NEW TRANSCULTURALISMS, 1400–1800

Gender and Cultural Mediation in the Long Eighteenth Century

Women across Borders

Edited by
MÓNICA BOLUFER · LAURA GUINOT-FERRI
CAROLINA BLUTRACH

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New Transculturalisms, 1400–1800

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Mónica Bolufer · Laura Guinot-Ferri ·
Carolina Blutrach
Editors

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Editors
Mónica Bolufer
University of Valencia
Valencia, Spain

Laura Guinot-Ferri
University of Valencia
Valencia, Spain

Carolina Blutrach
University of Valencia
Valencia, Spain

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Praise for *Gender and Cultural Mediation in the Long Eighteenth Century*

"*Gender and Cultural Mediation in the Long Eighteenth Century* constitutes a major contribution to the field of Eighteenth-Century Studies, women writers and cultural mediators. It thoroughly changes our perspective on how the Enlightenment functioned and how ideas moved. A prime example of multidisciplinary research, it deftly combines transmedia studies, translation studies, cultural studies, book history, and material culture to document platforms of exchange and interaction among women that reflected new forms of sociability and the circulation of knowledge beyond elite spaces. In his ground-breaking *Placing the Enlightenment*, Charles Withers' intention to chart enlightened flows of knowledge through the geography of Enlightenment is fulfilled in this volume and expanded by adding the dimension of gender. The new knowledge about the long eighteenth century produced here forces us to confront old tropes and revisit studies and assumptions that have been proven to be erroneous. This book is destined to become a classic and a beacon."

—Clorinda Donato, *author,* The Life and Legend of Catterina Vizzani: Sexual Identity, Science, and Sensationalism in Eighteenth-Century Italy and England *(2020); coeditor,* Translation and Transfer of Knowledge in Encyclopedic Compilations, 1680–1830 *(2021)*

"*Gender and Cultural Mediation in the Long Eighteenth Century* makes an important contribution to the expanding field of transnational studies, bringing women into a discussion of the European Enlightenment that has long been dominated by studies of the production by and relationships among male intellectuals. The scholarship in this collection represents some of the highest quality work in the field. It takes the field forward by focusing on women as central to the transnational and transatlantic circulation of texts. Recent research has asserted the importance of seeing the Enlightenment as a global, not merely a European, phenomenon. In particular, the chapters that engage Spanish America speak directly to this new understanding of the Enlightenment and complicate the research by integrating women into a transatlantic intellectual framework. The collection also makes an important contribution with its many chapters on Spanish and Italian women, as the scholarship on the Enlightenment has largely focused on English and northern European women, often marginalizing the contributions of women from southern Europe."

—Allyson Poska, *author,* Gendered Crossings: Women and Migration in the Spanish Empire *(2016); coeditor,* Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe *(2013)*

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Mónica Bolufer is Professor of Modern History at the University of Valencia. A specialist in discourses on gender, politeness, sensibility and the self, travel narratives and women's writing in the eighteenth century, her current research interests are the circulation of debates on gender, and languages of feeling in transatlantic correspondence. Her most recent monographs are *Arte y artificio de la vida en común* (Marcial Pons, 2019) and *Mujeres y hombres en la Historia. Una propuesta historiográfica y docente* (Comares, 2018). She has co-edited *The Routledge Companion to the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Routledge, 2020), in collaboration with Elizabeth F. Lewis and Catherine M. Jaffe, and *European Modernity and the Passionate South. Gender and Nation in Spain and Italy in the long Nineteenth Century* (Brill, 2023), with Xavier Andreu. She is currently Principal Investigator of CIRGEN: *Circulating Gender in the Global Enlightenment. Ideas, Networks, Agencies* (ERC2017-AdG 787015).

Laura Guinot-Ferri is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Project CIRGEN: *Circulating Gender in the Global Enlightenment. Ideas, Networks, Agencies* (ERC2017-AdG 787015) (University of Valencia). She obtained her Ph.D. in 2019 with a research on the intersection between women's studies, history of medicine and the history of religious practices. She is the author of *Mujeres y santidad: sanadoras por mediación divina. Un*

estudio desde la microhistoria (siglos XVII y XVIII) (Comares, 2021). Her current research is focused on the circulation of books "for women" and in the contrast between imagined female readerships and actual readers, as well as in the role of women as cultural mediators. On this topic, she is the co-editor with Carolina Blutrach of the special issue *Agencia y mediación cultural en femenino: bibliotecas, correspondencia y redes transnacionales en los siglos XVII y XVIII* (*Arenal. Revista de Historia de las Mujeres* 2022).

Carolina Blutrach works as Postdoctoral Researcher at the ERC Project CIRGEN (ERC AdG 787015) at the University of Valencia (Spain). She received her Ph.D. in History and Civilization from the European University Institute in Florence (2009). She works on the social and cultural history of the European aristocracy in the early modern period (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries). She is the author of the monograph *El III Conde de Fernán Núñez (1644–1721). Vida y memoria de un hombre práctico* (2014), co-editor with Laura Guinot-Ferri of a special issue on *Agencia y mediación cultural en femenino: bibliotecas, correspondencia y redes transnacionales en los siglos XVII y XVIII* (2022), editor of *El viaje y su memoria en la construcción de identidades siglos XVI–XIX* (2016) and co-editor with Giulia Calvi of *Sibling Relations and Family History: Conflicts, Co-operation and Gender Roles in the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (2010), among other publications.

Contributors

Mirella Agorni is Associate Professor at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. Her main publications include: *Translating Italy for the Eighteenth Century: Women, Translation and Travel Writing* (Routledge, 2002/ 2014); *Translating Italy for the Nineteenth Century: Translation and an Imagined Nation in the Early Romantic Period 1816–1830s* (Peter Lang, 2021). Together with Giuseppe De Bonis, she has recently edited *Collaboration in Translation: from Training to Platforms and Publishing* Betwixt Series, Loffredo 2022. She is PI of the national project DIETALY on the English-language institutional tourism promotion of Italy as a destination for international visitors over the past 100 years. She has just completed the project of making Prof. Jean Delisle's archive on the history of translation accessible.

Patrizia Delpiano is full Professor of early modern history at the University of Turin, Department of Cultures, Politics, Society. She is the author of *Church and Censorship in Eighteenth-Century Italy. Governing Reading in the Age of Enlightenment* (Routledge, 2018; 1st Italian edition 2007); *La schiavitù in età moderna* (Laterza, 2009; Arabic translation Kalima 2012); *Liberi di scrivere. La battaglia per la stampa nell'età dei Lumi* (Laterza, 2015). She is the co-editor of *Les journaux savants dans l'Europe des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, "Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences" (2013, with J. Peiffer and M. Conforti); *Il Settecento e la religione* (Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2018, with M. Formica and A. M. Rao) and the editor of *Enlightenment and Extra-European Cultures* in *Diciottesimo secolo*, 2022.

Amélie Jaques is Doctoral Student at the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and KU Leuven, where she conducts research on the shaping of female authorship and authority in Enlightenment Europe and the strategic use of multilingualism in life writing. Her first research results (on the use of multilingualism in the letters of the eighteenth-century French writer and translator Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni) have appeared in *Orbis Litterarum.*

Anthony J. La Vopa is Professor Emeritus of History at North Carolina State University. He is a scholar of the Enlightenment interested in intellectual biography, historiography and the social and cultural history of ideas. His most recent books are *Enlightenment Past and Present: Essays in the Social History of Ideas* (2022) and *The Labor of the Mind: Intellect and Gender in Enlightenment Cultures* (2017); earlier books include *Fichte: The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1762–1799* (2001), and *Grace, Talent, and Merit: Poor Students, Clerical Careers, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (1991). With Lawrence E. Klein, he has co-edited *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850.* He is also the co-editor of the journal *Modern Intellectual History* and the global book series "Palgrave/Macmillan Studies in Intellectual and Cultural History".

Elizabeth Franklin Lewis is Professor of Spanish and Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Mary Washington, USA, specialising in women and gender in Spain's Enlightenment period. She is the author of *Women Writers in the Spanish Enlightenment*

(Ashgate, 2004) and the co-editor with Catherine Jaffe of *Eve's Enlightenment: Women's Experience in Spain and Spanish America, 1726–1839* (LSU Press, 2009) and with Mónica Bolufer Peruga and Catherine Jaffe of *The Routledge Companion to the Hispanic Enlightenment* (2020).

Mariselle Meléndez is Professor of Colonial Latin American Literatures and Cultures and LAS Alumni Distinguished Professorial Scholar at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is the author of *Deviant and Useful Citizens: The Cultural Production of the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Peru* (2011; reprinted in 2021); *Raza, género e hibridez en El lazarillo de ciegos caminantes* (1999), and the co-editor of *Mapping Colonial Spanish America: Places and Commonplaces of Identity, Culture, and Experience* (2002). Her articles have appeared in journals such as *Latin American Research Review, Colonial Latin American Review, Revista Iberoamericana*, among others.

Alicia C. Montoya is Professor of French Literature and Culture at Radboud University, The Netherlands. From 2016 to 2022, she was the Principal Investigator of the European Research Council-funded MEDIATE project that produced a major Open Access bibliometric database of eighteenth-century private library catalogues (www.mediate18.nl). She is the author of *Medievalist Enlightenment: From Charles Perrault to Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Cambridge, 2013), *Marie-Anne Barbier et la tragédie post-classique* (Paris, 2007) and the co-editor of several volumes, including *La pensée sérielle, du Moyen Age aux Lumières* (Leiden, 2019), *Women Writing Back/Writing Back Women: Transnational Perspectives from the Late Middle Ages to the Dawn of the Modern Era* (Leiden, 2010) and *Lumières et histoire/Enlightenment and History* (Paris, 2010).

Elisavet Papalexopoulou is Ph.D. Candidate at the European University Institute. Her research focuses on Intellectual History with an emphasis on gender. She has been one of the organisers of the Intellectual History Working Group at the EUI. At the moment, she is writing her Ph.D. titled: "Tracing the 'political' in women's work: Women of Letters in the Greek cultural space 1800–1832". She has published an article in the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* on the topic of her dissertation and another one on conceptions of space in the Greek revolution will be published soon in the Journal *Historein*.

Silvia Sebastiani is Professor of early modern history at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris. A specialist of the Scottish Enlightenment, she works on the questions of race, gender, animality and history writing. She is the author of *The Scottish Enlightenment. Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (Palgrave, 2013; Italian edition: Il Mulino, 2008) and the co-author, with Jean-Frédéric Schaub, of *Race et histoire dans les sociétés occidentales (15e-18e siècle)* (Albin Michel, 2021). She is now completing a book on the boundaries of humanity in the Enlightenment, focusing on how the great apes contributed to the shaping of human and social sciences.

Luisa Simonutti is Research Director in the history of philosophy at the Italian National Research Council (CNR) in Milan. Her interests cover different aspects of seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century philosophy and religion, in thinkers such as Spinoza, Locke and other figures. She focuses on translation and philosophy, and on the cultural transfer between Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. She is the editor of numerous books, including *Barbarie in età moderna e contemporanea* (FrancoAngeli, 2018), *John Locke: les idées et les choses. Avec le manuscrit inédit "Notes upon Mr. John Lock's Essay"* (Mimesis, 2019), *Locke and Biblical Hermeneutics. Conscience and Scripture* (Springer, 2019) and *Spinoza en Angleterre. Sciences et réflexions sur les sciences* (Brepols, 2022).

Lieke van Deinsen is tenure-track (research) Professor of Dutch historical literature at the KU Leuven. She conducts research on the visual and textual representations of female authorship and authority in early modern Europe. In 2017, she completed her Ph.D. on processes of literary canon formation (*Literaire erflaters. Canonvorming in tijden van culturele crisis* 2017). As the Rijksmuseum's Johan Huizinga Fellow, she published *The Panpoëticon Batavûm. The Portrait of the Author as a Celebrity* (2016).

