are shown primarily as a means of manipulating men:

> When a woman wanteth any thing, shee will flatter and speake faire, not much unlike the flattering Butcher who gently claweth the Oxe, when he intendeth to knock him on the head; but the thing being once obtained and their desires gained, then they will begin to looke bigge and answere so stately, and speake so scornfully, that one would imagine they would never seeke helpe nor crave comfort at thy hands any more. But a woman is compared unto a ship . . . even so give a woman all that she can demaund to day, yet she will be out of reparations to morrow and want one thing or other.
>
> (*The Arraingment* 11)

This passage also shows us the fear that men have that they can be manipulated. The unruly woman is not a new image; she is present in Chaucer in the person of the Wife of Bath, Apulieus' *The Golden Ass*, Juvenal's *Sixteen Satires*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

It is easy to speculate, after the negative images used by Swetnam and Sprint, that women themselves came to regard speech as a negative and "unwomanly" attribute. One of the many weapons of the patriarchy, impressing on women the undesirablity of their speech also has dire effects upon women's self-esteem because after women accept that they talk too much, they will come to accept the converse, silence, as normal.

In *The Bride-Womans Counseller*, the reign of the nag is described in terms of uncontrollably bad weather: "perpetual Scolding and Brawling within doors, upon the least Occasion is more intolerable than the Thunder and Lightning and blustring Winds, which may molest him without" (9). These tempests are, like Gould's storms, also metaphors of elements that cannot be restricted or controlled by men. But storms only harm a husband's body, whereas a vocal woman

threatens a husband's mental well-being also. Sprint cites the authority of the Bible on this point: "*'Tis better to live in a corner of a House Top, than with a brawling Woman in a wide House* [Prov. 21. 9]" (9). An unnatural wife prevents the house from being a place of refuge any longer. The speaker concentrates on the effect such women have on men.

> 'Tis much more desirable to live poorly and solitary in the open Air, exposed to all the Injuries of he Weather, nay to thrust into a little corner on the Top of the House, than to have a spatious Habitation . . . govern'd by a contentious Wife, whose perpetual Scolding and Brawling within doors, upon the least Occasion is more intolerable than the Thunder and Lightning and blustring Winds, which may molest him without.
>
> (9)

Men's lives are curtailed by the behaviour of such women. Men either attempt to regain their natural dominance by "retaliat[ing] the Affronts that are offered him," making "the House wherein they dwell" more "like to *Hell*" than a home; or, if the husband "be of a meek and patient Temper" the wife's noise challenges and threatens to silence him (8). The threat that he may be the object of her discourse as she gains subjectivity seems particularly terrifying. The meek husband may die from lack of self-expression, as he suffers "those inward wounds of Spirit," that "make his Life short and miserable" (8)

Sprint's portrayal of a successful marriage is based on the wife's ability to perform her duty in marriage where the Wife is "submissive and obedient," and the Husband is "respectful and kind;" then "how comfortably do they spend their days!" (8). While Sprint argues that "Love is an Affection" (11), the good wife's affection must show itself as "careful to oblige, and fearful to offend" (11) the result of which will be "in process of time she will soon engage [her husband's] Affections to her" (11). In addition to this, Sprint argues that "the love of a Husband does very much depend upon the Obedience of a Wife" (4). Sprint's repeated emphasis on the responsibility on the *wife* for the success of the marriage is reveals the paradox of woman's duty: that affection will "kindle and enflame" through obedience as a result of which a wife may lead her husband "captive at

her pleasure," and leave "him so fast bound in the golden Fetters of Love, that she may do even with him what she pleases" (4). Women are actively encouraged to be duplicitous: "would Women thus endeavour [to be like a mirror], they would not only content and please their Husbands, but they would thereby open a way for the obtaining of their Husbands what they themselves do will and desire" (7-8). Similarly, the bride is advised "to use all means to endear her Husband to her self, and her self to her Husband" (10). However, Sprint does not claim that submission is a guarantee of happiness, as such words as "might" indicate: they *might* have made their Husbands happy and themselves too" (my italics, 11), and again, if you "do what becomes good Wives, and indeed what is, or *should be at least sufficient* to please your Husbands" (my italics, 14). In any case, any complaint by women is met with the rejoinder that "you may thank your Mother Eve . . . who, when she had gotten a good Natur'd and Loving Husband . . . could not be contented, but must try practices with him, till she had spoil'd him" (7).

The Bride-Womans Counseller draws a stark sketch of women's lot in marriage. Initially, she is expected to care "how she may please her Husband (I Cor. Chap. 7. Ver. 34)" and to "forget her own People, and her Father's Family; with whose Company and Converse she can be contented and pleased, should all the World besides be annihilated" (10). In addition to this, she must have no thoughts of her own (and in a slightly contradictory message) must obtain what she desires by appearing only to want what will appease or benefit her Husband. It is no wonder Gould accuses women of falsehood and dissimilation, when Sprint is actively encouraging them to act like this. As Wollstonecraft was to complain a century later, "Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of a man" (Noyes 187).

Women are required to exhibit an outward show of respect for their husbands. Titles such as "Lord" and "Master" rather than personal names maintain a strict hierarchy in which wives are subordinate. Underlying Sprint's complaints we can see a message that these apparently disrespectful wives may be

merely exhibiting a desire for a more personal and interactive relationship with their husbands, rather than such a formal hierarchical one. Thus, when Sprint complains that women "esteemed" their husband's "at no higher a rate than their very Servants that attend them," he is objecting to the uncomely practice of wives calling their husbands by their Christian names (12-13). The reader may be able to see that by this action women may intend to show their affection and equal status within their marriage.

However, the authority of men over women, and more specifically husbands over their wives is reiterated again, this time more forcefully. A husband's authority is dependent on biblical evidence, which clearly states a husband's superiority over his wife. In my examination of *The Female Preacher* that follows we will see that Eugenia follows the Bible in this too, but her argument is based on a discussion of the *degree* to which the husband has authority over his wife. Generally the argument of the origin of a husband's authority is linked to the political theory that establishes the divine right of kings and the extent to which a subject may rebel. In Sprint's sermon the topic is confined to marriage, but we will see the political ramifications developed in *The Female Preacher*.

Sprint's defence of male superiority is, as one would expect, heavily dependent on the Bible. Sprint attempts to define the man's authority as follows:

> And however light Women may make of [obeying their husbands], yet I know not of any duty belonging to Men or Women, in the whole Book of God, that is urged with more Vehemency, or pressed with stronger or more cogent Reasons than this is. Subjection and Obedience to their Husbands is required from Wives, as absolutely and peremtorily as unto Christ himself, [*Ephes*. 5. 22.] *Wives submit to your Husbands, as unto the Lord*; and is extended to all the Husband's commands, *Ver*. 24. *Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so should the Wives be to their Husbands, in Every thing.*
>
> Obj. But what if an Husband commands the Wife to do that which is sinful?
>
> Ans. By *Every thing* in the Text, is meant all that comes within the compass of his Authority to command; and certainly God never gave to any Man Authority to commend that which is contradictory to his own Laws; excepting this, or the Impossibility of the thing commanded to be done. Both God and Nature hath given the Husband Authority to Command, and the Wife is bound to obey, however unnecessary or

> unfit she may think it to be . . . . And this is certainly no greater a Subjection than every Husband will readily yield to his wife, and falls infinitely short of the *Apostle's* Intent . . .
>
> (13-14)

Initially Sprint is quick to establish that man's authority is not without "compass." The boundaries of male power are that they may not be "contradictory" to God's "own Laws," or be impossible. But as we can see, the "compass" of his authority has little practical effect for the wife who is "bound to obey" unless she is commanded to do something contrary to the Ten Commandments or something impossible. Therefore although women are allowed to object to some of their husband's commands, in reality they are not regarded as capable to judge what is a right law or a wrong one, leaving women subjected to men. Although theoretically the husband is limited by these two restrictions, his authority is upheld by his wife's enforced obedience to him.

The existence of a subtext in this sermon adds a good deal of interest. The reader may speculate that Sprint is aware that the relationship between women and men in society is not *necessarily* unequal, but is constructed in favour of men. Is Sprint really as unsympathetic to women as these images and arguments make him appear? Is he insensitive to their situation and demands for improved treatment? In two crucial places a subtext that suggests that he is not is accessible to us: the first is in Sprint's representation of men; the second is in his awareness of the way that the Bible can be interpreted.

If Sprint's women are annoying and unattractive, his men are hardly less so. While he does not directly condemn them, or discuss their faults, the overall picture of men is of unreasonable and brutish individuals. A brief catalogue of some of the adjectives used to describe men and their behaviour will show their negative representation: "humoursome," "hard to be pleased" (6), "Morosity," "Sowerness," of harsh and "severe" temper, troublesome and tedious Humours (7). To then say that these are the "experienc'd Truth with most women" (7) argues that Sprint has far greater sympathy with women's lot than initially appears, as well as a far less favourable view of men.

Various types of men are mentioned, but these descriptions are often formed by or dependent on the behaviour of a woman. Men are continually portrayed as remote beings whom women must please, and as "madmen or Sots" made so by bad women, or of too passive a nature, driven to death by vocal women. The portrayal of men, as we have seen, depends on the effect that women have on them i.e. either too harsh, or too mild. Implicit in these images is male superiority and their exclusive right to authority. That a woman must be subordinate to either an assertive man or a meek man shows the dominance of men.

The second point, that Sprint acknowledges that the Bible is on men's side, can be construed as an apologia for male dominance. Sprint preaches that the Christian Doctrine is a "Comfort and Happiness" to men in life. He says that:

> . . . you may from this Doctrine learn how great a Friend Religion is to the Comfort and Happiness of Man in this Life, in the Institution whereof God hath not only wisely consulted the Interest of his own Honour and Glory, but hath graciously condescended to adapt its Precepts to the Comfort and Happiness of Man in every State and Condition of Life.
>
> (14-15)

Here he acknowledges that "this Doctrine" (the Bible) is made exclusively in favour of men. He places the responsibility for this at God's door ("God hath given such Laws for your Wife to observe" [15]), but underlying this is a sense that while this is very convenient for men, it is not particularly fair. Some women writers exhibit an awareness of the bias of men's interpretations, so we find Egerton arguing that the Pentateuch's convenient sexism is because it was written by a man, sarcastically suggesting that his relationship with his wife influenced what he wrote:

> Say, tyrant Custom, why must we obey
> The impositions of thy haughty sway?
> From the first dawn of life unto the grave,
> Poor womankind's in every state a slave . . . .
> For men all join to keep the wife in awe.
> Moses, who first our freedom did rebuke,

> Was married when he writ the Pentateuch.
>
> ("The Emulation," ll.1-4, 11-12)

Egerton extends her general statement to encompass "all men" who " join to keep the wife in awe" recognising that the dominant gender group (men) have successfully codified their ideas to maintain their hegemony which results in the slavery of women. But although Sprint shows himself to be aware of the way that the Bible is suited to men, he refuses to identify women's position as affected by society and custom at all despite the fact that virtually all feminists of the time target "Custom" or "tradition" as having the biggest restrictions on their lives. "Custom" bears much resemblance to the modern term the "patriarchy" in the way these women recognise women's exclusion from language, the double standard, and the way women are defined by male society.

Finally Sprint's message to those men who are already married is also worthy of note. Although its tone is condescending, it exhorts men not to make women's lot more difficult than it already is:

> . . . remember that their Duty is hard, the frailty of that Sex is great, and therefore beware of making their task more difficult than necessity doth require, or than their Nature will bear; tho' 'tis true they are in subjection, yet still remember they are part of your selves, and therefore let your Authority be united with love, as your love must be governing love, so let your commands be loving commands.
>
> (15)

This passage combines the text and subtext very interestingly by calling women frail, thus retaining men's dominant position, but Sprint also asks men not to make women's duties impossible. However, this potentially positive message continues with the qualification "than *necessity doth* require" (my italics, 15), placing women's tasks at men's discretion. Therefore despite the fact that women's bonds may be "loving" and men's government be gentle, women are still in bondage and subjection.

The final lines re-establish male superiority with finality and a patronising form of chauvinism:

> But I must forbear enlargement, least, that, by overlading the memories of the Women, I should cause them to forget their Duty which has been set before them.
>
> (16)

Sprint seems to be well intentioned, but the only way in which he can see the problems of marital disharmony being solved is by a return to traditional gender roles. Other religious sects offered different alternatives. For example, Simon Shepherd points out that rather than thinking about the Puritan sects as sexually prudish, we should "see the Puritan as sexual libertarian," as "the more radical Puritan sects advocate marriage without ceremony, by mutual consent in front of one's equals; and similarly divorce by mutual public consent" (Shepherd, 20).[4] Possibly Sprint's rejection of such liberal views of marriage are influenced by his overall politics (as displayed in *Christian Loyalty Revived*), which extend to his views on sexual politics.

All in all, Sprint's sermon is an orthodox view of the Bible and its social applications by men for men. While his metaphors and similes at times betray ambiguity and unease, he blames women for the present state of humanity because of Eve's fall. The subtext that I have discussed occurs at weak points in Sprint's argument -- points where he unwittingly exposes men's natures as brutish and inconsistent, and where he seems to recognise the advantages provided for men by the Bible and the abuses that these are open to by husbands.

The two women writers who analyse Sprint's sermon are aware of its weaknesses. Eugenia and Mary Chudleigh both concentrate on the consequences of Sprint's advice and systematically demolish his arguments. They both dispute the areas that John Sprint had found hardest to justify and prove, particularly the question of the degree to which some of these ideas should be practised. In *The Female Preacher* and *The Ladies Defence* we see Sprint's sermon placed in relation to women's views on these subjects. These women's interactions with

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[4] Similarly Milton argues in his Divorce pamphlets that a marriage in which one partner is unhappy, or intellectually unsuited to another is not a true marriage in the eyes of God and therefore maybe terminated without penalty: "in God's intention a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and the noblest end of marriage" (177). And "Marriage is a Covenant, the very being whereof consists not in a forced cohabitation, and counterfeit performance of duties, but in unfeigned love and peace" (185).

Sprint's text reveal an awareness of the patriarchy and the importance of language in controlling their lives.

II. EUGENIA:

WISHING IT WERE OTHERWISE

There is some dispute over the authorship of *The Female Preacher*. The name "Eugenia" appears on several pieces of literature in the period, and has long been identified with Mary Chudleigh. Some recent biographies still support this view, stating that Chudleigh "used the pseudonym 'Eugenia' " (Bell et al 47). Several scholars, however, have recently disputed this conclusion, arguing that "internal evidence suggests Eugenia is a man; he is well-travelled, has a good command of Greek and Latin, as well as 'the more solid parts of learning', and writes about Sprint with an air of confident superiority" (Browne 89); Margaret Ezell too argues that Mary Chudleigh cannot have been Eugenia because "her sharp-edged prose reproof to Sprint is very different in tone and tactics from Chudleigh's dialogue" (Ezell xxix). Although a change in tone is not proof that the authors are not the same, the fact the Chudleigh herself wrote a poem "To Eugenia, on her Pastoral" also lends support to Ezell's suggestion (Ezell xxix). In the end the identity of the author is not significant in that regardless of authorship the piece makes a valuable contribution to the debate with Sprint. *The Female Preacher* is primarily of interest to me as the first rebuttal of *The Bride-Womans Counseller*. While it has been argued that *The Female Preacher* "takes the inequality of power between husband and wife for granted" (Browne 90), I suggest that this is only partly true, as the text still offers a revision of Sprint's sermon as it notes the discrepancies between his arguments and women's own experiences and radically questions the basis of the husband's authority. Eugenia argues continually for a *mutual* exchange as the best basis for a marriage. Many of her analogies show the need for the superior party to consider the needs of the inferior. *The Female Preacher* employs irony and wit to undermine Sprint's arguments, as well as using many of Sprint's own techniques, such as interpretation of Scripture, to good effect.

THE

FEMALE ADVOCATE;

OR,

A Plea for the juſt Liberty of the Tender Sex, and particularly of Married Women.

BEING

REFLECTIONS

On a late Rude and Diſingenuous

DISCOURSE,

Delivered by

Mr. *JOHN SPRINT*, in a Sermon at a Wedding, *May* 11th; at *Sherburn* in *Dorſetſhire*, 1699.

By a Lady of Quality.

——Hanc etiam Mœcenas aſpice partem.

LONDON,

Printed for *Andrew Bell* at the Croſs-keys and Bible in *Cornhil*, near *Stocksmarket*. 1700.

The title page of the second edition of *The Female Preacher*, retitled *The Female Advocate* (1700).

The Female Preacher and *The Ladies Defence* argue for women's right to education and responsibility for their own moral decisions. While Eugenia and Chudleigh both demand education for women as a method of realising women's full intellectual potential they do not object outright to male domination of the family. Both texts argue (in particular *The Ladies Defence*) for better education for women, but emphasise the role education would play in enabling women to be better wives and mothers.[1] This form of feminism, "instrumental feminism," argues that improvements in women's education and position in society will benefit men, children, and society as a whole, rather than because justice to women demands them.[2] But this feminism is not naïve. Both women critique accepted stereotypes of men and women and the double standard, they both recognise male authority over language and interpretation, offer alternative views of the roles of husbands and wives in marriage, and criticise male desire. Thus while on the surface instrumental feminism may seem to avoid some issues, it too is based on a general awareness of women's difficulties.

Feminism in the period took a wide variety of forms -- it has been argued that the very act of writing and printing constituted of form of feminism. It is certainly true that the high profile of the male / female debate led to greater "interest in women's experience and subjectivity" (Browne 7) but did not necessarily make the reception of women who published any more positive.[3] Instrumental feminism could be used by anti-feminists who argued that women had been educated as much as possible already without it leading to them neglecting their husbands and children (Browne 6-7). Oppression of women also became appropriated as a symbol of general human dilemmas which resulted in women's oppression being viewed as "inevitable and natural" removing the need for active attempts to alter the situation (Browne 7). The political implications of instrumental feminism were considerable, as it provided a strong argument for women to acquire education, ostensibly to make them more useful to men, but

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[1] Mary Astell in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Bathsua Makin in *An Essay to Revive the Antient Art of Education*, and Judith Drake's *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* all subscribe to this form of feminism.

[2] See Browne 4-8 for a fuller discussion of instrumental feminism in an eighteenth-century context.

[3] Mermin and Pearson both provide enlightening information on the situation of women attempting to publish.

also perhaps as a means by which women justified what they wanted for themselves. Egerton and Chudleigh show the attainment of education as improving women's self-image and self-expression. "Self-expression" assumes a certain autonomy and self-identity to begin with, and we can see that women's relationship with self-expression is a step towards women's active participation in their culture. Thus in women's writing (and all the writing that I am investigating) we will see a conflict between the poet's self-expression and images created and imposed on them by society.

The Female Preacher is a fascinating text covering many aspects of women's relationships with and perceptions of men. I will investigate several of these by exploring the mechanics of the text, such as Eugenia's use of wit and irony, her analogies, and her arguments about the importance of interpreting and manipulating meaning from texts. Other themes that I will explore are Eugenia's arguments against passive obedience as it appears in *The Bride-Woman's Counseller* in relation to marriage; her version of the Creation and Fall; and her emphasis on companionate marriages.

The introduction of *The Female Preacher* establishes the speaker as an educated reader intending to give a corrective commentary of *The Bride-Womans Counseller* for other readers. Eugenia describes her aims as one of "taking Arms, and alaraming the whole Power of Females against him" (2), suggesting that she believes that other women will agree with her. She writes that she did not consider the piece worthy of attention, until she found "that Miracles were not ceased, and that some People were so charm'd with it, that they thought it worth their while to teize every Woman they met with it" (2). We thus discover that she is motivated to write by the need for a response to Sprint.[4]

> 'Tis not the first time a Woman has appear'd in Publick, and 'twill be hard for any to accuse us for taking up Weapons since they are only defensive, and we are provok'd into the Field by so great and honourable a Champion. Besides, the itch of being in Print which the Men have infected us with, and the Glory of having but lifted up a Pen against so great a Man, must needs be a sufficient Excuse beyond all Reply.

[4] See Pearson, Chapter One (esp. 6-14), for other motivations behind women's writing.

(2)

Eugenia enjoys the irony that Sprint's attempts to silence women have in fact given her the opportunity to satisfy her desire to be in print.

Women's explanations for their writing is common in prefaces and dedicatory epistles of the period. Women writers were received by an avid but often highly critical public readership. Some women playwrights were maligned when their names were associated with other women who frequented the theatre, namely actresses and prostitutes. Other women such as Aphra Behn actively courted a degree of notoriety in their literature and their lives. But the association of women writers and prostitutes occurred at an even more basic level. Writing and publication placed the woman's body (her text) in the public (male) gaze in a manner comparable to that of prostitution. Women writers thus became associated with immodest women, their wares deliberately displayed before the public. Pearson explains these attacks on women by showing that their texts were a threat to the male ownership of language: "Writing women were clearly guilty of something, and these charges were usually formulated as accusations of unchastity, madness and plagiarism . . . An unusual access to language in a woman was thus taken as symbolic of an immoral access to sexual experience." Such an equation reveals the extent to which writing was still felt to be a male preserve (Pearson 9-10). Some women writers tried to avoid this association by circulating their writing in manuscript form, while yet others wrote under false names as "Eugenia" herself does, used initials, or displayed themselves as weaker, non-threatening vessels of the Muse. Others, Sarah Egerton and Mary Chudleigh among them, sought to identify themselves and their work with respectable women, and enthusiastically seized the opportunity to identify with the Queens Mary II and Anne by writing dedications and poems to them.[5] Katherine Philips too provided women with an exemplary model of a woman who "led a blameless life, avoided risqué subjects, did not explicitly question conventional notions of women, and above all did not seek for publication" (Pearson 8). Women like

[5] Carol Barash examines the relationship between "women writers' defences of Anne's political legitimacy and their defences of their own legitimacy as authors" (*Women, Writing, History* 56).