Beatrijs Vanacker is Assistant Professor of French Literature and Translation Studies at KU Leuven, where she teaches and conducts research on the transnational spread of the novel, periodicals and women writers in the eighteenth century as well as on translation theory and history. She published widely on these topics in (a.o.) *Translation Studies, Études françaises, Orbis Litterarum and Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, and co-edited *Portraits and Poses. Female Intellectual Authority, Agency and Authorship in Early Modern Europe* with Lieke van Deinsen (LUP, 2022).

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CHAPTER 1

Towards a Gendered, Decentred History of Cultural Mediation in the Eighteenth Century

Mónica Bolufer and Laura Guinot-Ferri

> [My] journey has been useful to me. The variety of people and the variety of mores have considerably increased the number of my ideas, and (if I may say this without embarrassment) have corrected many errors of my imagination, to the great profit of my heart.
>
> —Leonor de Almeida Portugal, marquise of Alorna, letter to her sister, 21 June 1780 (in Anastácio 2017, 135)

> Geography is an area of study both enjoyable and useful for people of all kinds, since it enables them to discern the size and division of the world from the comfort of their own homes … It is not enough to know where a place may be – it is far more important to know what is unusual about

M. Bolufer (✉) · L. Guinot-Ferri
University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain
e-mail: monica.bolufer@uv.es

L. Guinot-Ferri
e-mail: Laura.guinot@uv.es

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it and how its people's customs may vary from those of other places. This can be learned by reading travel writings that entertain and instruct at the same time.

—Josefa Amar y Borbón (1994 [1790], 182–83)

Crossing Borders: Concepts, Actors and Geographies

With these words, two eighteenth-century women who led very different lives despite being almost exact contemporaries make plain the significant place held by travel and learning about the world in their respective experiences. The former, Leonor de Almeida Portugal (1750–1839), Countess of Oeynhausen and Marquise of Alorna, was born in Lisbon, married a German diplomat and lived abroad most of her life: in Vienna, Madrid and London. The latter, Spanish intellectual Josefa Amar y Borbón (1749–1833), was born in provincial Zaragoza and never ventured out of peninsular Spain, unlike her brother and her son, both of whom served in the Bourbon administration in Spanish America. She was, however, an avid reader and translator of travel narratives, and recommended them to women as pleasurable and useful reading matter that would expand their mental horizons beyond those of their daily lives (Bolufer 2016, 235–37).

In the eighteenth century, European horizons in general were expanding both literally and metaphorically. Improved communications, an intensification of both domestic and long-distance diplomatic, military, cultural and recreational travels, an exponential surge in publications, including increasing numbers of translations and travel narratives, the development of global commerce (and slavery), as well as of transnational and transoceanic networks linking academies, societies and individuals, all of these contributed to a shared feeling of a densely interconnected world. What part did women play in these processes and, more generally, how were the latter shaped according to local, regional and social settings? What restrictions and obstacles remained, and how were these negotiated?

This book helps answer those questions and advance current scholarship in three main ways. Firstly, it gives us a more intricate knowledge of the transnational developments of debates on gender which, in the eighteenth century, often took the form of discussions on female "nature", education and roles (with men seen either as embodying

universal humanity, or as the implicit opposite against which women were measured). Secondly, it expands our visions of the gendered dimensions of cultural mediation, with an emphasis on the circulation of written culture in different formats and genres (correspondence, travel narratives, novels and short stories, historical and philosophical essays, periodicals, operas and plays), as well as on printed portraits. It pays particular attention to female cultural mediators: women writers, translators, travellers and readers. However, it also considers male agents of mediation (writers, translators, correspondents; secondarily, printers, booksellers, reviewers) with reference to their relations with women or their participation in debates on gender. Finally, it decentres our perspectives on Enlightenment cultural geographies by emphasising cultural transfers within Southern Europe, between Southern Europe and the rest of Europe, and between Europe and the Americas.

Our aim is to bring together two stimulating but thus far relatively discrete strands of eighteenth-century studies. On the one hand, the current focus on processes of circulation and adaptation of ideas, objects and transcultural practices (reading, writing, translation, sociability, travel, correspondence, consumption) has led to an emphasis on the transnational and global dimensions of the Enlightenment (Kontler 2006; Withers 2007; Conrad 2012; Brewer and Sebastiani 2014) and even to its consideration as an "event in the history of mediation" (Siskin and Warner 2010, 1). This line of research, however, has barely touched on questions of gender (Bolufer and Serrano 2022; Sebastiani 2008, 2023). On the other hand, studies on women's central role in eighteenth-century cultural life as authors, translators, readers and patrons, as well as research into the importance of gender in Enlightenment thought, have genuinely transformed the very interpretation of the Enlightenment (La Vopa 2008), but have until recently developed from primarily national perspectives.[1] Both these strands of eighteenth-century studies have, moreover, tended to omit the South of Europe (Italy, Portugal, Greece) and the Hispanic world (peninsular as well as colonial). While

[1] On women and gender in eighteenth-century France, see among many other studies those of Steinbrügge (1987), Goodman (1994), Hesse (2001), special issue "Femmes et Lumières" (*Dix-huitième siècle*, 2004), Krieff and André (2015). In Britain and Scotland: O'Brien (2009), Sebastiani (2013). In Spain and Spanish America: Bolufer (1998), Jaffe and Lewis (2009). In Italy: Messbarger (2002), Findlen et al. (2009), Brambilla (2013), Brambilla and Jacobson Schutte (2014). In Germany: Bödeker and Steinbrügge (2001).

more research into all these territories from the perspective of gender has accumulated in recent decades, in different languages and to varying extents depending on the territory, it has been insufficiently integrated—other than in the form of singular cases or notable exceptions—into general surveys of the period.

The essay collections *Conceptualising Woman in Enlightenment Thought* (Bödeker and Steinbrügge 2001) and *Women, Gender, and the Enlightenment* (Knott and Taylor 2005) were pioneering attempts at transnational dialogues which, although still favouring France and Britain, did at least gesture towards incorporating other territories (Germany, British America; to a lesser extent Italy, Spain, The Netherlands) so as to offer a broader picture. Subsequent studies of Enlightenment debates on gender have concentrated on translations into other languages of either French or British works.[2] Approaches that look at intertwined discussions and multiple connections remain infrequent: Anthony La Vopa's fascinating study of personal and intellectual friendships connecting women and men of the French, British and Scottish Enlightenment is a rare accomplishment (La Vopa 2017).

For its part, the incipient but steadily growing scholarship on the transnational dimensions of women's cultural agency has tended to focus on female writers' activities and networks. Women's contributions to the Republic of Letters have only recently begun to be considered from a transnational perspective: in collaborative projects such as COST Action *Women Writers in History* (and the subsequent series published by Brill), and in several book collections and monographs.[3] The main focus has been on how female authors (particularly French) were received abroad, with some attention paid to other roles such as those of *salonnière* or patron.[4] Women's activities as translators during the eighteenth century,

[2] See, for example, Moran (2005), Lee (2014), Kirkley (2022). Dubois-Nayt et al. (2016), the last of four volumes on the *querelle des femmes* in France (considered the epicentre of the debate) from the fifteenth century to eighteenth century looks at French influence on other countries, with some focus on the role played by works of the sixteenth and seventeenth (but not eighteenth) centuries originally published elsewhere.

[3] Fidecaro et al. (2009). See also other collaborative projects such as HERA *Travelling Texts. Circulating Women's Writings on the Fringes of Europe* (https://travellingtexts.huygens.knaw.nl/) and *EDULUM. Éducatrices et Lumières: l'exemple de Mme Leprince de Beaumon* (https://hal.univ-lorraine.fr/EDULUM-UL/).

[4] Dow (2007) focuses on literary translation by women or of women's works from French to English or English to French, with one Spanish translation, but no Portuguese,

a subject of growing interest, have been studied above all in relation to literary and scientific translations by or from British and French authors or translators, again with little acknowledgement of research on Spanish, Italian and Portuguese women translators.[5]

Other types of female cultural mediation across frontiers have received substantially less attention than has the work of women writers and translators. Scholarship on women travellers has grown steadily, expanding from what was previously an almost exclusive interest in nineteenth-century women explorers to include earlier and more varied cases. However, with a small number of exceptions, it has tended to concentrate on British women's travel experiences and writings, looking at how they roamed the British empire and beyond, contributing to the construction of "imperial gazes"; or how they participated in the Grand Tour, previously reserved to their male peers (Pratt 1992; Dutta 2019; Brilli and Neri 2020; O'Loughlin 2020; Krueger 2021). The perspectives of women travellers and mediators from other cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds, if still less studied, are more familiar today: for example, women rulers, queen consorts, ladies-in-waiting and female ambassadors crossing dynastic, linguistic and religious borders; or nuns venturing across the Atlantic and the Pacific.[6] Other dynamic areas of research include women's roles in consumption and collecting practices, the forced migration of female slaves and their cross-cultural roles, and the gendered politics of evangelising missions.[7] While different from the objectives of

Italian or Latin American translators or authors. Cheek (2019) addresses the emergence of "women's writing" as a transnational category of identity for women of letters in France, Britain, Germany and The Netherlands.

[5] Essays in Leduc (2012) discuss women translators, mediators, travellers and feminists from the fifteenth century to the twentieth century; those on the eighteenth century deal mostly with French and secondarily with British and Eastern European (notably Russian) cases, with just one Spanish example. On Italian women translators, see Agorni (2014), Bertucci (2013); on Spain, Bolufer (2017), García Garrosa (2022); on Portugal, Bello Vázquez (2013) and Anastácio (2017).

[6] On mobility and mediations of queens, female aristocrats and diplomats' wives, see Watanabe-O'Kelly and Morton (2016), Palos and Sánchez (2016), Sluga and James (2016), Anastácio (2017), Blutrach (2022, 2023), Guinot-Ferri (2022). On nuns' experiences (better documented for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than for the eighteenth), see Rogers and Thébaud (2008), Owens (2017), and Baranda and Cruz (2018).

[7] See, for example, Strobel and Germann (2016), Leis and Wills (2021), Morgan (2021), Dorlin (2006).

this volume, these point to a growing interest in the roles of women and gender in diverse forms of cultural mediation, as well as underlining the still patchy advancements of a field of learning that remains far more developed for the British world than for other territories.

Histories of women's reading, including the development of the new commodity of literature "for women", exist in abundance for France and Britain, and to a lesser extent for Italy and the Spanish empire, and for the most part adopt national approaches (Brouard-Arends 2003; Knight et al. 2018; Plebani 2001; Arias de Saavedra Alías 2017; Castañeda et al. 2004). There are hardly any comparative studies covering, for instance, exchanges within Catholic Southern Europe, whose territories are linked by strong cultural ties. Some research has been done into readers' networks and connections bridging the Atlantic, but primarily with regard to Britain and North America (Brayman Hackel and Kelly 2008). This mirrors the general trend in Atlantic history written in English, which has until recently restricted its horizons to the British Atlantic.

The move in Atlantic history towards the south, that is, towards the Spanish and Portuguese world, already perceptible in imperial history and the history of science (Aram and Yun-Casalilla 2014; Yun-Casalilla 2019; Pimentel and Pardo-Tomás 2017), will gain much from incorporating greater attention to gender. For its part, scholarship on women and gender in peninsular Spain and in Hispanic America, to some extent treated in isolation from one another, has just started to read these experiences in parallel and still needs to look more closely at transoceanic transfers (Morant 2005; Jaffe and Lewis 2009; Díaz and Quispe-Agnoli 2018; Lewis et al. 2020). For instance, while more is now known about women's roles in transoceanic migration and family correspondence across the Spanish Atlantic and Pacific than was the case some years ago, much remains to be discovered about, for example, their participation in knowledge circulation and in intellectual, cultural and religious networks, particularly in the late colonial period.[8]

[8] See, for example, Martínez Pérez (2021), Sánchez Rubio and Testón Núñez (2019), Gutiérrez (2018), Rey (2021), Poska (2016), Premo (2010, 2017). Cruz and Hernández (2011) and Baranda and Cruz (2018) cover sixteenth- and seventeenth-century peninsular Spain and Spanish America; the latter examines the transatlantic circulation of women's travel narratives, hagiographies and spiritual autobiographies in that period; O'Phelan and Salazar-Soler (2005) consider male cross-cultural mediators.

Our book draws on recent calls for further cross-fertilisation between transnational and global approaches and those of women's and gender history, and takes said approaches in new directions, with a particular focus on travel, translation and book circulation.[9] It explores, on a scale not previously attempted for the eighteenth century, the ways in which notions of gender circulated and were transformed, hybridised and creatively appropriated. In so doing, it contributes to a more inclusive global history which critically interrogates the cultural geographies of the Enlightenment and the symbolic configurations of centres and peripheries, by exploring the relationships and tensions, crucial to modernity, between the local, the "national" and the "cosmopolitan", and considering how those were defined in gendered terms.[10] More particularly, it aims to place Southern Europe and the Hispanic world at the centre of those debates. While the Enlightenment in those territories has unquestionably been marginalised in international (particularly English-speaking) historiography, becoming in Karen Stolley's words "a scholarly blind spot in discussions of the global Enlightenment", it cannot be considered marginal.[11] The Enlightenment developed there, as elsewhere, through the creative exchange and active interplay of ideas both received from abroad and locally elaborated (Withers 2007, 37).

This book itself crosses borders at different levels. It establishes dialogues between disciplines, as our authors are experts in different fields, with all their methodological plurality: cultural, intellectual and gender history, philosophy, literary criticism, translation and visual studies. We also move between different national academic traditions. The essays draw

[9] Wiesner-Hanks (2015) approaches the exchanges of texts and images across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean in a wider chronology, with some essays dealing with the eighteenth century. Campbell and Larsen (2009) is an important collection focusing on women in cross-national communities of letters, ranging from Italy and France to the Low Countries and England.

[10] Theoretical and methodological discussions of the synergies between global and transnational history and women's and gender history include, among others, Calvi (2009) and Wiesner-Hanks (2011); for Enlightenment studies, see Bolufer and Serrano (2022).

[11] Stolley (2020, 17). On the specificity of the Hispanic Enlightenment and its exclusion from general surveys of the movement, see Butterwick et al. (2008), Astigarraga (2015), Lewis et al. (2020) (particularly Bolufer 2020 and Stolley 2020), Cañizares-Esguerra (2001), Escamilla (2010). Pagden (2013) mentions just one eighteenth-century Spanish writer, Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, but in the preface to the Spanish edition of his book acknowledges the need for the Hispanic Enlightenment to be studied in greater depth.

on a rich, varied and multilingual scholarship that has been brewing in Europe and the Americas in recent decades. References to primary and secondary sources in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, German, Greek (and Latin) are eloquent proof of that diversity. No matter what its geographical span and ambitions, research based exclusively on scholarship produced in a single language can never convincingly claim to be transnational or global. The territories covered embrace Europe and colonial America, with a particular—but not exclusive—emphasis on Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece) and the Hispanic empire; although we have not been able to include a specific essay on Portugal and Brazil, both receive attention within these pages. We also touch on other European and non-European spaces inhabited, traversed or reflected upon by the protagonists of our stories (France, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey).

We are very much aware of the challenges involved in efforts to go beyond the narrow focus of national and often also Eurocentric or parochial histories and instead write global, transnational, Atlantic, intermingled or connected histories (*histoires croisées*) whose interest lies in mobility and circulation (of ideas, objects and people) and in forms of cultural mixing. We are also persuaded of the need for conceptual precision and historical accuracy when speaking of processes of cultural circulation or mixing, and their results in terms of adaptation, hybridity, syncretism or resistance (Wiesner-Hanks 2011, 358; Burke 2009). To conceptualise these processes, we have chosen to use the encompassing notion of mediation in our title. We agree with other scholars that it better captures the active role of a plurality of agents (in our case, writers, translators, reviewers and adaptors, printers, booksellers, correspondents, travellers) in cultural exchanges than do other, more abstract terms such as reception or circulation which, in some uses, seem to imply unilateral movement or passive imitation and reproduction. Also, as has been stressed in recent discussions, this notion helps us move beyond the usual focus on bilateral exchanges between two languages or cultures and visualise "plural and multidirectional forms of transfer both within and between cultures" (Verschaffel et al. 2014, 1259). However, we have chosen not to impose a unitarian conceptual framework on the volume as a whole. Many of our contributors speak of cultural mediation, and of their characters as mediators, while others speak of book circulation, cultural transfers, reception, negotiation and adaptation, or

combine several of these categories in their analyses.[12] Nuances notwithstanding, what matters is that we all consider the processes behind these concepts as forms of creative appropriation, which result in cultural products that are not mere reproductions but hybrids. Knowledge is always transformed as it circulates, and reception (through reading, watching, listening, translating) is never a passive act, nor is it ever homogeneous or entirely predictable.[13] At the same time, these processes are framed in precise historical contexts and restricted by material and cultural obstacles and limits.

Translation is a crucial concept in this book—our focus on it inspired by the ways in which new understandings of culture and gender have challenged and extended traditional notions of this form of reworking. We approach it both as a specific literary practice—part of a wide range of writing activities (borrowing, rewriting, plagiarism)—and as a metaphor for complex processes of collective and individual adaptation and transfer of ideas, aesthetics and culture (including material culture). It is therefore connected to notions of collaboration, adaptation, negotiation, as well as to travel (the movement of both people and ideas) and transposition. The particular dynamism associated with translation in the eighteenth century—as versions of texts moving from one language to others multiplied and transnational commerce of books flourished—makes it an activity that characterised the cosmopolitan spirit of the Enlightenment. Translation also exemplifies the gendered dimensions of intellectual life, literary production and distribution, reading and the making of audiences/readerships.[14]

All those gendered forms of mediation were not only transnational and multilingual, but also crucially connected to local material, social, political and cultural circumstances. We assume that ideas do not circulate in the void, but through personal contacts and material objects. The essays

[12] See, among an abundance of sources: on knowledge or literary circulation (Roberts 2009; Raj 2013; Mulholland 2018); on appropriation (Withers 2007, 36). Comparative discussions of these and other concepts can be found in Johns (2014, 1–2), Burke (2005,101–8).

[13] An interesting proposal for addressing knowledge circulation in the eighteenth century from a decentred perspective can be found in Kontler et al. (2014).

[14] On translation in the eighteenth century, see Oz-Salzberger (2006), Stockhorst (2010). An influential classic in translation theory is Bassnett (2014). For more on cultural translation in historical studies, see Burke and Po-chia (2007) and Burke (2005, 103).

included here explore some of the multiple, material channels for cultural transfer—print circulation, travel, translation, correspondence and sociability—and consider a diversity of written and iconographic sources, from travel narratives, novels, philosophical essays, moral and pedagogical works and manuscript letters to engraved portraits. Several of our authors are inspired by the cultural history of the book and also by more recent attention to materiality as a corrective to the sometimes overly text-based approaches influenced by the linguistic turn (Wharton 2018). For example, they consider the physicality of printed materials (formats, qualities, sizes) that point at specific dissemination strategies and target readerships (scholarly, aristocratic, middlebrow, popular).

We understand the Enlightenment, building on an extensive scholarship on its multiple, global, contextualised and material forms, not exclusively or primarily as a doctrinal whole, but as a set of cultural and communication practices which had a pragmatic dimension and were the result of embodied activities, displayed by socially and spatially situated actors.[15] In considering the agency of those actors, we take into account the different positions in configurations of power from which they exerted their mediation. However, we try to qualify clear-cut dichotomies (male/female, metropolitan/colonial, author/translator…) in favour of more nuanced, contextualised approaches. We also consider obstacles to circulation, conflicts generated by mediation, for instance the power of censorship, the social boundaries posed by low literacy levels or diverging language competences, and technical limitations such as the uneven distribution of printing presses. To quote Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "as we examine historical examples of border-crossers and border-transcenders …, it is equally important to remind ourselves of the continued power of those borders" (Wiesner-Hanks 2011, 378–79).

Chronologically, our book travels from the origins of the Enlightenment in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to the merging of Enlightenment and Romantic threads in the first decades of the nineteenth century. This periodisation is coherent with our perspective seeking to problematise simple dichotomies between modernity and tradition, and the idea of "backwardness" or "retarded" cultural processes, especially applied to Southern Europe and the Hispanic world. A less compartmentalised view of the transitions from Baroque to Enlightenment, and on

[15] Discussions of scholarship on the Enlightenment can be found in Pagden (2013), Bolufer (2003), Outram (1995), Jordanova and Hulme (1990).

again to Romanticism and nationalism, allows us to consider the different timings at which, and the variegated ways in which, values, ideals and aesthetic forms blended and were combined, rather than simply replacing one another, in diverse cultural and political landscapes. It also brings to the fore the multiple ways in which Enlightenment legacies were revisited, appropriated, reshaped and contested well into the nineteenth century.

In terms of geographic scope, the essays adopt transnational and global perspectives. Transnational not in the sense of relations between nation-states (anachronistic in terms of the eighteenth century), but in the sense of individuals, books and ideas moving between imagined communities (defined in linguistic, political or religious senses), "across or between borders, and above or beyond them" (Wiesner-Hanks 2011, 358).[16] Global, because we look at mutual exchanges between the two Atlantic shores, peninsular and American, of the Hispanic (and to some extent, the Portuguese) empire, which for obvious reasons do not fall into the category of "transnational" connections, as they involved territories that were part of the same monarchy and shared a common language (linguistic diversity both in peninsular Spain and in America notwithstanding). However, following the insights of works on knowledge circulation, we look at geographic specificity and "situatedness" (Raj 2016, 337) as well. That is, we combine interlocking scales ranging, where appropriate, from the local, regional or national to the global dimensions of the Enlightenment. We also consider overlapping contexts consisting of specific social and professional circles, communities of knowledge and practice: learned, middlebrow or even popular; aristocratic, polite, ecclesiastical; male, female or mixed.

We reject the idea of fixed and self-evident centres and peripheries or marginal spaces, already widely questioned in history and cultural studies (Raj 2016), but without ignoring the workings of power (political, economic, cultural) and resulting spatial hierarchies. The unequal configurations defined by geopolitics and economic and cultural dynamics meant that Spain, Portugal, Italy and the Greek-speaking territories were, by the eighteenth century, no longer playing the leading roles they had played in the past. We assume that the notion of centres and peripheries conveys, to a great extent, forms of consciousness and therefore ask which discourses, representations and practices help define certain places

[16] See an argument for using "transnational" in early modern history too in Yun-Casalilla (2007, 660; 2019, 53).

as central and others as peripheral, both in the eighteenth century and in modern historiography.[17] In relation to the cases most relevant to us, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece were perceived from Northwestern Europe, notably France and Britain—and to some extent by their own citizens—as having experienced decline from their respective and idealised golden ages: early colonial empires, the Renaissance, classical Greece and Rome. Concerns about backwardness weighed heavily, therefore, on the minds of eighteenth-century Southern European intellectuals. These preoccupations were expressed in reformist rhetoric and practice which were strongly gendered, as were the very notions of modernity and decadence in Enlightenment philosophy: gender norms and relations were considered indicative of the level of progress attained by each society, with those of Africa, Asia and America characterised by despotic treatment of women, Southern Europe stuck in an archaic past of domestic confinement, and North-Western Europe seen as the pinnacle of a modernity characterised by moderate government, commercial prosperity and complementarity between men and women (Andreu and Bolufer 2023).