Katherine Philips and Anne Finch (Countess Winchilsea) -- respectable women poets -- found that "the burden of representativeness" fell "heavily on women poets, who have had constantly to prove that women could write at all, and even so have been praised at other women's expense" (Mermin 337). Chaste women, like Sprint's Good Wives, could be used to chastise the unruly socially non-conformist. However, in Eugenia's text, the self-effacing and modest preface is as much formulaic as sincere, and it gives Eugenia an opportunity to excuse herself and denigrate Sprint.

Irony is one of the most important devices used in *The Female Preacher* to undermine Sprint's position. The subversive nature of irony is very appropriate in a text in which a major concern is with showing the arbitrary nature of words and the tenuousness of meaning. "In most of the critical uses of the term 'irony' there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case; not, however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects" (Abrams 91). Eugenia's use of irony in relation to Sprint results in an uncovering of what he really is. While irony implies the opposite of what it ridicules, it also recognises the power of that which it undermines. Eugenia "creates" a literary "Sprint" of her own who becomes a comic buffoon within her text. Through such expressions as "so celebrated an Author" and "some mighty force in his Arguments," and descriptions of his sermon as attacking women with more "confident Impudence than ever they were [attacked] on the Stage, tho' with far less Wit and Ingenuity," and by developing his person as a "great Goliath, this Man of mighty Fame," of "haughty temper," the speaker is able to discredit her opponent and to show that she has no respect his person and that she easily expects to best his arguments.

Having reduced her opponent to the status of a presumptuous misogynist mock-hero, Eugenia continues her analysis of the sermon. Eugenia, like Gould, is troubled by the connotations of "authority." Her redefinition of the "authority" of the husband and what constitutes "fair discipline" for the wife is centred around her concern about the *degree* to which men have authority over women. Much of the husband's authority is resident in his power to interpret language and divine intention. Using the example of the word "careth" (from Sprint's assertion that it

is a "Duty incumbent on all Married Women to be extraordinary careful to content and please their Husbands" [3]), Eugenia shows that the Sprint's elaboration on the word is no more than "a most Etymological Argument" (5), in other words, that his definition is completely conditional upon his intention, and he can "by the same method prove a Doctrine not very pleasing to him" (5).

Her awareness that such people as Sprint have the power to give a word its "true and proper signification" (5) leads her to use the same definition of "careth" in relation to men. Sprint, as we have seen, regards the Bible as a book for men. As a direct descendent of Adam, son of God, who first acquired speech and named the animals (Genesis 1: 19-20), he claims divine authorisation to inscribe meaning and to interpret. Eugenia has no argument with the Biblical texts on which Sprint's arguments are based, but she shows that she is prepared to fight over the interpretation of those texts because his authority is due to his sex rather than any objective merit. While agreeing that women were made as "an helpmeet," she argues that this means a "Social help, not a Servile one" (9). Women were made for men, but the relationship is conditional; the man only has "limited Power" which must not be used "to the Unhappiness and Ruine of a Creature that was made for him" (9).

Examples of Eugenia's belief in the flexibility of language are easy to find,. It is after all the basis of her argument that the Bible is being misinterpreted by Sprint. An argument that is easily identifiable, and also perhaps the one that represents many of the others, is her dispute with Sprint over *Jure Divino* (4, 20). In the first occurrence of this Eugenia argues that Sprint must prove that he understands the "correct" meaning of *Jure Divino* as it is not something that exists separately from people, or if it does, it is often misunderstood by them: "he must first of all perswade us that what he says is *Jure Divino*, before he can fright any of us with a Purgatory hereafter." (4). The later use of the term "*Jus Divinum*" (20) raises the same issue when Sprint realises that his claims have been too extensive. This, Eugenia claims, voluntarily acknowledges the difference between men and God as she recognises that whether *Jus Divino* exists or not, it can only be transmitted through fallible people, so the point at which value is ascribed to a word is crucial.

Eugenia's arguments against passive obedience link political doctrine to her discussion of marriage. Throughout *The Female Preacher* Eugenia equates the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, but the reader should note that the two are not the same.[6] The "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 had thrown the behaviour of subordinates to their superiors into question. The deposition of James II in favour of William and Mary prompted arguments that monarchs ruled by contractual authority only, and the contract was broken if the ruler exercised tyrannical abuses of power. However, those opposed to the revolution argued that subjects had no right of resistance and could not disobey even on matters of conscience. The corollary of these arguments in relation to marriage was frequently noted. The husband's authority was increasingly seen as invested through a contract rather than by divine right and innate superiority (Browne 86-87). Eugenia initially focuses in the ways in which male superiority should be expressed, and gradually moves to arguing against the doctrine of passive obedience to asserting the right of women to object. Eugenia approaches the subject through absurd examples of the husband's power, and demonstrating the weaknesses of Sprint's arguments. Underlying Eugenia's criticism of Sprint's interpretations of the Bible are not only concerns with male power of interpretation, but also the authority invested in men due to this interpretation. Eugenia does not dispute Sprint's biblical argument that women are the "weaker Vessel," but she argues that this does not mean that men do not owe women some respect in their mutual interactions.

Eugenia's response to Sprint's authority over words is, as we have seen, to manipulate herself into a position of authority over (her version of) Sprint. Another technique is to undermine his arguments by inventing her own metaphors. Eugenia destroys most of his metaphors by ridiculing the "literal" conclusion of the metaphor, for example, she argues that even the most rigid and

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[6] Passive obedience is the doctrine that holds that a subject may refuse to obey his / her superior only when "his commands violated God's law" (Schochet 42), but must be prepared for the consequences. A very similar doctrine, often confused with passive obedience, is non-resistance which "does not allow the subject the right to disobey even for reasons of conscience" (Schochet 42 n.13). Non-resistance holds that "God alone is the judge of the sovereign's actions . . . and . . . must be obeyed even when his commands are contrary to the word of God" (Schochet 42 n.13). To minimise confusion I will refer throughout to both doctrines as "passive obedience" as Eugenia does.

"absolute Monarchs in the World" cannot control the "very *Desires of their Hearts*" although they have the authority to chain people at the oar as galley slaves (12). "A very wooden simile" is attacked for its irrelevance. However, rather than actually demolish the simile, she links it to a metaphor of her own, resulting in her ridicule of his comparison.

> Thus he talks and raves . . . and concludes this Head with a very *Wooden simile*, for the Instruction and Edification of all well meaning Carpenters and Joyners, viz. *That when two Boards are first glued together, a small matter will loosen them . . . but if . . . the Glue be hardened, 'twill not be an easy matter to dis joynt or sever them.* A most instructing Similitude! . . . Either the Auditory he preach'd this to were Persons of very *wooden* Understandings, or else they were in danger of apprehending the Comparison to be very much akin to the Author.
>
> (17)

She also complains that many of Sprint's examples are irrelevant, and are given undue import because of Sprint's position of authority. For example, the quotation about shrews needing blisters on their tongues is described by Eugenia as "sanctified" simply because it comes "from the Pulpit," and so "becomes a very Pious and Ingenious Saying" (15). Similarly, by arguing that Sprint uses the mirror metaphor to show how miserable women are, Egerton claims that his readers will find a different meaning in it: " 'tis plain he would never have passed this Complement of a Looking glass on us, if he had not intended it as an Argument for, or at least an Illustration of our Misery" (14). Eugenia's metaphors and analogies produce a counterpoint to Sprint's. Among these are comparisons of Sprint's writing to a tedious battle with an enemy whom Eugenia "must follow up Hill and down Hill till he comes to the same place again" (3), ably illustrating Sprint's circular arguments. Another instance is Eugenia's mischievous suggestion that Good Wives' revenge will be to "have put his excellent Discourse at the bottom of minc'd Pies . . . [as] a wicked way to obscure the Glory of so dread an Author" (3).

Where Sprint compared women's position in the natural hierarchy to evils that "are most troublesome out of their proper Places, as Profaness in Ministers,

whose Work it is to beat it down . . . and Discomfort in a Wife, who was made to be a Comfort" (*The Bride-Womans Counseller* 8-9), Eugenia creates a related metaphor in which she highlights the abuses that this system of thought is open to:

> Suppose a Master and his Servants, a Lawyer and his Clients, a Physician and its Patients; 'tis you'll say the Duty of these Servants, Clients, and Patients to be govern'd and submit: But a Servant may be abus'd by his Master, a Client cheated and impoverish'd by his Lawyer, and the Patient genteely dispatch'd by his Doctor. Now certainly any Man would be of *weak Capacity* to endure these things and therefore the Duties of Servants, Clients, and Patients must be always rung in their Ears, and the Duties of Masters, Lawyers and Physicians, never; who sees not the mighty Force, and feels not the close Girds of so [Si]newy an Argument.
>
> (6-7)

Implicit in this metaphor is an argument against passive obedience. In Eugenia's argument we can see her portrayal of the necessity that the apparently inferior party has the legal right to express a grievance. The mutual dependence of the relationship also questions what power the Doctor / Lawyer / Master would be able to exercise without patients, clients or slaves. The Servant-Master / Client-Lawyer relationship is shown to be mutual and inter-dependent. Eugenia implies the natural extension of this relationship to wives and husbands. Eugenia's interest in passive obedience shows in her discussion of the degree to which women should be subject to their husbands, but she seems confused as to just how far women should submit, and how far women are naturally inferior to men. As a consequence we find some confusion is Eugenia's text as she wants greater freedom for women, but sees women with authority over men as out of the natural order: "It's true, a Woman that abridges her Husband of his reasonable Authority, and has Impudence enough to put on Breeches, does certainly pervert the end of her Creation" (10). Although her dilemma remains unresolved, it is a rich mine for ridiculing the same indecision in Sprint's own text.

Eugenia too suggests that Adam, as the penultimate creation was not as perfect as the last, quoting Milton in support:

> O fairest of Creation! last and best
> Of all GOD's Works ----
>
> (9)[7]

But although "woman was created for the Man" (9) Eugenia constantly qualifies this with her interpretation of God's *intention*, expressed in the analogy that "tho' the Beasts were made for Man, yet a good Man is Merciful to his Beast" (10). Using extreme exaggeration, Eugenia takes a point where Sprint seems undecided as to the degree to which women must obey men (*The Bride-Womans Counseller* 13-14), and describes the "compass of a Husband's Authority" extending to the point where his wife must "never speak a word but to him, she must never eat but what he leaves, and the Dogs and she may scramble for the Bones" (20).

Eugenia's version of the Fall rejects any claim that women alone are culpable. She emphasises that she "never heard or read that there was a particular Original Sin imputed to the Woman, and another to the Man. I thought Learned Men had held that Original Guilt was convey'd alike to both Sexes" (10). Eugenia again ridicules Sprint's argument that all women deserve to atone for Eve's sin in an analogy that demonstrates the ridiculous nature of such a claim. Sprint's argument would be like one that claimed that "all the barbarous Actions, Wickedness and Rebellion committed in former Ages, must be imputed to this Age; and they must suffer for it" (10). She also argues that "All the other Sex sprang from her as well as we, and are therefore, I think, equally guilty of her Transgression; and I would be glad to see any one strongly prove, that because we are of the same Sex, therefore that Sin is imputed to us more than the Men" (10). She ends by speculating that Man being "left to himself and the Power he had given him from Heaven, he might have fallen singly, and by himself" (10). By denying that women have any special relationship to Eve and her part in the Fall, Eugenia removes one of the main reasons behind Sprint's sermon: his insistence that women must redeem their reputations and atone for their injustice to Adam is simply denied. Eugenia also reminds us of women's redemption by Mary, second Eve, mother of the second Adam (11), calling attention to Sprint's omission as

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[7] *Paradise Lost* IX, ll.896-97.

another example of his grudge against women and his unforgiving and biased view.