We have made a deliberate point of incorporating views and voices from Spain, Italy, Greece, to some extent Portugal, and colonial Hispanic and Portuguese America. This perspective, infrequent in current scholarship, is both necessary and intellectually productive. Firstly, as explained above, because these areas are under-represented in general surveys both of Enlightenment and gender and of eighteenth-century circulation of ideas. Secondly, and more crucially, because such a vantage point offers a more comprehensive picture of Enlightenment practices and debates by adopting multipolar rather than bipolar approaches: a dynamic configuration of multiple centres, from Venice, including its former empire in the Ionian islands and the Balkans as a common, multilingual space and centre of intellectual activity, to the Atlantic as a vibrant channel of communication between peninsular Spain, Europe and Spanish America.

In line with not only the most recent trends in transnational history, but also a long-standing tradition in women's history and a revitalised biographical history full of transnational and interdisciplinary potential, we pay particular attention to the different actors involved in processes of cultural transfer and mediation. Drawing inspiration from recent

[17] For useful reflections on the concepts of centres and peripheries, their limits and their potential, see Burke (2005, 82–88) (for periphery as a form of consciousness, 85). See also de Vito (2019).

approaches that question the "ubiquitous association between intermediation and mobility" (Raj 2016, 45), we look both at individuals who travelled widely and at those who performed mediations from their own specific locations: female and male writers, translators, travellers, printers and artists (painters, engravers), but also booksellers, journalists, reviewers, readers and correspondents.[18] Some of our protagonists are well-known figures in intellectual and literary history (Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Isabelle de Charrière, María Rosa Gálvez), others are virtually forgotten despite having achieved a certain level of renown in their own time (Bianca Milesi, Maria Petrettini, Jacob Brucker), while others again are obscure or anonymous. We consider them as agents inserted in their intellectual, personal and family networks, displaying varying degrees of agency, facing limits and obstacles, both interacting with their multiple political, cultural and social contexts, and helping to shape them.

Gender and Cultural Mediation: An Overview of the Book

The book is organised in four parts. The first of these analyses how debate on gender was in the eighteenth century profoundly cosmopolitan in several complementary senses: because of its wide circulation and manifold appropriations, because of the interpretative ambition of its philosophical and historical schemes (which purported to embrace the progress of humanity as a whole) and because of the transnational experiences and readings of many of the women and men who participated in its discussions, which in turn played a part in shaping their visions of gender. The two central parts look at women of letters engaged in transnational, transatlantic and trans-Mediterranean mobility, whether of body or mind, through travel, linguistic and cultural translation, correspondence and image circulation. The final part of the book interrogates women's involvement as target audiences, reading publics and library owners or users in transnational processes of knowledge dissemination.

The three chapters in Part I ("Discussing Gender in Transnational and Transatlantic Settings") show how in the eighteenth century the debate

[18] For inspiring discussions of the heuristic potential of so-called global biographies, see Cossart (2013) and Pons (2013).

on women's moral and intellectual capacities, continuing and modifying the centuries-long *querelle des femmes*, reached unprecedented heights of popularity and dissemination via all sorts of printed and manuscript formats. Its transnational dimension also expanded hugely, thanks to a vast number of translations and adaptations. Texts were circulated, adapted, targeted or challenged in diverse locations, through processes not of unilateral diffusion and passive reception, but of creative transformation, hybridisation and sometimes contestation. Mónica Bolufer analyses how a seminal Spanish essay, Benito Jerónimo Feijoo's *Defensa de las mujeres* (Defence of women, 1726), travelled across Europe and America. She traces its multiple translations into French, Italian, Portuguese and English, and the comments and appropriations it sparked in Europe and America, starting in its author's lifetime and continuing into the early nineteenth century. Those adaptations and echoes reveal in fascinating fashion how works can be rewritten, recontextualised and reframed across time and space by various agents (translators, printers, booksellers, patrons), both textually and materially (through different publishing formats and marketing strategies). These multiple adaptations therefore allow for a multicentred understanding of Enlightenment debates of gender, one that goes beyond the usual focus on the unilateral, radial dissemination and influence of French works. Although many of Feijoo's contemporaries found it paradoxical that a religious writer from Catholic, supposedly backward Spain, might argue for gender intellectual and moral equality, the fact that the portrait of the author (widely disseminated in Spain and America) was not included in any of the translations perhaps helped make the essay, symbolically speaking, a blank page on which different meanings could be inscribed.

Debates about gender did indeed travel across borders and circulate at a broad transnational level. Women and gender were absolutely key, for instance, to the historiographical revolution of the Enlightenment, as Silvia Sebastiani reminds us in her analysis of the works of Scottish historians and philosophers Adam Smith, David Hume, John Millar and Lord Kames. The new Enlightenment histories tracing the allegedly universal process of civilisation, that is, the evolution of mankind through successive stages of economic, social, cultural and moral development, placed women at their centre. In so doing, they laid the foundations of what today we call gender history, by historicising the role of women as civilisers of male manners and feelings and as agents of commerce, politeness and taste. Earlier studies of these theories (which became

widespread in Europe and America in multiple genres, from travel narratives to reformist essays) demonstrated how women were perceived as both agents and beneficiaries of progress, and how civilisation itself was seen as a process of feminisation. More recently, some have also pointed at the ways in which the "progress of the female sex" was inscribed in a geography of civilisation that was meant to be universal, as it embraced the whole of humanity in its reach, but which set Western Europe at its zenith, presented America and Africa as imprisoned in the savage stage, and Southern Europe (Spain above all) very much bringing up the rear. Sebastiani's essay draws on all that scholarship, but takes a fresh approach by underlining the role assigned to women not only as agents of culture, but also as bearers of the human species (their reproductive labour having been concealed by an emphasis on the productive labour of men). Her essay also highlights the ambiguities and instability of civilisation even in modern and commercial European societies and how these concerns were symbolised by women: "excessive" female influence and power (including sexuality) embodied the limits of modernity and threatened an inversion of progress itself, a male fear that made manifest the dark side of historical progress and its potential circularity.

Mariselle Meléndez's chapter covers debates on gender and education in Spanish American newspapers of the late eighteenth century, showing how they engaged in dialogue with contemporary discussions in Spain and Europe while being strongly shaped by their specific loci of enunciation. Colonial newspapers issued in the viceroyalty of Peru in the 1790s, such as the *Mercurio Peruano* in Lima and the *Papel periódico de la ciudad de Santafé de Bogotá*, were widely read throughout the Spanish empire, but also in Europe and North America. They functioned, Meléndez argues, as discursive platforms for gendered patriotic epistemologies that discussed the roles of women in the reform of society and the economy, paying particular attention to education and with an emphasis on local needs and customs. Women subscribed (in small numbers) to these periodicals and were among their readers; their voices appeared alongside those of men discussing the intellectual and moral capacities and social roles of their sex. These (real or fictional) female voices sometimes offered views on marriage, the authority of husbands and education of the young that clashed with more conventional opinions. The key question as to whether women's intellectual limitations were due to nature or culture, however, received conflicting answers. This points to the open-ended character of a debate which, as Meléndez reminds us, persisted in the nations born out

of independence from Spain. Her chapter, like Bolufer's on European and American multiple and long-term adaptations of an essay defending gender intellectual equality and Sebastiani's emphasising the gendered paradoxes of progress, thus underlines the Enlightenment's contested legacy and its complex resonance and appropriations in the nineteenth century.

Part II ("Women of Letters Across Frontiers") sheds light on the ways in which women of letters crossed metaphorical and actual frontiers, and how that process and the strategies they actively developed shaped their image as intellectuals. The Republic of Letters constructed its members' public, transnational image through printed portraits of the learned. Lieke van Deinsen studies this iconographic tradition from the point of view of gender. Four prominent contemporary women (Laura Bassi, Italian; Émilie du Châtelet, French; Luise Gottsched and Magdalen Sibylla Rieger, German) were included in Jacob Brucker's *Bilder-Sal* (1741–1755), a German and Latin catalogue of famous intellectuals. This can be seen as a cautious move away from the exceptionalism of earlier initiatives, for example Nicolás Antonio's Latin *Bibliotheca Hispana Nova*, written in the late seventeenth century and published in 1788, with a separate section—*Gynaeceum Hispanae Minervae*—devoted to female Spanish writers. The more inclusive approach of Brucker's initiative suggests women were enjoying increased integration and authority in the transnational Republic of Letters, with female intellectuals actively participating in male projects to create and circulate their public, visual image. However, it also indicates the limits of both integration and authority, since their portraits were relegated to the end of each volume and their physical appearance was more commented on than was that of their male counterparts.

Female participants in this Republic of Letters were involved in debates, intellectual practices and often transnational experiences that helped them alter their view of the world and develop new ideas. As Anthony La Vopa forcefully argues in his essay, this is true of French intellectual Louise d'Épinay, whose visit to Geneva during the 1750s and the friendship she struck up there with Swiss physician Théodore Tronchin proved life-changing. She was introduced to a Republican political culture that she idealised for the marked contrast it represented with Parisian high society (*le monde*), a milieu with which she had begun to feel disaffected. This symbolic dichotomy did much to support her feminist convictions, already in the making in her essays and letters of that period. Her belief

that conventional gender differentiations alienated women from their true nature, and a work ethic based on the tenets of Stoicism which led her to reject *mondanité* and devote herself to strenuous intellectual labour, not only had an impact on both her later life decisions and her writing but, according to La Vopa, mean that she exemplifies the transition from early modern to modern feminism.

La Vopa also highlights the importance given to the act of writing as a form of introspection on the road to self-knowledge, an issue central to the essay that follows his, in which Amélie Jacques and Beatrijs Vanacker take us to the 1770s to scrutinise the strategies of self-construction and self-representation employed by women intellectuals in their letter-writing. The 2500 letters penned by Dutch-Swiss writer Isabelle de Charrière (who was educated in French), and specifically her correspondence with Scottish scholar James Boswell and French-German writer Ludwig Ferdinand Huber (her translator into German), allow us to explore her deliberate uses of multilingualism. Other female writers and translators also adopted the practice of multilingual writing, as examined in Part III of this book, but Charrière does so in exceptionally self-reflective style. Her strategic use of French, German and English adds nuance to the idea of the virtual monopoly of French and attests to the use of different languages in cultivated transnational letter exchange. It also sheds light on the meaning of these strategic linguistic decisions in terms of shaping and negotiating women's intellectual and authorial identity.

Part III ("Rewriting Through Translation") focuses on translation, both as a linguistic and cultural process and as a product. It looks at the specific and changing ways in which translation was used by women between the early Enlightenment and the advent of Romanticism. The essays here pay particular attention to the political and commercial dynamics of translation and its connection with travel writing—after all in English, though not in French, Italian or Spanish, the word "translation" can also refer to the physical movement of a person or thing from one place to another. Luisa Simonutti analyses the analogies between travel and translation, two experiences that involve mobility and the crossing of cultural frontiers and produce different forms of amalgam and hybridisation. The examples of Anne-Marie Fiquet du Boccage and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, travellers in Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as those of other women travellers who were also translators or artists, reveal their awareness that they were acting as mediators between cultures,

connecting worlds through writing, translating and/or painting. Translation also allows us to explore the particularities of women's travel writing: often less conditioned than men by literary commonplaces of their age concerning women of foreign cultures—e.g. Orientalistic tropes about Islamic sensuality—they built their authority precisely on the basis of their gender-specific experience.

While translation was not ranked as highly as original production when it came to making a writer's name, it could still be instrumental in achieving commercial success, particularly in the case of widely consumed genres such as novels and plays. This is clearly illustrated by the case of María Rosa de Gálvez, an extremely successful Spanish playwright, as we discover in the next chapter. Elizabeth Franklin Lewis chooses three works of the 1800s from Gálvez's extensive literary production (two translated from the French and one original drama, probably inspired by French, English and German sources) and analyses them to show how she used her own originality to serve her literary ambitions, becoming the most successful female Spanish writer of the eighteenth century and introducing new formats, notably in the genre of opera, to the Spanish stage. Gálvez did not merely "circulate" preformed texts and formats, but carefully adapted them to her national context and her local audience and market, incorporating her own aesthetic choices, changes and ideological identifications, with various parallels apparent between the contents of her translations and original works and her own life story. She, like other women translators of her time, thus left her mark on the Enlightenment, playing an active part in shaping its literary and mental landscape.

The careful strategies of domestication and adaptation often involved in translation are further illustrated in the Italian version of Maria Edgeworth's *Early Lessons* created by the Milanese intellectual Bianca Milesi Mojon in 1829, more than 25 years after the publication of the original. As Mirella Agorni shows in her essay, in the context of Romantic nationalism, translation became a highly political endeavour fostering a self-conscious and painstaking task of linguistic and cultural mediation. This allowed translators, including women, to gain a new visibility and prominence. Milesi chose to translate a work for children, a genre relatively new to the Italian cultural system, one considered fitting both for female and male authors, and broached by many women writers in Britain, France and (to a lesser extent) Spain. Her translation was a response to the contemporary concern with promoting national identity as part of a child's education and so ensured her instant success. That said, both

Mrs Edgeworth and Milesi were later dismissed as "feminine" and therefore minor writers and as a consequence were excluded from the literary canon.

A similar fate befell Milesi's contemporary Maria Petrettini, a Greco-Venetian aristocrat studied by Elisavet Papalexopoulou. A polyglot who identified herself as Greek, Petrettini followed the Greek Orthodox religion, wrote in Italian and lived at the crossroads between the Habsburg, Venetian, Turkish and Russian empires. She was closely connected to Italian and Greek literary and philosophical circles, but did not explicitly engage with the Greek Revolution or the Italian Risorgimento. Instead, she developed her own female Enlightenment project by translating Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* in 1838 (more than 70 years after the original publication) and by planning a literary history of Venetian women that remained largely unpublished. Her translation was a personal statement addressed to her intellectual friends and the Italian public, and at the same time a play of mirrors inspired by a deep personal identification with the author, both as an independent woman and as a philhellene. Petrettini was forgotten even sooner and more completely than Milesi, because—by contrast with the latter's work—her cosmopolitan, transcultural, aristocratic and non-patriotic perspective did not suit the epic narratives of nation and revolution of her day.

Part IV ("Mediating Knowledge, Making Publics") interrogates women's involvement as target audiences, reading publics and library owners or users in transnational processes of knowledge dissemination. It considers the interplay and occasional clashes between the commercial construction of the "woman reader", moral and religious campaigns aimed at regulating the female readership, and women's real-life literary choices. What did women actually read? Did they primarily immerse themselves in pleasurable books, above all novels, as depicted in vivid eighteenth-century paintings of sensual *liseuses*? Or did they prefer the devotional materials vigorously recommended by moralists and educators?

Alicia Montoya's essay deals with some of these complex issues by considering other, related questions: to what extent did the contents of women's libraries differ from those of their male contemporaries of similar linguistic, cultural and social milieux? Where they did differ, was this echoed across Europe, or were those differences specific to particular territories? She seeks to answer these questions by delving into the hugely valuable resource that is the MEDIATE database of eighteenth-century catalogues of private libraries, and focusing on those that were

owned by women, some of them Dutch, but most French. Quantitative data enable us to reconstruct the libraries of ordinary readers, male and female, but have their limits, starting with the fact that book possession does not equate to reading, as women often made extensive use of conjugal or family libraries as well as (and sometimes instead of) establishing their own. Montoya's findings confirm that women's libraries differed perceptibly from men's, containing more novels (particularly of the sentimental type), devotional literature and works aimed at a female readership; the differences are, however, less pronounced than is sometimes argued, requiring a detailed contextualisation of period, context and individual biographies. There is no such thing, therefore, as a typical "female library": what we usually identify as such is generally modelled on French, late eighteenth-century examples and connected with the heavily gendered category of *bibliothèque choisie* or amateur library (as opposed to the scholarly, male library or *bibliothèque universelle*).

What were the genres, contents and morals of the books targeted at women readers and which appear in both the male and the female libraries studied by Montoya, if in higher numbers in the latter? To what extent did they really address a specifically female readership rather than a broader audience explicitly or implicitly identified as "lay" or "uneducated", that is, in need (supposedly) of spiritual and moral guidance? How did such literature circulate in Europe and America, and what were its territorial specificities? How was the Catholic Church involved in its production, adaptation and dissemination? These key questions are addressed in the following essays.

Laura Guinot-Ferri traces the circulation and adaptation of books aimed at different female target readerships (women in general, nuns, girls, wives and mothers, midwives…) across the Spanish Atlantic: almost completely uncharted territory. She looks at movements in both directions, taking a multifocal perspective that considers works originally written or translated in the metropolis, but also original productions and translations created in New Spain (most of which were religious in content) and their dissemination back in peninsular Spain. Her conclusions align with new scholarship that challenges the traditional vision of the Enlightenment in Spanish America as merely derivative, backward and weak. The protagonism of the Catholic Church in book production and circulation and its dominant influence on cultural and intellectual life, including the education of girls, together with low literacy rates, explain the overwhelmingly religious nature of books written and printed for

women in New Spain. This was not, however, a static situation and, over time, the strictly spiritual gave way firstly to simply didactic texts and then, in the early nineteenth century, to a far greater variety of reading matter. Furthermore, the widespread presence of European books in the viceroyalty can be seen as indicative not just of passive reception but of cultural and social dynamism.

Patrizia Delpiano's essay looks at the active strategies employed by clerics and male lay figures involved in the more conservative and combative sections of Catholicism to control and moralise new and growing readerships: women, children, the uneducated. Their self-assigned mission was to protect these readers from what was seen in the eighteenth century as a "flood" (a powerful biblical metaphor) of dangerous books threatening religious faith and the social and political foundations of the Old Regime, including its gender politics. Delpiani looks specifically at the new genres of *contes* and *romans antiphilosophiques*, with a transnational perspective that points to their French origins and widespread European (particularly Italian and Spanish) adaptations and appropriations. Through the powerful image of the passionate female reader whose love of "immoral" and anti-religious books prevented her from fulfilling her prescribed roles of wife and mother, influential sectors of the Catholic Church sent out a wider warning to heads of families, educators and society at large about the dangers involved in reading. They actively sought to conjure fears of social, cultural and political change with an abundant literature aimed at giving a Catholic response to changing times. The roots of nineteenth-century Catholicism, with its heavy emphasis on women's role in counteracting secularisation, therefore lie in this solidly transnational eighteenth-century Counter-Enlightenment.

Gender, Modernities, and the Global Enlightenment: Final Remarks

These valuable contributions to the discussions surrounding women's mediating roles and the implications of gender in eighteenth-century cultural transfers and exchanges reveal the uneven nature of those processes. Our incorporation of a wider variety of countries and regions into the picture of the cosmopolitan, global eighteenth century, with a particular focus on traditionally neglected territories, does not lead us to claim that the latter played a leading role in that period—they did not, for

various political, economic and cultural reasons. Instead, and rather more importantly, it helps us problematise modernity itself, by highlighting its plural and not always converging paths.[19]

One specific example that reveals how examining these issues from the combined perspectives of gender and these Southern locations can both complicate and enrich our understanding of the answers to various thorny questions is that of the relationship between Enlightenment and religion—more specifically, Catholicism. Our essays confirm that we cannot simply resort to the hackneyed identification of modernity with secularisation or irreligion, of Catholicism with mere continuity and traditionalism.[20] Catholicism worked its own way to modernity. There were unquestionably enlightened men and women who were Catholics, and enlightened forms of devotion and spirituality (Mestre 1979; Lehner 2016). Moreover, while it was a resolutely confessional movement, the Counter-Enlightenment was simultaneously dynamic, proactive and in a certain sense modern, with its use of transnational networks (Lok and Eijnatten 2019) and Enlightenment genres and media. Even the strictest Catholic moralists did not only work in a repressive way, for example attempting to discourage so-called fragile readers (women first and foremost) from accessing sentimental and philosophical novels. They also acted, to use Foucaultian language, in a *productive* way, actively creating and disseminating new genres that dramatised the dangers of secularised modernity by embodying them in the figure of the woman reader. It is possible to argue that the influential religious component of Spanish America's intellectual, cultural and social life put certain restrictions on women's lives, but also that it allowed them some initiative as patrons and educators. Indeed, if modernity was considered in Enlightenment history and philosophy to be "distinctly feminine", to quote Sebastiani, then women remained ambivalently placed in relation to it.

The essays in this volume also show that discussions on whether nature or culture determined gender differences, and whether the female mind was capable of sustained intellectual effort or only of aesthetic appreciation and witty conversation, continued to rage throughout the eighteenth century and beyond, circulating across languages and oceans and taking

[19] On this issue, see in particular Pimentel and Pardo-Tomás (2017).

[20] On the debate about the category of "Catholic Enlightenment", see Delpiano (2019).

many local, regional and individual forms. Individual writers' answers to these crucial questions displayed varying degrees of egalitarianism and were not always necessarily aligned with their moderate or radical stances towards other sociopolitical issues. Two examples seem particularly illuminating in this respect. Mme d'Épinay's feminist convictions developed in part from an idealised, ultimately elitist view of republican government in Geneva. Maria Petrettini's enlightened project for a canon of women intellectuals was inspired by her firm belief in the emancipatory power of education, but also by her experience as a cosmopolitan aristocrat yearning for the stability of the old world of empires, rather than the new world of nation and revolution.

Translation as a heavily gendered practice and a creative intellectual and cultural process connecting local and transnational networks and discussions also allows for a decentred, multipolar view of the Enlightenment and of modernities. On the one hand, our essays confirm the multiple possibilities of translation for female literary endeavours. The fact that translation was considered to some extent a secondary, non-creative activity, and therefore deemed more fitting for women, had ambiguous implications. It helped women write under the rhetorical mantle of modesty (which often resulted in their invisibility), but also allowed them to make not only aesthetic, but ideological decisions and changes—to adapt works for new audiences, incorporate new genres and even express in more or less veiled ways their own, sometimes provocative ideas. The use of images can also be understood as a form of translation between written and visual culture: portraits of intellectuals, including some female writers, gave faces to the Republic of Letters and helped break down linguistic barriers via the power of iconography.