In *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, Lawrence Stone traces an increasing trend throughout the eighteenth century towards relationships based on affection. He terms these "companionate" marriages. As the importance of kin relationships declined, emotional ties became focussed on the immediate family.[8] The centrality of the relationship between the parents of the family thus became more important, so women and men expected to have greater control over the choice of spouses, rather than submitting to parentally arranged marriages. Coinciding with this trend seems to be an increasing amount of women's literature concerned with their experiences and crucial events in their lives. Because of the legal non-existence of wives under the law as *feme couverte* and the increasing numbers of unmarried women at the time, the dependence of wives on their husbands was one of women's greatest concerns. Eugenia returns several times to her ideas about relationships and the role of the husband. A central part of Eugenia's vision of companionate marriages is the idea that a marriage may be happy if "both endeavour to make it so" (13). Once again Eugenia redefines the difference between being a comfort and benefit and a servant or vassal (10).

Eugenia's stress on companionship in marriage is repeated in a variety of ways throughout.[9]

> it [is] a much nobler Comfort to have a Companion, a Person in whom a Man may confide, to whom he can communicate his very Soul, and open his Breast and most inward Thoughts, than to have a Slave sitting at his Footstool, and trembling at every word that comes like Thunder and Lightning from the mouth of the domestick *Pharoah*.
>
> (9)

So far does she assume that affection based marriages should be the norm that she sarcastically repeats Sprint's idea "every married Woman, in order to please her

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[8] Stone uses this term to refer to relationships of blood or marriage. These include relatives who do not live under the roof and are outside the nuclear family.

[9] One hundred years later Wollstonecraft appeals to men to seek a wife who "deserves to be respected" (Noyes 188) and who "provides rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience" (Noyes 190).

Husband, ought to love him. A notable Discovery! and who ever doubted or denied it?" (15-16). Moreover, she accuses men of seducing women in the way that he accuses women of seducing men. Her claims that women only use "petty Arts" to please the "vanity of Men" (16) identifies the double-bind that Egerton criticised in *The Female Advocate* (ll.80-88). Women suffer many difficulties while trying to find a husband.

> . . . there are some Ladies not so very easy of Access, but hold out desperately against all the Arts of the undermining Sex, and the pulling Lovers cannot spell *Come love me*, till they have given some very remarkable proofs of their Integrity; which if they prove afterwards to be but Shams, are not very contemptible Temptations to the New-married Woman to blot out the Impression of undeserv'd Love, which Hypocrisy had made in her Heart.
>
> (16)

Eugenia shows women accused of the things that she claims men practise, despite the fact that the woman remains almost totally passive during the courtship, being unable to discover the truth about her suitor, or to attempt to find "proofs of their Integrity" (16).

One of the strengths of *The Female Preacher* is Eugenia's recognition of men's domination of language and interpretation. We have already seen in brief her critique of Sprint's interpretations of the Bible and some secular texts as being invested with divine authority, and we will see her analysis of Sprint's hidden agenda in relation to men's and women's roles in courtship and marriage. Sprint and Eugenia both interpret many words "literally," but they draw quite different conclusions from each interpretation, for example, Sprint sees the use of Christian names as *disrespectful* and indicative of women's true feelings towards their husbands, Eugenia sees it as *companionable* and indicative of women's true feelings towards their husbands.

Eugenia expresses her desire that a partner understand that "dear and Tender Esteem is won by the Charms of an agreeable Temper, the instances of a Noble Generosity, [and] those other powerful things which 'tis impossible to resist" (18) and that "Women's calling their Husbands by their *Christian Names*

and their using familiar Terms to one another" will show "the effect of Tenderness and Freedom," which will "banish" from marriage "all the Names of haughty Distance and servile Subjection" (19). Thus she considers what Sprint scathingly calls "outward show" an important part of an intimate relationship in which the "outward show" is a wife's external honour, familiarity and respect for her husband.

Eugenia also criticises the male dominated society for becoming annoyed with women when they refuse to show complete reverence for something written by men. Her critique of the marriage vows recognises the absence of any input by women, and the consequences for women in these vows.[10]

> I am not about to quarrel with the Compilers of the Liturgy, only I shall take notice, that they were *Men* who had a hand in it, and by consequence would not obmit the binding our sex as fast as possible: But 'tis also observ'd, that those words [*With my Body I thee worship*] if they have any meaning in them, can never be applied to such a sort of Creature as is a Slave.
>
> (15)

Because words are the outward show of the internal intention, any woman married sincerely by means of the liturgy cannot be enslaved. Women of the period invest more importance in the marriage ceremony and the exchange of vows than men seem to.

Throughout her text Eugenia argues that relationships should be based on honesty (calling husbands fools if that is what they are) and desert. Thus women must submit to their husbands if their husbands have earned the honour:

> . . . where Husbands *deserve* such untoward Names as this Gentleman complains of, 'tis something difficult to conceive how the Women of moderate Consciences can heartily attribute to them Titles which imply some mighty Excellence they never once had the least shadow of in their Lives.
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> (my emphasis, 19)

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[10] See Egerton, "The Emulation" (59 above).

Eugenia links respect being paid only where it is due to the idea that marriages should be contractual by showing that husbands must earn respect and subsequent submission from their wives, and that continued respect is dependent in the husbands' continued respectful behaviour. A wife's conscience must guide her in telling her when she is lying by calling her husband by a "Title" that he has not earned. Eugenia always emphasises the fact that a wife's respect is dependent on her husband's behaviour, and that this is negated if he treats her badly. The idea of marriage as a contractual arrangement questions the behaviour of one partner to another, and the possibility of the contract becoming null and void if one partner does not fulfil the terms of agreement. Later in the eighteenth century Lady Mary Wortley Montagu made this point succinctly:

> All Bargains but conditional are made;
> The Purchase void, the Creditor unpaid,
> Defrauded Servants are from Service free;
> A wounded Slave regains his Liberty.
> For Wives ill us'd no remedy remains,
> To daily Racks condemn'd, and to eternal Chains.
> ("Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge] to her Husband" ll.19-24)

The idea that contracts are based on desert and fulfilment of an agreement brings us back to Eugenia's problem of degree. Eugenia throughout speculates on the degree to which texts should be interpreted literally, and the degree to which women are inferior to men and the degree to which this should affect their relationships with men. It is however difficult to draw a conclusion about where Eugenia leaves us. She herself only offers suggestions obliquely, through analogy and criticism, and never offers a solution or a method of correcting what she criticises.

> Let it be granted that 'tis the part of a Woman, being the weaker Vessel, to submit, and learn as well as she can the hard lesson of *Passive Obedience*; yet I defy the meekest woman in the World, if she meets with an unreasonable, imperious, domineering, insolent Creature, I defy such a Lady, with all her Virtue and Patience, to forbear *wishing* at least it were otherwise.
>
> (11)

Her portrayal of a marriage of this kind shows that Sprint's ideal marriage is far beyond the degree of control that a husband can demand of his wife. Eugenia's comparison of a political doctrine to the codes of family life is revealing as she argues that although rebellion is against a ruler is not allowed, it is impossible to control the minds of mistreated subjects. She also states that although officially passive obedience is a policy that allows dissent, in fact disagreement was heavily discouraged: "when the Doctrine of Passive Obedience and Non-resistance was cry'd up and down with a mighty Confidence, 'twas but to say that all that spoke against this Doctrine were disloyal and rebellious, and the business was compleatly done and ended, and needed no further Confirmation" (3-4). Passive obedience was an unjust political doctrine that no more justice in family life. Through her critique of marriage and the restrictions of passive obedience Eugenia obliquely makes one of the most radical statements in the works of these three women. Although she acknowledges that the wife is a "weaker Vessel," she also argues that subjects must be allowed to object when they feel they are being unreasonably oppressed. Despite the fact that the position of the husband / monarch is God-ordained, the degree of their power is open to interpretation and objection. In certain circumstances, disloyalty and rebellion seem to be justified. Eugenia differs from most Tory feminists of the period, including Astell and Chudleigh, who do not envisage an earthly rebellion against the monarch, which seriously flaws their critiques of the male-dominated family.

The Female Preacher shows a mixture of conservative ideas about women's position in society and non-traditional ideas. Eugenia's dispute with Sprint is primarily over the problem of men's authority over women and ways in which it can be manifest and the degrees to which it can be practised. Her confusion over the position of women in relation to men results in an ambiguous view of women. She seems to be suggesting that while women are inferior to men, they should not be treated like slaves, and that women may rebel against men if it is a matter of conscience. However, the boundaries of this agreement have not been clearly delineated, creating an area of confusion in her argument. Her arguments are based on an awareness of the limits of language as a source of

concrete meaning and the multiple interpretations that texts are open to. In the end her refutation of Sprint is revisionary, thought-provoking and entertaining, although not entirely satisfactory.

Eugenia's feminism encompasses ideas of considerable importance. Unlike Egerton and Chudleigh, who openly suggest alternatives to the current male ideological model as expressed by Sprint, Eugenia tries to adapt the present one to accommodate women in ways that they wish. Her feminism is primarily based on a *revision* of the current regime, and radical ideas are buried in some of her analogies. In Chudleigh we find similar concerns with Sprints arguments, a similar awareness of many problems with interpretation, but very different methods of discussion and conclusions in her counter-argument.