On the other hand, this book's in-depth consideration of the linguistic, political, cultural and religious contexts of translation reveals the sometimes profound modifications made to new versions, and the varied resonances acquired by works at different points in time and in different geographical and cultural locations. For example, the debates on the role of women and gender in the reform of the nation aired in Spanish American newspapers show how colonial loci of enunciation shaped preoccupations that were strongly local and at the same time engaged in active, reactive and creative ways to discussions happening in Europe. The examples of Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Maria Edgeworth, whose works were translated respectively in London, Paris, Lisbon, Rome, Naples and Genoa, in Padua and in Milan, also

suggest the crucial role of locality. Moreover, the fact that those translations were made decades, in some cases up to a century after the original's first publication, draws our attention to temporality. Instead of understanding these differed versions as a symptom of delayed, ultimately subsidiary Enlightenments, we have coined the notion of "transtemporal translation" to denote the process by which texts written long ago are adapted and re-signified and to explain why translators and readers connect with them, thus making them their virtual or symbolic contemporaries. This, for example, helps us understand women's contribution to nation building and the development of patriotic ideals and epistemologies at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Translating and adapting texts, negotiating the production and circulation of their visual image, travelling (and writing, translating or reading travel accounts), making deliberate use of multilingualism and weaving transnational epistolary networks across frontiers, these were some of the practices through which women of letters constructed their individual and collective identities. Their transnational reach was not, strictly speaking, new: women had been involved since Renaissance times in humanist Latin correspondence bridging linguistic, politic and religious borders, as well as in other family and epistolary networks or virtual communities of kindred spirits (Campbell and Larsen 2009). In the eighteenth century, the expansion of epistolary communication, as well as that of print circulation, offered them increasing opportunities to participate in the "transcultural and international dimension of what we today define as 'networks of learning'" (Vanacker and Van Deinsen 2022, 9) by creating their own intellectual, literary or scientific, personal and virtual networks or participating in existing ones (Maerker et al. 2023). Our essays show, for example, how textual and visual galleries featuring women of letters of both past and present were often transnational (as in Feijoo's *Defensa de las mujeres* and Brucker's *Bilder-Sal*), but at the same time nationally and regionally appropriated and reworked through the inclusion of figures chosen with specific reference to the translator or adaptor's local and social circles or national allegiances. Women intellectuals, in particular, built female genealogies reaching back in time and looked to other contemporary female writers to integrate themselves into transtemporal and/or transnational communities. Women readers were another imagined community that contributed to the development or adaptation of new genres and forms—from civil histories and sentimental, pedagogical or *antiphilosophique* tales and novels to children's fiction—both through

their actual reading practices and as a target audience influencing male and female authors, translators and publishers.

In short, the contributions to this volume bring fresh perspectives to the growing interest in the transnational dimensions of women's cultural agency and of gender debate in the Enlightenment. They connect approaches to eighteenth-century culture investigating the crucial roles of women and gender with those that are concerned with transnational and transoceanic travels, correspondence networks, cosmopolitan practices, circulation of books, periodicals and images, but often ignore their gender dimensions. Inspired by feminist studies and by criticisms of triumphalist global approaches, these essays do not take a diffusionist view of knowledge production and circulation in which ideas float unimpeded. By looking at the material and spatial dimensions of cultural transfers and the obstacles faced by the latter, at the porosities or rigidities of cultural and religious frontiers, at different kinds of mobility (geographical, linguistic, virtual and imaginary), as well as at the experiences of those with less opportunity to travel, they underscore the possibilities, but also the limits, of the gendered circulation of ideas, the circulation of ideas about gender and the mediating roles played by women in the Enlightenment.

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PART I

Discussing Gender in Transnational and Transatlantic Settings

CHAPTER 2

Discussing Gender, Discussing Modernities in the Global Enlightenment: The Many Lives of a Spanish Defence of Women in Europe and America

Mónica Bolufer

Moving in Time and Space

Between November 1810 and August 1811, the many followers of *The Lady's Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* were offered, in ten instalments, "A Defence of Women translated from the Spanish of Geronymo Feijoo" by a mysterious "Elenir Irwin". Few, if any, of its readers (female or male) would have known that Feijoo was a Benedictine monk and professor of theology, who had died in 1764 at the age of almost 90, having penned the text in question back in 1726. The *Defensa de las mujeres* was part of his *Teatro crítico universal de errores comunes* (Critical Theatre of Common Errors, 1st ed., 1726–1739, printed in quarto format), an immensely successful eight-volume

M. Bolufer (✉)
University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain
e-mail: monica.bolufer@uv.es

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collection (nine with the 1740 supplement). The 118 essays of this work challenged all kinds of prejudice and superstition in fields ranging from politeness to national character and skin colour; from medicine, music and remedies for love to politics. The *Teatro crítico* was aimed at a broad, educated readership and its style combines erudition with humour, with the former element toned down over the years, resulting in texts of greater fluency and clarity.[1] The *Defensa de las mujeres* is the last and easily the longest of the sixteen essays in Volume I (66 vs an average 20–30 pages). One of many polemics that would mark its author's consistently controversial career, it divided public opinion in Spain as well as rocking the country's intellectual circles. As a cleric, Feijoo did not question male political and domestic authority which, he stated, was determined by Providence. He did however reject the idea that this had anything to do with women's natural inferiority, dismantling the foundations of this widely shared notion with argumentation and examples aimed at lay and learned readers alike. In his view, both popular superstitions and academic scholarship, including the much-revered Aristoteliant and Galenic theses, together with new ideas about the greater sensitivity of female "nerve fibres", were all wrong. With great lucidity, he exposed them as philosophical and scientific theories constructed ad hoc in order to justify social prejudices. By way of counter-argument, he asserted women's capacity to rule and their moral excellence. He also—and more significantly—defended intellectual gender equality by presenting both rational, empirical arguments on the sexless nature of the soul and more traditional examples of learned women from Spain, France, Italy and Germany, adding the case of Sitti Maani Gioerida della Valle (c.1600–1621, the Syrian Christian wife of Roman traveller Pietro della Valle) to prove that "women's literary glory is not confined to Europe".[2]

The translation in *The Lady's Magazine* in 1810–1811 was not the first to appear in English, yet its author and the journal's editors still believed it would appeal to their readers. What did they see in this essay, almost a century after its original publication? To answer this, we need

[1] On Feijoo's congenial relations with his readers, see Lafuente and Valverde (2003), García Díaz (2019).

[2] Feijoo (1726, I, 367–68). On Feijoo's "feminism" and his similarities and differences with Poulain de la Barre and other authors, see Bolufer (2005, 2016a), Serrano (2021). On Baroque portraits of Sitti Maani (whose remains arrived in Rome in 1626), see Baskins (2012).

to see translation not only as the rendering of a text into a different language, but as its rewriting, appropriation and circulation in a different cultural—and often temporal—context, by different actors (translators, patrons, reviewers, printers), for different readers. This crucial insight has been developed by literary criticism, translation studies and, more recently, intellectual and cultural history, and the history of science, but has not yet inspired extensive research on how transnational and transatlantic circulation shaped debates on gender.[3] To date, a small number of studies have dealt with translations of one (generally French) work into one other language; little is known about the fate of works originally published in languages other than French, and multiple translations are rarely compared.[4] As for the matter of temporality, this has scarcely been analysed at all: prompt or late translations are just noted in passing as an indication of early or delayed reception. Translations, however, tell complex stories that are not about unilateral "reception", but about different communities of knowledge and practice reframing and resignifying texts across languages, cultures and times.

Feijoo's writings were widely disseminated in his own day to both lay and learned readerships, especially—but not exclusively—in the (peninsular, Atlantic and Pacific) Hispanic world. His works ran into numerous editions, including fifteen complete and five partial editions of the *Teatro crítico* and eleven of the *Cartas eruditas* (Erudite letters) before 1787, with 200 reprints and even indexes and dictionaries to facilitate consultation.[5] Their print runs were large, in some cases up to 3000 copies, exceptional in Spain at the time, and the works were present in countless Spanish, American and European institutional and private libraries (Arias de Saavedra 2016). Feijoo's friends and sympathisers Martín Sarmiento, a fellow Benedictine, and José Mariano Gregorio de Elizalde, former

[3] For an overview of historical approaches to translation, see Burke and Po-chia Hsia (2007); on the eighteenth century, see Oz-Salzberger (2006) and Stockhorst (2010).

[4] See, for example, Dubois-Nayt et al. (2016). On translations from or into Spanish, Portuguese and Italian, see Bolufer (1998, 70–73, 81–86), Bello Vázquez (2013), Anastácio (2018), Findlen (1995), Fabiani (2009).

[5] Pérez-Rioja (1965, 285–305). After 1787, reprints of the *Teatro crítico* waned and there were no new editions until the mid-nineteenth century, although Feijoo's works continued to be present in private libraries and an abridged version was published in 1804. The bicentenary of his birth was marked with due solemnity in 1876, with critical consideration given to both the man and his thinking—including his defence of gender intellectual equality—by, among others, Emilia Pardo Bazán.

rector of the Real Universidad de México, were not exaggerating when they wrote that his books had crossed borders and reached "the farthest reaches of America, in both kingdoms [Spanish and Portuguese], and of Asia and the Philippines" (Checa Beltrán 2016, 418; Feijoo 1726–1740, IV). The portrait of a 57-year-old Feijoo, seated at his desk, a well-appointed library in the background, first appeared in Volume VI of the *Teatro crítico* (1734), and was subsequently reproduced in many other editions, though not in any of the translations (González Santos 2003, 162–73) (Fig. 2.1).

Feijoo was very conscious of his own image, and of his role as an intellectual, above and beyond scholarly polemics, in influencing public opinion. He was aware of the international scope of his fame, about which he wrote with apparent modesty, "I see my name flying in glory (an undeserved joy, I confess), not only around Spain, but throughout almost all the nations of Europe" (Feijoo 1734, V, "To the reader"). He also took an interest in the translations that were helping spread his fame far and wide (Feijoo 1774, 152–156). The *Defensa de las mujeres* itself was published in other languages more than ten times, either separately or as part of unabridged, excerpted or anthological translations of the *Teatro crítico* or one of its volumes: it appeared in French in 1743, Italian in 1744 (two different versions) and 1777, Portuguese in 1746 and English in 1760, 1768, 1774, 1778, 1780 and 1810–1811.[6] Even those who had not read it might have been aware of its contents thanks to widespread reviews.

The ways in which this essay was translated, discussed and used say much about the various settings in which it appeared: "national" contexts defined by the different languages in which it was rewritten and read, but also particular geographic territories, social circles (aristocratic, literate, ecclesiastical, middle-class or even popular; male or mixed) and intellectual and personal networks. As we shall see below, the specific interests of these various communities had their own impact on the broad debates that were, to a greater or lesser degree, part of the European (and American) culture of the time—those dealing with gender, with the social identity of men of letters, and with the roles attributed to different nations in modern civilisation. The translations of the *Defensa de las mujeres*,

[6] In Germany, only partial editions of one or more essays of the *Teatro crítico* (most on medicine, never the *Defensa de las mujeres*) were published: one in 1766, and several others much later, in 1789, 1790 and 1791.

Fig. 2.1 Portrait of Benito Jerónimo Feijoo. Engraving by Juan Bernabé Palomino (1781) after a lost oil portrait by Francisco Antonio Bustamante (1733 or 1734). Biblioteca Nacional de España

understood as intellectual acts but with social and commercial dimensions too (as we can see from the various formats in which it circulated), enable us to observe gender discourses in action on an interconnected scale, from the local to the national, transnational and global.

France: Between Erudition and *mondanité*

The first Spanish edition of the *Teatro crítico* was warmly received in France, where it was reviewed in the *Mercure de France* as early as 1731—and interest soon honed in on the *Defensa de las mujeres* in particular. Its theme was particularly relevant in the French context, where defending female aptitude in the face of misogyny was neither a purely rhetorical attitude nor an abstract philosophical position, but a living tradition rooted in the cultural practices of the aristocracy and literary society. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mixed salons—often presided over by women—and exclusively male academic, literary and scientific academies were communicating vessels, linked by relationships based on friendship, protection and patronage, and governed by a shared elitist code of *politesse* and *honnêteté* which ascribed to women an aesthetic, moral and intellectual authority (Lilti 2005; La Vopa 2017). The debate between the sexes was entwined—not without tension—with the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, which pitted those attached to Classical ideals against those advocating a culture linked to the art of conversation and civility, and in which the role of women was recognised and valued: a notable example of the crossover between Cartesian rationalism and *mondanité* is the feminism of François Poulain de la Barre (*De l'égalité des deux sexes*, 1673; *De l'éducation des dames*, 1674), of which Feijoo was indirectly aware, through Pierre Bayle (Bolufer 2005, 2016a). As Anthony La Vopa (2017) has shown, these male–female connections and friendships were part of the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment, but also a source of anxiety about the feminisation of the male mind, a fear that haunted educated men of the period. Unease about these patterns of mixed sociability and their respective models of femininity and manliness would only increase in the last third of the century, with Rousseau defiantly declaring the independence of (male) intellectuals from *salonnières* and proclaiming domesticity as the true empire of women.

Feijoo was himself an intellectual cleric, but also a sociable man who was closely connected to the circles of power and knew how to deploy the language of gallantry in his dealings with the noble ladies of his

acquaintance and, through them, the local elites (Feijoo 2019, 341–55). In the *Defensa de las mujeres*, however, he strove to portray himself not as a courteous man concerned with pleasing women, but as an impartial philosopher (Feijoo 1726, I, 354). The ways in which his work was interpreted in French literary circles reveal its ambivalent nature but also, and more importantly, the identity dilemma facing many men of letters as they chose a role: that of scholar in the masculine space of the academy or monastery; that of worldly intellectual capable of socialising in mixed environments; or—increasingly—that of commercial writer struggling to engage with wide readerships (Darnton 1987; Chartier 1996; Badinter 2018). Some joined the aristocratic networks of patronage and mixed sociability, others proclaimed their membership of communities of scholars who claimed to be above ties of dependence, while a third group cultivated a wider and more varied reading public, all three groups looking at one another askance. Many individuals, however, shifted between these different positions and allegiances, albeit not without hesitation.

At the same time, French writers and intellectuals strove to present the defence of women in the debate between the sexes as a mark of their nation's glory, the pinnacle of refined and gallant modernity, even though the *querelle des femmes* was a Europe-wide and centuries-long polemic (Dubois-Nayt et al. 2016). The reception given to the first volume of the *Teatro crítico* is a case in point (Fig. 2.2). It was translated into French between 1742 and 1743 by Nicolas Vaquette d'Hermilly (c.1714–1778), who had lived in Spain and translated other texts from Spanish and Portuguese, as well as contributing to periodicals and anthologies such as the *Bibliographie parisienne* and *Lettres orientales* (1754). In his preface, the translator laments the French public's lack of interest in Spanish culture, adopting, significantly, gendered conventions on national character that associated French taste with a lack of seriousness typical of women, but also of worldly culture, while considering the weightier erudition supposedly preferred by Spaniards as manly.[7] He himself, a reasonably successful man of letters, assumes a dual role. He defines himself as a *Sçavant* (a scholar) who despises the worldly *semi-Sçavants* and aspires to instruct rather than entertain. At the same time, however, his publication strategy was designed to appeal to his readers' tastes, with

[7] On Spanish and French national stereotypes, see some of the essays in Andreu and Bolufer (2023).

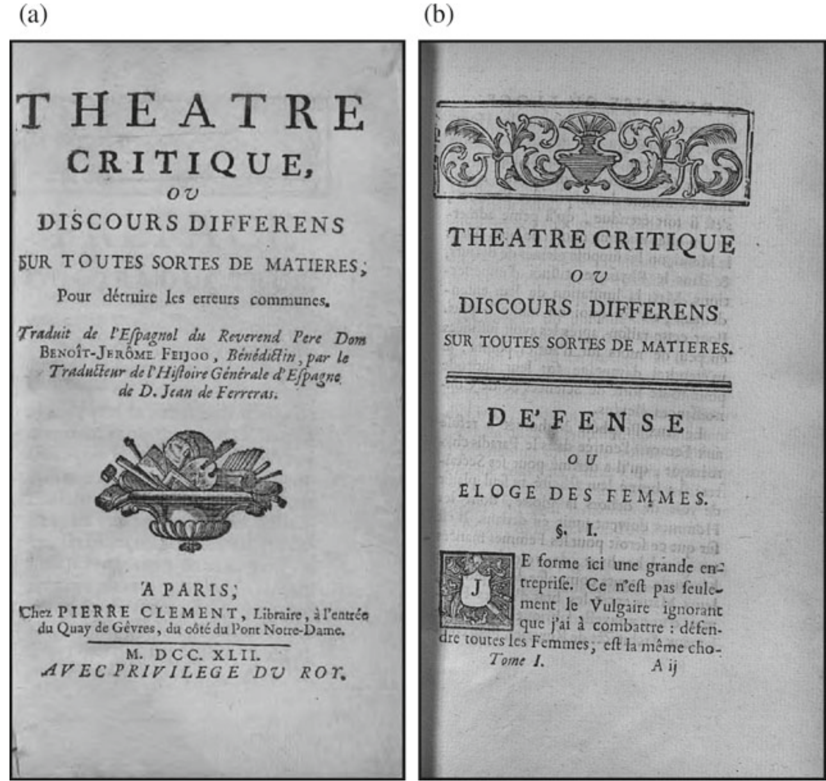
a commercial vision that Feijoo himself recognised. Vaquette issued the *Teatro crítico* not in bound volumes, but in monthly or fortnightly instalments so that people could acquire the essays they wanted and create their own personalised collection, and in an attractive duodecimo format, easy to carry and read anywhere. Vaquette's version is faithful to the original, but includes explanatory notes in line with what he saw as his readers' expectation—in the case of the *Defensa de las mujeres*, he added further biographical details about the "learned Frenchwomen" listed by Feijoo (1743, 101–3, 106).

The periodical *Mémoires pour l'histoire des sciences et des beaux-arts*, run by Jesuits since its creation in 1701 and better known as the *Journal de Trévoux*, covered the translation of the first volume of the *Teatro crítico* and published extensive commentaries on each essay. Writing about the *Defensa de las mujeres*, its editors praised Feijoo's efforts to break down prejudices and his impartial rather than gallant approach:

> A great number of authors have praised women, and have done so with wit and politeness, but no one before Father Feioo [sic] has done so with more wisdom and less partiality. It is no Panegyrist dazzled by the beautiful qualities of his Heroines who comes to insipidly praise their attractions, extol their graces, and lavish them with a thousand frivolous compliments, it is a Philosopher, a Historian, a Critic, a Cleric, a Spaniard, who wants to disabuse men of the idea that they are superior to women, and to avenge women for all the evil men have spoken of them.[8]

The Jesuits behind the *Journal de Trévoux* thus claimed Feijoo, a great supporter and user of the publication, as one of their own: not a dilettante aristocrat or an abbé fond of female company, but an intellectual positioned (as a scholar, cleric and Spaniard) at a triple remove from the sycophantic attitude they associated with the worldly culture of mixed society. Unlike Vaquette and the *Journal*'s publishers, the Abbé Desfontaines's *Observations sur les écrits modernes* (1735–1743) fluctuated between categorising Feijoo in the scholarly field suggested by his status as a cleric and a text full of erudite information, and in the worldly sphere. In 1743, this periodical marked the publication of Vaquette's translation by printing an article about Feijoo and what it calls the *Éloge des femmes*. There was praise for Feijoo's seriousness of purpose and tone

[8] *Mémoires* 1743, LXXXVI, 2770–91; qt. 2770–71.


(a)

THEATRE
CRITIQUE,
OU
DISCOURS DIFFERENS
SUR TOUTES SORTES DE MATIERES;
Pour détruire les erreurs communes.
Traduit de l'Espagnol du Reverend Pere Dom BENOÎT-JERÔME FEIJOO, *Bénédictin, par le Traducteur de l'Histoire Générale d'Espagne de D. Jean de Ferreras.*

A PARIS,
Chez PIERRE CLEMENT, Libraire, à l'entrée du Quay de Gêvres, du côté du Pont Notre-Dame.
M. DCC. XLII.
AVEC PRIVILEGE DU ROY.

(b)

THEATRE CRITIQUE
OU
DISCOURS DIFFERENS
SUR TOUTES SORTES DE MATIERES.

DE'FENSE
OU
ELOGE DES FEMMES.
§. I.
JE forme ici une grande entreprise. Ce n'est pas seulement le Vulgaire ignorant que j'ai à combattre : défendre toutes les Femmes; est la même cho-
Tome I. A ij

Fig. 2.2 [Nicolas Vaquette d'Hermilly]. *Theatre critique, ou Discours differens sur toutes sortes de matieres por détruire les erreurs communes traduit de l'Espagnol*… Paris: Pierre Clement, 1742–1743. Biblioteca de Asturias "Ramón Pérez de Ayala"

("Had a man of the world undertaken this work he would have scattered it with amusing moments, but since it is a man of religion who has done so, the reader should not be surprised by his earnest tone."),[9] but also for his ability to charm the ladies: "Don Feijoo neglects nothing which

[9] *Observations*, XXXI (24 November 1741–16 February 1743), letter 464, 313–25; qt. 314.

may prove pleasing to women; he pays court to them in all kinds of ways" (322).

Vaquette's *Teatro crítico* translation was judged far more severely by the *Journal Étranger* which, under the direction of the Abbé Prévost, extended its coverage of Spain from the usual reviews of Golden Age literature to take in contemporary works as well. Between May and August 1755, it published an extensive extract from the *Teatro crítico* in several instalments, together with an introduction (70 pages in all) in which the *Defensa de las mujeres* is discussed in terms of rivalry between national cultures.[10] The *Journal*'s introduction emphasises the superiority of French writers as regards a subject on which they had supposedly passed judgement far earlier, and with greater insight. It condescendingly admits that Feijoo's essay has some originality and that it has led Spain to begin to question the assumption of female inferiority and thus move closer to the civilised nations:

> It would be a matter of regret, *for the honour of France*, should the first idea of such a gallant enterprise have fallen into the mind of a foreigner; but, thanks to Nature, which has not allowed French men to be surpassed in any matter of discernment or amiability, Women have long been indebted to them for having come to their defence.[11]

The translation and discussion of the *Defensa de las mujeres* in France therefore brought to the surface the tensions experienced by its writers, between salon, academy and literary market, and, more broadly, the anxieties generated by the culture of *politesse* and gallantry, one minute extolled as the height of European civilisation and proof of French cultural hegemony, the next denigrated as frivolous, feminised and feminising.

Britain: The Long Shadow of the Black Legend

In eighteenth-century Britain, Feijoo was better known than any other contemporary Spanish writer, running Cervantes and *Don Quixote* a close second. A number of essays from the *Teatro crítico* were translated, individually or in groups, as well as a wide-ranging selection published in four

[10] *Journal Étranger*, May 1755, 189–226; July 1755, 208–37; August 1755, 247–50.

[11] *Journal Étranger*, May 1755, 189–90; my emphasis.

volumes. The essays on medical matters sparked particular interest, but so did the *Defensa de las mujeres*, at a time when "the place of women in the moral, intellectual, and social life of the nation was discussed and debated as never before" (O'Brien 2010, 19; see also O'Brien 2009; Knott and Taylor 2005). From the late seventeenth century onwards, religious and political controversies, the rise of polite sociability and commercial society, and philosophical and scientific developments had fuelled intense discussion of women's obedience and rights in domestic government, their position under common law and their status as rational subjects (by figures such as Mary Astell, Lady Mary Chudleigh, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Bernard Mandeville, among others). Poulain's *De l'égalité* had been translated in 1677 and again in 1758, and freely adapted by a still mysterious "Sophia" in 1739 (*Woman not Inferior to Man*, reprinted 1743 and 1751). All this happened within a booming print culture where women had crucial roles as writers (some enjoying great fame and commercial success), translators, printers and readers, with gender, genre and class boundaries (and those between high and low literature) relatively permeable in the mid-eighteenth century (Levy 2010; Clarke 2000). Feijoo's *Defensa de las mujeres* gained early recognition in bluestocking circles and in other assemblies bringing together literary men and women, including figures such as novelist Samuel Richardson and Elizabeth Carter (1717–1806), the eminent classicist and translator who was something of a national institution, both of whom were admirers of Spanish literature.[12] Conduct-book writer Hester Chapone (1727–1801), who did not read Spanish, asked her friend Elizabeth to send her various passages in translation and expressed her surprise that "a Spaniard should think so favourably of women. One would imagine by their manner of treating them, that they had as mean an opinion of them as the Turks" (Chapone 1807, 9 September 1750, 36–40). Her words echo the clichés found in travel narratives and philosophical essays that (influenced by the Black Legend about Spaniards' cruelty, religious fanaticism and ignorance) suggested Spanish women were subject to despotic confinement and oppression, under the double weight of the Islamic legacy and Catholic superstition and obscurantism (Bolufer 2016b).