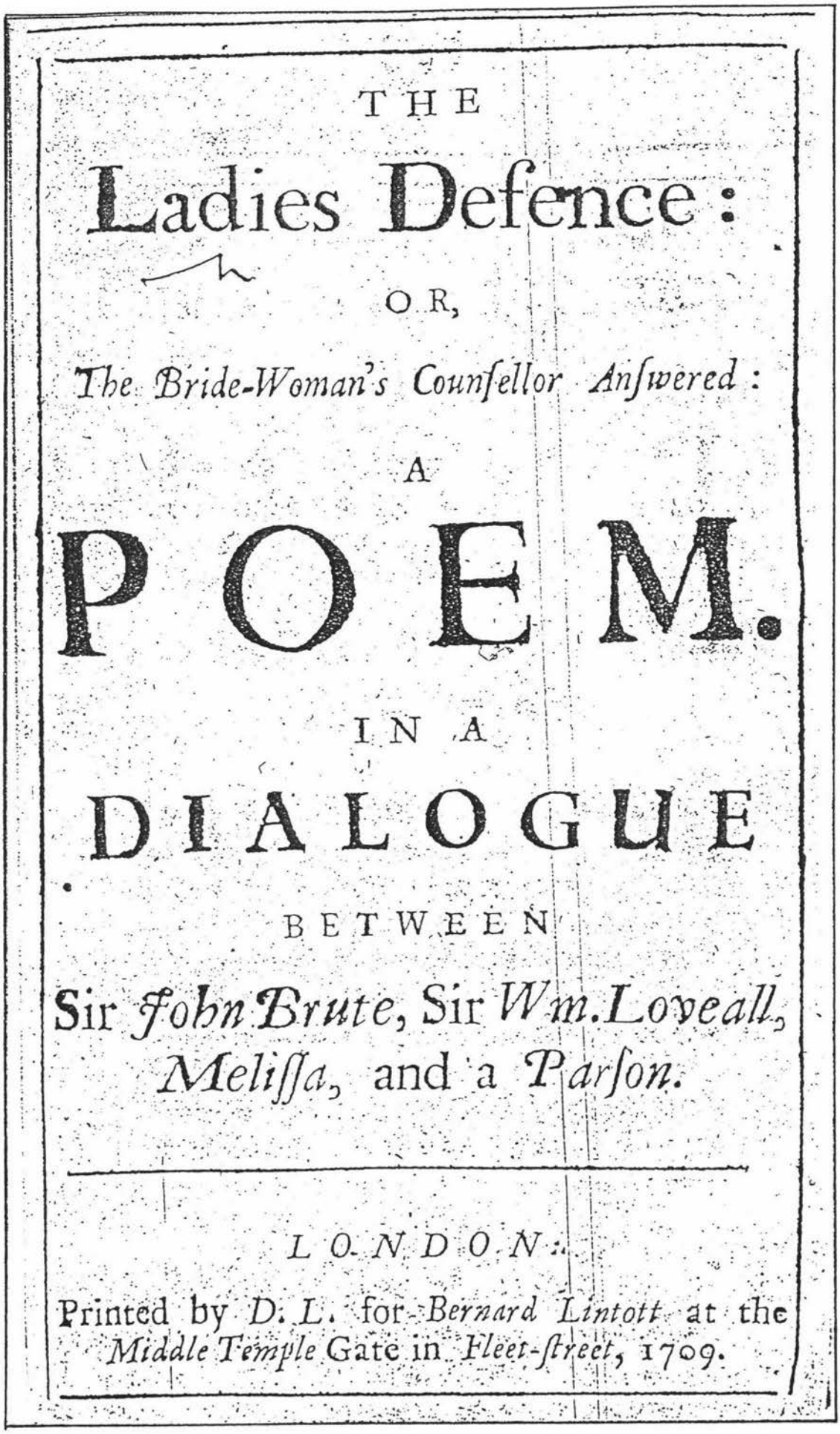
III. LADY MARY CHUDLEIGH:

THE UNSEEN EMPIRE OF THE MIND

Mary Lee was born in 1656 in George St Clyst in Devonshire. Her family was well connected, particularly on her mother, Mary Sydenham's side. Mary Lee's uncles included Colonel William Sydenham, a member of Richard Cromwell's council, and Dr. Thomas Sydenham, a physician whose friends included Richard Boyle and John Locke. Her father, Richard Lee, was a man of property. In 1674 Mary Lee married George Chudleigh of Ashton, a township about 20 kilometres south-east of Exeter where she lived throughout her married life. There is no evidence to support the statement that her "marriage was far from happy" (*DNB*). As Margaret Ezell argues, if Sir George Chudleigh is the brutal figure of Sir John Brute in Mary Chudleigh's *The Ladies Defence*, he was hardly likely "to have sanctioned subsequent editions of [her poetry] after her death" (Ezell xxv).

The main concerns in *The Ladies Defence* will by now be familiar to the reader, concerns with education, perceptions of women, and roles of men and women in marriage. Chudleigh responds to Sprint's sermon by developing characters in her poem who represent the consequences of Sprint's arguments. My discussion of Chudleigh's poem will encompass a variety of aspects. After a brief examination of the way in which Chudleigh's text interacts with Sprint's, I will outline Chudleigh's treatment of male desire by examining Sir John Brute and Sir William Loveall and their attitudes towards women. Following this I will investigate the three closely interrelated themes of marriage, male manipulation of language to retain self-interest and double standards, and female education. Finally I will examine Chudleigh's apparent quietism at the end of the poem.

At first Chudleigh's view seems diametrically opposed to that of John Sprint. However, as the poem progresses, we find that eventually Chudleigh adopts an apparently very similar position. While advocating intellectual equality Chudleigh does not conclude that women have a right to public positions as men



THE

Ladies Defence:

OR,

The Bride-Woman's Counsellor Answered:

A

POEM.

IN A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Sir *John Brute*, Sir *Wm. Loveall*, *Melissa*, and a *Parson.*

LONDON:

Printed by *D. L.* for *Bernard Lintott* at the *Middle Temple* Gate in *Fleet-street*, 1709.

The title page of Lady Mary Chudleigh's *The Ladies Defence*, from the edition that was published by Bernard Lintott in 1709, the year before her death.

do. She concludes that women will be able to improve their minds and gain greater self-expression and self respect from knowledge and self-knowledge but their increased authority will only be over themselves. In the light of this first conclusion, her second conclusion, an apparent recantation of all that she has previously advocated, is problematic. She determines that women will suppress any desires of their own in deference to the wishes of friends, family and husbands, arguing that their virtuous behaviour will be rewarded in Heaven.

The Ladies Defence is a dialogue between four characters. Each of the characters represents a different view of relationships between men and women. The Parson is motivated by Godly zeal and kindly intent to explain women's duty and men's superiority. The idealistic view of Sir William Loveall depicts women as vessels of chastity manifesting a virtue that men can never hope to attain. Sir John Brute advocates ill-using women because they are nothing more than men's property anyway, and Melissa argues that marriage must be based on mutual respect which will only be possible after women have found self-respect. Chudleigh anxiously explores different realms of power and expressions of gender. Sir John and Sir William are personifications of male desire that represent different aspects and attitudes towards desire and how it should be expressed. The Parson differentiates male from female knowledge, exploring the ideal marriage and male / female roles within it and limits female sexual activity and expression to the flattering of their husbands. Melissa's ideal of the perfect marriage is explored, as are her views of female education and its role in women's self-esteem. Melissa's apparent neutrality at the conclusion of the poem may be strategic as much as genuine as she removes the threat of female authority from marriage while attempting to retain some form of individualism and autonomy for women.

Chudleigh's adaptations of Sprint's text reveal her preoccupations with men and women and her perception of Sprint's motives. She employs several different methods to incorporate Sprint's text into her own, all of which reveal her interpretations of his sermon. In some cases, she virtually quotes *The Bride-Womans Counseller*, but recontextualises it, at others she subtly alters the quotation to elaborate the sense that she feels it conveys, at yet others she

enlarges upon a direct quotation, extending an idea that Sprint has implied rather than stated. The sermon uses a formal pseudo-scientific structure:

> 1. Prove it by Reason and Argument.
> 2. Shew how and which way married Women must endeavour to please their Husbands.
> 3. Make some Improvement of it . . . .
>
> Now if the Woman owes her Being to the Comfort and Profit of Man, 'tis highly reasonable the she should be careful and diligent to content and please him, otherwise she doth wickedly pervert the End of her Creation.
>
> (*The Bride-Womans Counseller* 5)

In Chudleigh's text Sprint's arguments become parodied in the voice of the Parson:

> First, I'll by Reason prove you should obey,
> Next, point you out the most compendious way,
> And then th' important Doctrine I'll improve . . .
> These are the Steps by which I mean to move.
> And first, because you were by Heav'n design'd
> To be the Comforts of our Nobler Kind . . .
> And dare you now, as if it were in Spight,
> Become our Plagues when form'd for our Delight?
>
> (ll.287-292, 297-98)

Although very close to the original (particularly ll.287-289), Chudleigh adds adjectives that characterise the Parson and show his weighting of various ideas, thus "compendious" and "important" add bombastic importance to the Parson's person and "Nobler" and "Plagues" illuminate his opinions of the state of the sexes. Another instance of a similar adaptation is to be found quite early in *The Ladies Defence*, where the Parson is arguing that women should not complain about the treatment they receive from their husbands. The Parson says:

> I dare affirm those Husbands that are ill,
> Were they unmarry'd, wou'd be faultless still.
> If we are cruel, they have made us so;
> Whate'er they suffer, to themselves they owe:
> Our Love on their Obedience does depend,

We will be kind, when they no more offend.

(ll.267-72)

The above passage has its origins in Sprint's reasons for his sermon:

> . . . I shall not scruple to affirm, that the number of those bad Husbands, which their Wives have made so, is greater by far than the number of those whom their Wives have found so when they were first married.
>
> 4. Because the Love of a Husband does very much depend upon the Obedience of a Wife;
>
> (*The Bride-Womans Counseller* 4)

The reuse of many words, such as "affirm," "unmarried" / "married," "made so" / "made us so," "Obedience," "Love," "depend," and so on, establishes Sprint's sermon as the parent text, but Chudleigh's alterations give birth to new meaning. Chudleigh makes the passage more emotive by using the words "faultless," "cruel," "suffer," "kind," and "offend," and changing the passage to show the underlying motive of Sprint's words and the consequences they will have for women. Her streamlining of the parent text helps elucidate the meaning, as does the emphasis placed on the emotive adjectives through rhyme.

As we saw in Sprint, the kindness of a husband is dependent, on the wife's behaviour.

> The *Persian* Ladies have the resemblance of a Foot worn on the top of their Coronets, in token that the height of their Glory, *Top-knot* and all, does stoop to their Husbands Feet.
>
> (*The Bride-Womans Counseller* 11)

Chudleigh skilfully adapts the text from *The Bride-Womans Counseller* to clarify the argument, clearly showing men's arrogance and privileged position. The passages indicate the Parson's ideology of women's assumed inferiority and dependence.

> If to your Lords you strict Allegiance pay'd,
> And their Commands submissively obey'd,

> If like wise Eastern Slaves with trembling Awe
> You watch'd their looks, and made their Will your Law,
> You wou'd both Kindness and Protection gain,
> And find your duteous Care was not in vain.
>
> (ll.179-184)

The most aggressive depiction of male desire is in Sir John Brute. Sir John Brute is just as his name suggests. Closest of the three men to Gould in *Love Given O're* in his outlook, he envisages a world without women in which he and his friends can do as they wish. The repetitive themes in his arguments are cruelty to women and the myth that women confine men. Chudleigh's Sir John is based on the character of Sir John Brute in Vanbrugh's *The Provok'd Wife* (1697) who complains of "the tedium of marriage and speak[s] up for free love" (Browne 90).[1] Sir John resents having been told by the Parson that he has responsibilities: " 'Till now, I thought you knew not how to Write: / Dull heavy Morals did your Pens employ; / And all your Business was to pall our Joy" (ll.2-4), and is pleased when the Parson begins to instruct women in his sermons instead. He congratulates the Parson on being the one who

> against those Terrors of our Lives,
> Those worst of Plagues, those Furies call'd our Wives,
> Have shew'd your Anger in a Strain Divine . . .
>
> (ll.15-17)

Metaphors such as "Terrors of our Lives," "Plagues," and "Furies," link women to monsters in a manner by now familiar to us as Chudleigh draws on the extensive misogynist tradition. Chudleigh intends us to see Sir John's own ungovernable passions in his images of women.

Sir John's maleness is conceptualised in terms of power and violence, and his masculinity is expressed as "Manly Roughness" that can be jeopardised by an

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[1] Vanbrugh's play begins with Sir John's comment "What cloying meat is Love -- when matrimony's the sauce to it!" (Act I, scene I), and continues:
Lady Brute: What is it that disturbs you?
Sir John: A parson.
L B: Why, what has he done to you?
S J: He has married me.

inexplicable attraction to a "Female Face" (ll.111, 112). Male desire, as in *Love Given O're*, is expressed in terms of sexual freedom and lack of responsibility to others such as Sir John's wish to "freely chuse among the female kind," and sample the "sweets of dear Variety" (ll.238, 244).

Sir John also represents the patriarchal ideology that assumes that men are entirely justified in dominating their wives ("as we please, we may our Wives chastise" [l.107] because " 'Tis the Prerogative of being Wise" [l.108]). His envy of Sir William's single state leads him to picture the single life as one of "undisturb'd" pastoral pleasure, where ruling over "Brutal Subjects" he can view his "Snowy Flocks with delight" (l.27). Because Sir John views marriage as a confining, restricting state that prevents him from acting freely, he describes women and their offspring "fright[ing] him with "their hideous Cry" (l.33). Their lack of "Compliance" (l.356) inhibits his own pleasure. The pastimes that women and children prevent him from enjoying are shown as simple and undemanding such as the "Joy [of] the Noble Chase," and drinking "freely with a Friend" (ll.30, 31). Sir John's disgust of his wife Lenera once he has married her are part of the libertine tradition, which here shows its effects on women as they are subjected to a cycle in which they are pursued, captured, resented, maltreated, and finally discarded.

Thus aspects of male desire are brutal, selfish, unproductive and ignore all pretences to the Reason that men were supposedly endowed with.[2] Sir John's portrayal of the single man as a "Great *Mogul*" who is "Absolute: / Supream in all things" (ll.35-36) casts Sir William (who has "not known the Trouble of a Wife") in the role of an autocrat, who rules untroubled over his kingdom. Images of domination are recurrent in the poem. Their use ranges from that of men's dominance of their lives to women's control of their own thoughts. Images of domination in this context are linked to the notions of ruling provinces and kingdoms. For men these kingdoms are material, tracts of land that confer power and wealth on the owner: but for women the kingdoms are the abstract worlds of thought and the mind. The recurrent images of conquering and dominion used by

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[2] In *Paradise Lost* we find a summary of the rational condition of man as Raphael tells Adam of his rational nature (VIII, ll.585-594). None of these attributes are perceptible in Sir John or Sir William.

the men in the poem become appropriated by Melissa who applies them to women's intellectual sphere as well as the public and material worlds.

Sir William's anti-feminism is as dangerous as Sir John's and is made all the more so by its attractive dress. Sir William's anti-feminism is dependent on maintaining women as frail ignorant creatures who will depend on men utterly. His chivalry defends women from Sir John's charges while underscoring the double standard. However, he too is intent on retaining women on pedestals while he samples the fruits of "dear Variety." Like Sir John, Sir William expresses his masculinity by reassuring his auditors that he has "had of Mistresses a numerous Store" (l.42), and objectifies women as a series of "Charming Face[s]" (l.41) and his future wife as "some lovely she to be forever mine" (l.49).

The large central section of the poem is a prolonged reworking of Sprint's sermon, again, in the manner I have shown above, subtly altered to show the Parson's stupidity and his self-interest that perpetuates male domination. In a long passage broken only by an interjection by Sir John, the Parson instructs Sir John and Sir William in the ways they should behave and the reasons why women may be treated as slaves. The passage is an expression of male hegemony, the ways men are empowered to mistreat women, and the consequences resulting from Melissa's critique of male motivations and actions. After explaining why women are subjected to men and citing Eve's part in the Fall (she was "guilty first"), the Parson propounds his view of matrimony. His agenda is revealed in the final part of his speech. The Parson, like Sir John is subjected to the "Gordian Tye" of matrimony (l.435) into which it is safe to enter now that he has shown women their Duty. The Parson colludes with men to retain their "Sovereign Pow'r" through religious evidence that raises men "above the Females" (l.437). His position of authority is used to ensure definitions of marriage remain in the male domain.

In contrast to Chudleigh's portrayal of male desire is her idea of marriage as expressed by Melissa. Where Sir John advocates sexual license and promiscuity, Melissa shows her ideal marriage as monogamous and companionate. Milton, as I mentioned in the Introduction was a significant influence on thought about marriage at the time. His thought is followed by many

women of the day (as we have already seen, he is quoted in support of Eugenia's arguments about Eve's nature) and in Chudleigh Milton's influence is no less. In *Paradise Lost*, marriage is portrayed as a mutual relationship in which men and women are not equal but live in a state of mutual love. Adam's feelings of incompleteness before Eve's creation are emphasised as is his argument for marriage in which he identifies the need for "fellowship" (VIII, l.389):

> Among unequals what society
> Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
> Which must be mutual, in proportion due
> Giv'n and receiv'd; but in disparity
> The one intense, the other still remiss
> Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
> Tedious alike: Of fellowship I speak
> Such as I seek, fit to participate
> All rational delight . . .
>
> (VIII, 383-91)

Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* also constantly emphasises the importance of the mind and mental compatibility in marriage. Indeed mental compatibility is so important that if a married couple has an "unconversing ability of mind" (*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* 179) their marriage is not a true marriage, as "the best duty of marriage" is a "cheerful and agreeable conversation" (*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* 179). The three women writers surveyed in this study all emphasise this aspect of marriage and use the idea of "fellowship" and rational conversation as examples of the need for greater equality and equal education.

In *The Ladies Defence* Melissa argues that "Sincere Affection centres but in one, / And cannot be to various Objects shown" (ll.247-48) rejecting both Sir John's and Sir William's numerous relationships with women. Her language also sharply contrasts with Sir John's brutal descriptions of marriage as she emphasises the need for the "Joys of Love," "Sincere Affection," "Reason," and "Honour." She redefines male actions within marriage, making female behaviour dependent on men proving "kind, respectful, just and true" (l.249). Some men are without "vicious Habits" (l.245), and these few, "sway'd by Reason, and by Honour led,"

may in "their Minds delight" (ll.255-258). In these descriptions we see Melissa's desire that marriage be a state in which men and women are not swayed by passion and continue along the matrimonial path even when it is rough. Her portrayal of the ideal man as "kind, respectful, just and true" also demonstrates a belief that matrimony's success is not dependent only on the behaviour of the woman. Her ideal man is quite the opposite of Sprint's humoursome tyrant, who is the "experienc'd Truth with most women" (*The Bride-Womans Counseller* 7).

Melissa portrays marriage as it is currently as a relationship in which women become "Partners of a hated Bed" (l.140) where men are either "old ill-humour'd" Misers or "barbarous Men" (ll.144-170) and women are forced to marry for duty or paternal ambition (l.139, 141). If conjugal bliss is dependent on this, marriage would be better made "among the Savage kind" (l.171). The bestial images of women created by Sir John are literalised by Melissa who argues that marriage "confin'd" to "generous Lyons" or "match'd to Tygers," would "gentler prove" than marriage to a man (ll.172-174). Sir John's marriage results in his freedom being curtailed and in him being restricted to his house by a nagging wife; for Melissa it results in abuse, mutual disharmony and loss of spiritual and earthly freedom. Both offer solutions to the problem, but while Sir John rejects marriage completely, Melissa redefines it.

Among Melissa's complaints is a passage in which Chudleigh eloquently links male authority in marital relationships to the doctrine of passive obedience and the double standard:

> Why are not Husbands taught as well as we;
> Must they from all Restraints, all Laws be free?
> Passive Obedience you've to us transferr'd,
> And we must drudge in Paths where you have err'd:
> That antiquated Doctrine you disown;
> 'Tis now your Scorn, and fit for us alone.
>
> (ll.93-98)

Men have successfully transferred all "restraint" to another group in society (women) in order to protect their own interests. They show their double standard by entrapping women with an "antiquated Doctrine" that they have rejected from

their own politics. But the doctrine is still applied to marriage to prevent any diminution of male authority in marriage too. The double standard, which was initially applied largely to variants in men's and women's sexual codes extends to include differences in political practices.

The Parson is the male character most aware of the double standard which he is careful to strengthen against women's attacks. The Parson's first speech shows most of the attitudes that he has towards women and their relationships with men. He restrains women with their "Duty" dressed with "all the Charms that cou'd invite" (l.57) and encourages them

> their Husband to Obey and Please,
> And to their Humours sacrifice their Ease:
> Give up their Reason, and their Wills resign,
> And every Look and every Thought confine.
> Sure, this Detraction you can't justly call?
> 'Tis kindly meant, and 'tis address'd to All.
>
> (ll.58-63)

As a basis for his view of marriage we are immediately aware of three things. Firstly, the Parson tries to control women by defining their "Duty"; secondly, that he is aware that women have Reason and Will, which must be discarded if they are to interact successfully with men; and lastly, that Chudleigh is well aware that Sprint believes that he is acting out of women's best interests. The importance of this last is that it suggests that Chudleigh has identified the subtext in Sprint's sermon that threatens to undermine his argument.

The Parson's reliance on his interpretation of "Law Divine" (l.282) leads him to believe that he is an appropriate teacher for women. He continually emphasises women's need to learn and his role as teacher (for example, "told" (l.55), "Taught" (ll.58, 213), "advis'd" (l.185), "Instruction" (l.186), "learn" (l.189), "instructed" (ll.190, 368), "learn't" (l.215), "steps" (l.295), etc). Unfortunately, the Parson has prefaced his entire speech with the admission that all he has to say is "Truth drest in all the Gaieties of Art" (l.279) that

> 'Twill on your Mind a vital Influence have,

If while I speak, you're Silent as the Grave.
The sacred Oracles for deference call,
When from my Oily Tongue they smoothly fall.

(ll.283-286)

This passage undermines both his sincerity and his position as the unbiased voice of God. Melissa instantly recognises that the Parson's arguments expose his hidden agenda to empower men and deny women any voice or expression. In addition to this, the Parson also expects women to collude in his manipulation of "truth" that will confine women and negate their own voices further:

If Fools should Laugh, and cry 'tis but a Jest,
Yet still look Grave, and vow you are Sincere,
And undisturbd their ill-bred Censures bear.
Do what you can his Kindred to ingage,
Wink at his Vices, and indulge his Rage.

(ll.374-378)

This passage is Chudleigh's way of reworking Sprint's mirror metaphor, and clearly shows women being subsumed into their husbands. Other ideas suggest that women must pretend to respect men and the "useful Art of wheedling try" (l.338) in order to curry favour, show that for men women's duplicity is necessary because their happiness is dependent upon it. An honest relationship is neither expected nor desired. The Parson seems to show that women possess the truth about their husbands, but must conform to a social fiction. If he can persuade women to do this and men to "tell 'em [this advice is] holy as their Creed" (l.463), then men's "quiet" and women's "Souls" will be secured (l.466). However, Melissa is less than impressed with the Parson's manipulation of language, as she makes clear when she describes "Each Sentence" of his discourse as "a Satyr" on his "Sex" (l.481). She also denies that the Parson's language has any relationship with Divine Truth, although he is a priest:

I've still rever'd your Order as Divine;
And when I see unblemish'd Vertue Shine,
When solid Learning, and substantial Sense,

> Are joyn'd with unaffected Eloquence;
> When Lives and Doctrines of a Piece are made,
> And holy Truths with humble Zeal convey'd;
> When free from Passion, Bigottry and Pride,
> Not sway'd by Interest, nor to Parties ty'd . . .
>
> (488-495)

Chudleigh has identified the arbitrary nature of language and men's recognition that it can be manipulated to support the interests of one group in society over those of another. Given this awareness, the Parson's account of the nature of emotions and the value ascribed to them becomes a heavily ironic and parodic interpretation of Sprint's definitions of words in *The Bride-Womans Counseller*. We can see male manipulations of words when the Parson redefines "negative" emotions as "positive," thus making "Rage a Noble Bravery of Mind,"

> Revenge, a Tribute due to injur'd Fame;
> And Pride, but what transcendant Worth does claim:
> Cowards are Wary, and the Dull are Grave,
> Fops are Genteel, and Hectoring Bullies Brave:
> Such live as High, regardless of Expence,
> Are Generous Men, and ever bless'd with Sense . . .
> Thus to each Vice you give some specious Name,
> And with bright Colours varnish o're your Shame.
>
> (ll.78-83, 89-90)

Melissa's insistence on these words being "specious" shows her contempt of male trickery and her frustration at the constantly altering values that validate male emotions and actions.

Melissa sees men using words to gain a desired effect, although they never know their meaning: "you, who talk of Piety and Love, / Words, whose Sense, you never understood, / And for that Reason, are not kind, nor good" (ll.174-176). But at the same time that she scorns men's "talk," she seems to assume a certain amount of inherent value in language which she has identified and so knows that the Parson's interpretations of "Piety" and "Love" do not come from an understanding of their real "sense."

The metaphors of conquering and ruling over land, as I mentioned earlier, are recurrent throughout the poem. Many of these metaphors are linked to intellectual prominence, education, and authority over knowledge. Language and knowledge are the territory being warred over. The Parson portrays men as the sex who

> can beyond the Bounds of Nature see
> And dare to Fathom vast Infinity.
> Then soar aloft, and view the Worlds on high,
> And all the inmost Mansions of the Sky;
> Gaze on the Wonders, on the Beauties there,
> And talk with the bright Phantoms of the Air:
> Observe their Customs, Policy and State,
> And pry into the dark Intrigues of Fate . . .
>
> (ll.196-203)

The images of soaring aloft to observe infinity and gain, by implication, infinite knowledge, portrays men as the controllers of knowledge and heaven condoned rulers. Unlike women who "Wither in Shades" (l.211) men are "blest with *Phoebus* influence" (l.210). Their continual association with the sky, heavens and light shows their intelligence compared to women's dull and earthly matter. Men

> like Ancient Giants, stand on high,
> And seem to bid Defiance to the Sky,
> While you poor worthless Insects crawl below,
> And less than Mites t'our exhalted Reason show.
>
> (ll.220-223)

However, Melissa has pre-empted the Parson's use of the images of rulers by likening men to "petty Monarchs" and "Homer's Gods" (l.66) who think they rule but are so self-obsessed that they ignore fine qualities in others (ll.64-71). The Parson's images of power are in the context of marriage, thus a man will "Govern" his wife who should be a "repining Vassal." Women must be prevented from "invading" the "Province" of the mind, which is male territory (ll.610-619). The contrast between men and women is highlighted by Melissa's vision in which

women soar with angels (rather than "Phantoms of the Air" [l.201]) and learn from them in Heaven.

Chudleigh depicts the current state of education as a divided empire. The male domain consists of those things that improve the mind, the female those that trivialise. The argument over the acquisition and control of knowledge is fuelled by Melissa's criticism of men's restriction on knowledge. She claims that men regard women as stupid, but then refuse to educate them:

> 'Tis hard we should be by the Men despis'd,
> Yet kept from knowing what wou'd make us priz'd:
> Debarr'd from Knowledge, banish'd from the Schools,
> And with the utmost Industry bred Fools.
> Laugh'd out of Reason, jested out of Sense,
> And nothing left but Native Innocence:
> When told we are incapable of Wit,
> And only for the meanest Drudgeries fit . . .
>
> (ll.512-519)

Sir William's reaction to Melissa's desire for knowledge is to argue that women's acquisition of knowledge will lower the value of his own (limited) education. We see that for Sir William, education is just another weapon in his arsenal for the seduction of women. Only women's ignorance maintains him as an impressive figure.

> *Sir Wil.* Had you the Learning you so much desire
> You, sure, wou'd nothing, but your selves admire:
> All our Addresses wou'd be then in vain,
> And we no longer in your Hearts shou'd Reign:
> Sighs wou'd be lost, and Ogles cast away,
> You'd laugh at all we do, and all we say.
> No Courtship then durst by the Beaux be made
> To any thing above a Chamber Maid.
> Gay Cloaths, and Periwigs wou'd useless prove;
> None but the Men of Sense wou'd dare to love:
> With such Heav'n knows, this Isle does not abound,
> For one Man, Ten thousand Fools are found;
> Who all must at an awful distance wait,
> And vainly curse the Rigour of their Fate.
> Then blame us not, if we our Interest Mind,
> And would have Knowledge to ourselves confin'd,

Since that alone Pre-eminence does give,
And rob'd of it we should unvalu'd live.
While You are Ignorant, We are secure,
A little Pain will your Esteem procure.
Nonsense well cloath'd will pass for solid Sense,
And well pronounc'd, for matchless Eloquence:
Boldness for Learning, and a foreign Air
For nicest Breeding with th' admiring Fair.

(ll.565-588)

He then patronisingly tries to persuade Melissa that beauty is an adequate asset for women:

You shou'd content your selves with being Fair:
That is a Blessing, much more Great, than all
That we can Wisdom, or can Science call:
Such beauteous Faces, such bewitching Eyes,
Who wou'd not more than musty Authors prize?
Such wondrous Charms will much more Glory yield
Than all the Honours of the dusty Field:
Or all those Ivy Wreaths that Wit can give,
And make you more admir'd, more reverenc'd live.

(ll.621-629)

Melissa argues that it is not women's fault that they are seen by men as inadequate. She sees ignorance as resulting in lack of self awareness and self knowledge, insisting, as we have seen, that knowledge should be the property of all people. She argues that women are made good by the creator (ll.509-510) and are only "bred Fools" (l.515) by men who "debar" them from knowledge (l.514). But men who try to educate women are castigated for their superficiality:

Those generous few, whom Kinder Thoughts inspire ,
And who the Happiness of all desire;
Who wish we were from barbarous Usage free,
Exempt from Toils, and shameful Slavery,
Yet let us unreprov'd, mispend our Hours,
And to mean Purposes imploy our nobler Pow'rs.
They think if we our Thoughts can but express,
And know but how to Work, to Dance and Dress,
It is enough, as much as we should mind,
As if we were for nothing else design'd,
But made, like Puppets, to divert Mankind.

(ll.538-548)

Chudleigh discusses the issue of women's education in some detail. Although many men at the time agreed that women should be better educated, there was much dispute about the extent of their education and what form it should take. As I mentioned earlier in relation to Eugenia, instrumental feminism argued that wives could be better educated to make them more able to fulfil their role, but many people argued that women should only be educated in moral duty and housewifery rather receive the same education as men. Melissa advocates study of ethics and self-criticism as a solution for women's irrationality:

> O that my Sex would all such Toys despise;
> And only Study to be Good, and Wise;
> Inspect themselves, and every Blemish find,
> Search all the close Recesses of the Mind,
> And leave no Vice, no Ruling Passion there,
> Nothing to raise a Blush, or cause a Fear:
> Their Memories with solid Notions fill,
> And let their Reason dictate to their Will.
> Instead of Novels, Histories peruse,
> And for their Guides the wiser Ancients chuse,
> Thro' all the Labyrinths of Learning go,
> And grow more humble, as they more do know.
> By doing this, they will Respect procure,
> Silence the Men, and lasting Fame secure;
> And to themselves the best Companions prove,
> And neither fear their Malice, nor desire their Love.
>
> (ll.549-564)

Studying to be "Good and Wise" will lead to self-examination, which in turn leads to self-knowledge, self-respect and independence. The process of self inspection, investigation of the mind, elimination of vices and dedication to Reason rather than Passion will result in humility. The benefits of self-knowledge are also external, as women who gain Respect and Fame become irreproachable by men, but, most importantly, the gains are personal. Women will no longer need men to bolster their self-image as their self-assurance leads them to be their own "best Companions" (ll.563).

Sir John shows fear at the prospect of learned women. Like the "black, detested lines" women copy, books and plays also teach women bad habits, particularly increasing their power to deceive sexually. Yet the Parson rejects Sir John's views by claiming that women are *inherently* faulty. The idea that books harbour evil influences is refuted by the Parson, who, well aware of the influence of language, is determined to retain book-learning for men's use:

> Yet not in Books, but [in women], the Fault does lie:
> Plays are of use to cultivate our Parts,
> They teach us how to win our Hearers Hearts;
> Soft moving language for the Pulpit's fit,
> 'Tis there we consecrate the Poet's Wit:
> But Women were not for this Province made,
> And shou'd not our Prerogative invade . . .
> But from our Sermons they no ill can learn,
> They're there instructed in their true Concern:
> Told what they must, and what they must not be;
> And show'd the utmost Bounds of Liberty.
>
> (ll.606-612, 616-619)

But Melissa extends her arguments further than this fairly common criticism of the education system to examine the effect that lack of education has on women. Firstly she combines the images of empire and knowledge as the Parson did. Melissa's language in her final speech (which occupies nearly one quarter of the poem) converts the earlier images of empire to her own uses. The mind is still described as a concrete, material territory, but women will not gain power or material wealth from their empire. Chudleigh argues that women tend to value personal and abstract advantages instead of the material profits of wealth that men gain from knowledge and power. She emphasises women's lack of ambition for public power and wealth, and avoids making women a threat to men. After rejecting Sir William's value of external beauty Melissa emphasises the importance of developing the mind. Her descriptions again describe women in the role of on-looker rather than desiring to actively participate.

> Brightness of Thought, and an extensive View
> Of all the Wonders Nature has to shew;

So clear, so strong, and so inlarg'd a Sight
As can pierce thro' the gloomy Shades of Night,
Trace the first Heroes to their dark Abodes,
And find the Origin of Men and Gods:
See Empires rise, and Monarchies decay,
And all the Changes of the World survey:
The ancient and the modern Fate of Kings,
From whence their Glory, or Misfortunes springs;
Wou'd please me more, that if in one combind,
I'd all the Graces of the Female Kind.
But do not think 'tis an ambitious Heat,
To you I'll leave the being Rich and Great:
Yours be the Fame, the Profit, and the Praise;
We'll neither Rob you of your Vines, nor Bays:
Nor will we to Dominion once aspire;
You shall be Chief, and still your selves admire:
The Tyrant Man may still posses the Throne;
'Tis in our Minds that we wou'd Rule alone:
Those unseen Empires give us leave to sway,
And to our Reason private Homage pay . . .

(ll.641-662)

Her recurrent images of perception ("Sight," "view," "clear," "see," "survey," "pierce through the gloomy Shades of Night") echo those of the Parson ("beyond the Bounds of Nature see," "fathom," "view," "gaze on Wonders" and so on), and combine metaphors of knowledge with metaphors of empire. Images of empire are images of active control and mastery, traditionally men's province. But with Anne as the heiress to the throne and later queen, women argue that they are legitimised to control land and gain authority (at least in literary conceits) by her example. Women's rule and power is thus given oblique divine authority by the Mary II and Anne.[3] Melissa's verbs describe the process of actively finding knowledge, but unlike the men whose knowledge is "ambitious" and is used to acquire greatness and riches, Melissa emphasises that women want to rule an "*unseen* Empire" where each woman can "rule alone." By dividing public and private rule Melissa insists that women are not threatening to patriarchal authority (ll.654-59). Through her emphasis of the benefits to men Melissa portrays women as unthreatening (ll.701-704).

[3] See Chapter Two, II, 64 n.5 for women's identification with powerful contemporary women as role models.

Although Chudleigh obviously considers women's control of their minds of utmost importance, her political acumen advises her to emphasise the benefits that men will gain from educated women. After a long speech about the nature of men outlining their ambition, pride, and gullibility as well as a further critique of men's "Design" to keep women "Fools," that they may be your men's "Jest" (ll.715-716) and a plea to men to teach and nurture women's minds, Melissa concludes with an apparently conservative view of women's roles as wives and mothers.

Melissa begins her conclusion with comments on the relationships between men and women, which although oblique, are hardly complimentary:

> 'Tis we alone hard Measure still must find;
> But spite of you, we'll to our selves be kind:
> Your Censures slight, your little Tricks despise,
> And make it our whole Business to be wise.
> The mean low trivial Cares of Life disdain,
> And read and Think, and Think and Read again,
> And on our Minds bestow the utmost Pain.
> Our Souls with strictest Morals we'll adorn,
> And all your little Arts of wheedling Scorn;
> Be humble, mild, forgiving, just and true,
> Sincere to all, respectful unto you,
> While as becomes you, sacred Truths you teach,
> And live those Sermons you to others Preach.
> With want of Duty none shall us upbraid,
> Where-e'er 'tis due, it shall be nicely pay'd.
>
> (ll.794-808)

Her cynicism is ably demonstrated by her view of men's "little Tricks," their "little Arts of wheedling" and her ironic qualification "while as becomes you" which has also been previously qualified by her image of the generic Parson / Scholar who "mounts a Pulpit," and "Makes Vapours dance before his troubl'd Sight" (ll.749-750). His vaporous words are neither substantial, significant nor pleasing even to himself.

More troubling in the conclusion, however, is Melissa's gradual description of women, despite improvements of the mind and increased self-

respect, subsuming themselves in the lives of others if her appeal for more knowledge fails.

> . . . if our soft Submissions are in vain,
> We'll bear our Fate, and never once complain:
> Unto our Friends the tenderest kindness show,
> Be wholly theirs, no separate Interest know:
> With them their Dangers and their Suff'rings share,
> And make their Persons, and their Fame our Care.
>
> (ll.813-818)

This seems to be a complete turn around from Melissa's previous position where the women she wanted to be their own "best Companions," are now portrayed knowing "no separate Interest." But Melissa seems to be describing a world where women relate to other women to help one another. In highlighting the importance of supporting her "Friends" with "tenderest kindness" (language that throughout the poem is associated with women), and sharing their "Suff'rings" and "Dangers" we can see a network of female friendship. Women's concern with protecting both the "Person" and "Fame" of their friends is part of a bastion of female support against those who make them suffer and endanger them.

But the finale of the poem also employs another strategy that attempts to transcend male values. Chudleigh takes the image of the virtuous wife and shows her being rewarded in Heaven. In this image, she again succeeds in rescuing women from men's "hate" by raising women above men through their relationship to the spiritual. Standard contrasts between earthly and heavenly existence are expressed in descriptions of the physical body as Clay, and the body in Heaven as the "former State" in contact with "generous Spirits of a Make Divine," but for women Heaven is also a place where they can pursue their desire for knowledge. Here light and learning in Heaven enable women, unlike on earth, to "see clearly," the "busy Mortals" below who "still grope on, but never find their way" (ll.838-839). Contrasts between gloom-surrounded mortals and her own eternally enlightened state show woman consumed by Joy:

> We shall, well-pleas'd, eternally converse,

> And all the Sweets of Sacred Love possess:
> Love, freed from all the gross Allays of Sense,
> So pure, so strong, so constant, so intense,
> That it shall all our Faculties imploy,
> And leave no Room for any thing but Joy.
>
> (ll.840-845)

Although in the conclusion Chudleigh may at first appear to have reneged on her previous opinions, in fact we see that she creates a world in which women support each other and understand one another's sufferings, and through her identification of women with virtue and Heaven, women are associated with an authority greater than men's. After death women have no need for male interpretations of Scripture, as their direct link with God brings them greater authority than earth-bound men have access to.

The Ladies Defence gives us a detailed representation of feminist thought in the late seventeenth century. Chudleigh's representations of genders distinguished through education and upbringing are augmented by a sophisticated analysis of Sprint's sermon that identifies the roles of language in those distinctions. Chudleigh outlines her criticisms of the present state of marriage and damns male attitudes towards monogamous relationships because of their effect on women. Male attitudes are shown to devalue women, allow them no individual existence, and only view them negatively in relation to men

Perhaps most significantly, Chudleigh identifies the importance of language in all these constructions and attitudes. Like Egerton and in particular Eugenia, she criticises male authority over language and women's exclusion from words, education, and all forms of knowledge. Her vision of male control of education and their restricting women to only certain forms of education identifies the role that men play in actively creating women as dependent, helpless and dutiful. As Eugenia says, not only are women denied learning, they are then told that their "*weaker Capacities*" make it impossible for them to learn anyway, entrapping them in a vicious circle of ignorance. In order to break this circle Chudleigh argues that women must gain equal control over language and interpret the world in their own way in order to gain control of their own thoughts and lives. She manipulates instrumental feminism to allay male fears. Finally, her

depiction of the afterworld where women share knowledge assumes that knowledge is a right that God, unlike men, will not deny women: women will have a relationship with a higher authority where men can no longer deny them their "unseen Empires."

CONCLUSION

Throughout my thesis I have tried to show ways in which men and women have disputed women's nature and position in society and marital relationships. Although I have focussed particularly on the way in which *women* (as opposed to men) were viewed in the late seventeenth century, I have also tried to show that images of women and ideas about women are inextricably bound up with attitudes towards men and the interactions of the sexes as "determined" by nature, society and religion. Each of the authors that I have discussed adds a new angle to the debate -- Gould's violent misogyny reveals an anxious self-image as well as systematically illustrating common misogynist views about women; Sprint enlarges on the biblical tradition and attempts to confine women through guilt and their duty to men; Egerton, Eugenia and Chudleigh all discuss the implications of these male ideologies of femininity and attempt to formulate feminisms to accommodate themselves and their own wishes within their society.

These five texts are located within a flourishing literary tradition. The male side of the debate visualises women as terrifying uncontrollable monsters who threaten the male world with their sexuality and their use of language. These representations often indicate anxieties on the part of the authors that they may no longer be totally in control of their worlds as women began to assert themselves. From within the tradition of gender discussions in England women express their own interpretations of men, male desire and their ideal relationships with men as well as themselves. From outside the dominant (male) ideology, they try to find a place where they too can legitimately speak as they attempt to represent themselves.

The two texts by men show the culmination of two major traditions of misogynist literature, the Graeco-Roman in Gould and the Christian in Sprint. Gould in particular is influenced by both, and he adapts them efficiently to his medium. *Love Given O're* adds to the gender debate by its many portraits of women, which create women as death-bringing uncontrollable monsters. His

writing at once attempts to encode and define women and shows a lack of success in this attempt, as women prove themselves outside his control and ability to define. A central idea in Gould's expression of male sexuality is the idea that men must not be confined by marriage and that any association with women, however much desired, endangers men's sexual, physical and spiritual existence. The poem is a clever, vigorous and witty example of the development of misogynist satire and images of women.

The sedate and matter-of-fact style of Sprint's sermon is a vivid contrast to Gould's frenzied writing. *The Bride-Womans Counseller* adds biblical justifications of male dominance to the debate. It is representative of the attitudes towards women that control them by enforcing their subordination through an uncompromising and selective reading of the Bible. Sprint's emphasis of man's roles divides the sexes at a fundamental level by denying women inherent equality and explaining gender roles on the basis of an archaic but pervasive myth. The two men confer an unshakeable ascendancy on men through two different but equally rigid means.

Three feminisms develop from the three women writers, each with similarities, but also subtle differences. Sarah Egerton attacks men directly, responding to Gould's satire by creating stereotypes of male lust, pride and inconstancy, and enlarging upon the significance of chastity for women and rejecting sexual relationships with men in her alternative of the single life for women. Eugenia's argument differs considerably firstly because it is very much a response to Sprint, so many comments are confined to her rebuttal of this text; secondly, she is more involved with criticising Sprint's argument than in advancing her own. Despite this, we are able gradually to build up a picture of her views of men and marriage and her alternative view from her oblique criticisms of the present state of affairs. Eugenia's awareness of male authority and authority over language and women's exclusion leads her to criticise Sprint's interpretations and his standing as a parson. While not directly arguing that women should be given equal power, Eugenia simply assumes this by offering her own readings of biblical texts and metaphors. Chudleigh's feminism focuses on the four issues of male desire, marriage, education and women's self-expression.

Perhaps the most sustained feminist writer, she directly targets the double-expectations of the patriarchy and its consequences for women. She also explicitly indicates her understanding of the arbitrariness of men's power and their exclusion of women from these sources. All in all, our readings of the two misogynist texts must be enlightened by the three feminist responses which illuminate both our socio-historical knowledge of men's and women's relations in the late seventeenth century, and show the complex relationships that many metaphors and similes commonly used can have to one another and the power they have to change and be changed.

Women's rejection of male constructions amounts to a refusal to conform to codes of confinement which men were using to justify their own ideologies, myths, culture and representations of themselves and the world. The constructions written by these women explore possible alternatives (Lucretia, companionate marriages, education, single life) and assert a belief in women's value denied them in the texts by Gould and Sprint.

Late seventeenth-century men and women engaged in a series of very frank discussions in which we find aspects of men's and women's expectations and cultures exposed. Gender issues seem to have been largely divided into areas of experience and power, and the debates concentrate on defining and redefining them. As one feminist critic has observed, feminism in the twentieth century emphasises the need to *re*-create, *re*-define, *re*-write and above all to *re*-vise the tradition of Western culture (Gilbert, 32).[1] In the works of these three women writers, we see them not only revising, recreating and rewriting gender relations, but also looking ahead to create new alternatives for women.

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[1] Sandra M. Gilbert, "What do Feminist Critics Want?: A Postcard from the Volcano," in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed., Elaine Showalter, (London: Virago, 1986): 29-45.

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