Beyond those cultivated circles in which Feijoo's essay could be read in Spanish or French, a wider readership gained access to it when it was

[12] In 1738, Carter published an imitation of Francisco de Quevedo (Clarke 2000, 43). In 1752, Charlotte Lennox, another bluestocking, published *The Female Quixote*.

first translated into English in *The Lady's magazine, or, Polite companion for the fair sex* (1759–1763), with a title that trumpeted the author's fame and sought to stir public interest: "A Defence of Women, from the original Spanish of the celebrated Frejo. Never attempted in English before". It took up more than 50 pages, published over a year and divided into fourteen monthly instalments, between January 1760 and February 1761. An abridged version, it omits some erudite sections of the original (notably the long Latin quotations and extensive references to illustrious women) in order to address the polite, but not scholarly readership targeted by the journal. The translator's only explicit intervention echoes commonplaces about Spanish backwardness and lack of civilisation. Misogyny, condemned by Feijoo in his contemporaries worldwide, is presented as a Spanish national sin: "We may see by this, the Spaniards are not very polite in their opinions of the ladies" (Feijoo 1760–1761, Jan. 1760, 196).

The first self-standing English translation came a few years later, in 1768. *An essay on woman, or physiological and historical defence of the fair sex* was an anonymous 227-page volume in octavo dedicated to "Mrs. C… of Somersetshire", a woman of the local gentry who may have instigated, commissioned or paid for its publication (Fig. 2.3). Her full name is not revealed, but her identity and that of other ladies of the county ("Mrs. Rowe [probably Elizabeth Rowe, 1674–1737] and the Misses Minisse"), praised in the dedication as "a publicly known Somersetshire quadrumvirate, of females eminent for intellects", would have been obvious to her contemporaries.[13] The translator made two key additions to the work. The first of these was an extensive note, based on the authority of Lady Montagu, which rejects the idea held by Feijoo and other European authors that Islam excluded women from Paradise (Feijoo 1768, 5–7); the second, more significant addition, stemming from a feeling that Feijoo had ignored the number and merits of British or English female scholars, past and present, was a ten-page tribute to five such women: Lady Jane Grey, religious poet Elizabeth Rowe, scholars Elizabeth Carter and Constantia Grierson and historian Catherine Macaulay (Feijoo 1768, 192–201). The "illustrious women" genre, a European tradition associated with the *querelle des femmes* since the fifteenth century, had declined in England, but enjoyed a revival after the publication of George Ballard's

[13] Feijoo (1768, V–XIII).

Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain who have been celebrated for their writings or skill in the learned languages, arts and sciences (1752). Rather than being a relic of the past, it was a device useful in both legitimising the education of women and constructing Britishness, in a period in which Britain prided itself as a nation on its ability to produce, in Ballard's words, "more women famous for literary accomplishments than any other nation in Europe", even if harbouring mixed feelings about them (qt. by Clarke 2000, 3).

Educated female writers or patrons such as Chapone, Carter and the (semi-)anonymous "Mrs. C…" seem to have seen in Feijoo's essay an authoritative demonstration of women's intellectual capacities that correlated with their own aspirations. Male writers who moved in their circles, such as Richardson or the anonymous author of the first translation, either valued it or used it to ingratiate themselves with their female patrons and with British readers, particularly women. Moreover, the fact that the author was foreign enabled translators, critics and readers of both sexes to see themselves as part of a transnational literary community united by its devotion to rational thinking and rejection of vulgar prejudices.

By contrast, *The Critical Review* printed a cutting review of the *Teatro crítico*, using it as an opportunity to lash out at its compatriots' taste for translations and to expatiate on the backwardness and superstition of Catholic Spain. Its review of the 1768 translation presents misogyny as something of the past as far as Britain is concerned, but typical of a country overshadowed by the darkness of ignorance, to which it attributes Feijoo's problems with the Inquisition (which did exist, though for other reasons). The *Teatro crítico* is dismissed as an insipid text that has incomprehensibly caught the interest of British readers, who are reprimanded for consuming such meritless foreign works, instead of the far superior home-grown works on the same subject.[14]

Despite the scorn of *The Critical Review*, Feijoo's essay continued to circulate in Britain for many years. The 1768 translation was reprinted in 1774, and in 1778 another anonymous version was published (this one without additional material, be it dedication, preface or interpolation), together with two other essays in the second of three instalments of a selection of the *Teatro crítico* (13 essays altogether) in octavo (Feijoo 1778). Possibly encouraged by its success, two years later translator and

[14] *The Critical Review*, 26 (1768), 364–66.

(a)

AN
ESSAY
ON
WOMAN,
OR,
Phyfiological and Hiftorical
DEFENCE
OF THE
FAIR SEX.
Tranflated from the Spanifh of
EL THEATRO CRITICO.

LONDON,
Printed for W. BINGLEY, oppofite Durham-Yard,
in the Strand.

(b)

DEDICATION.

*To Mrs. C***** of Somerfet-fhire.*

MADAM,

AS on my reading the original of the following piece, you laid your commands on me to tranflate it for the farther juftification of the female fex, I conceived no name fo pro-
b per

Fig. 2.3 Cover and dedication of *An essay on woman, or physiological and historical defence of the fair sex. Translated from the Spanish of El Theatro Critico*. London: W. Bingley, ca.1768. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, *Antiq*. f. E. 66

retired Royal Navy officer John Brett (d. 1785) published at his own expense a much larger selection of 28 essays in four volumes, at the respectable price of 12 shillings and sixpence (Feijoo 1780): this is the edition that future US president John Adams and writer Samuel Johnson had in their libraries (the latter possessed a Spanish edition too).[15] At the end of the century, the partial 1778 edition was still for sale in Thomas Payne's antiquarian bookshop near Charing Cross, at a high price (3 shillings and sixpence in 1796, 3 shillings in 1797; Sánchez Espinosa 2016, 467). More significantly yet, it appeared in the catalogues of one of London's main circulating libraries: that of William Lane, a business linked to the Minerva Printing Press, which specialised in Gothic and sentimental literature written by women (Sánchez Espinosa 2016, 467, 472). This shows that the work was still available not only to affluent and educated readers of both sexes (among them Richardson, Johnson, Adams, Chapone and Carter) who either read it in Spanish or French or acquired the four-volume English translation, but also to a wider, more diverse middle class and even popular readership who could borrow an English version from a circulating library.

It is even more telling that another *Lady's Magazine* published a new complete translation in 1810–1811, thirty years later, and fifty years after the first one had appeared in its almost homonymous predecessor back in 1760.[16] *The Lady's Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex*, a miscellaneous periodical active from 1770 to 1818, was, in Jennie Batchelor's words, "one of the longest-lived periodicals of the eighteenth century, and the era's most successful women's magazine by a considerable margin" (Batchelor 2022, 2). It was groundbreaking among the many addressed to a female readership because of its wide-ranging cultural content and the particular relationship it established with its male and female readers, actively encouraging contributions from a large number of writers of both sexes, many of them writing under pseudonyms or initials (Batchelor 2011, 2022). Feijoo's essay was added to the textual and iconographic strategies (short biographies, engravings and extracts from the works of women writers) with which the newspaper sought to document the work of female intellectuals, with a transnational vision

[15] Adams's copy is still at the Boston Public Library with the rest of his library (https://www.bpl.org) (consulted 18 January 2022). For Johnson, see Green (1965, 58).

[16] *The Lady's Magazine, or, Polite Companion for the Fair Sex* (1759–1763).

that established symbolic genealogies and networks between women of different countries, languages and periods.

According to Gillian Dow, the translator on this occasion (hidden behind a pseudonym) may have been Charlotte Barrett, whose literary relatives included her aunts Sarah Harriet Burney (1772–1844) and the celebrated novelist Fanny Burney d'Arblay (1752–1840).[17] The fact that "Elenir Irwin" created a new version, rather than reproducing an existing one, is explained in part by the need to update both language and style to contemporary tastes. But it also confirms that she, like other women of her time, used translation as an indirect path into the literary world. The successful bookseller A. Dulau & Co., in Soho Square, to whom Sarah Burney seems to have shown her niece's text, seeking advice, had declined to publish it on the grounds that the title sounded too controversial and Spanish literature was no longer fashionable. However, *The Lady's Magazine* accepted it, probably realising that the essay's polemical tone remained relevant and that it was still necessary to work towards the equality of the sexes. Ultimately, as underlined by Batchelor, the translation was an effective way for the contributors to the magazine to make their point about the "systemic marginalisation of women's contribution to the cultural, intellectual and political life of various nations and cultures" (Batchelor 2022, 235). Its influence, she argues, can be seen in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817), whose heroine, Anne Elliot, declares that men have long held the pen in their hands, and therefore books questioning women's intellectual capacities are male-biased, in words that closely echo those of "Elenir Irwin"'s 1810 translation, a faithful version of Feijoo's own words written back in 1726.

Why did Feijoo's essay continue to arouse interest in Britain in the early 1800s? As we have seen, some considered his arguments outdated. Others argued that his belligerence was typical of a backward country which, after its past political hegemony and literary splendours, was depicted in British press reports from the Peninsular War with images of brutality and atavism. Others again, including the publishers of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, champions of contemporary Spanish literature, argued ironically in

[17] Dow bases her hypothesis on stylistic similarities between the translation and other writings by Barrett and on indirect information contained in Sarah Burney's correspondence; I am extremely grateful to her for sharing her work with me prior to publication (Dow 2023).

1801 that Spain had not sunk "beneath an Egyptian darkness of ignorance", as many believed (June 1801, 532).[18] For the latter, Feijoo's work was in itself an example of modernity in bringing together both "profound disquisitions and lively speculations" (534), without sharing the irreligion of French philosophy or the immorality of German sentimental fiction.[19]

There are three main reasons, in my view, for the new resonance of Feijoo's writing in Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Firstly, it spoke to the renewed interest in Spanish culture developing in British and more widely European Romanticism. Secondly, his name and work as a Catholic enlightened intellectual served as a reference in times of secularisation and revolution for moderate and conservative authors and readers. Lastly, and of particular interest to my argument, his defence of the equal intellectual capacity of men and women was used by educated women and aspiring female writers, translators, patrons and readers to legitimise their own position and that of their sex generally in such roles. At a time when the rise of a bourgeois respectability predicated on female domesticity was eroding late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century positions that emphasised the rational capacities of women and questioned the paradoxes of liberalism (government by social contract, but arbitrary power of husbands in the home), Feijoo's combative, erudite and somewhat old-fashioned essay could be seen as giving the increasingly strict norms of female decorum a healthy shake.

The Italian Peninsula. Connections with Aristocratic and Curial Contexts

In Italy, Feijoo's works were widely read in Spanish, thanks largely to the close cultural and political relationship between the two peninsulas and to the presence of Jesuits expelled from Spain (from 1767 onwards) and of other Spanish clerics in the Roman Curia. Three different translations of the *Teatro crítico* were published between 1744 and 1782: the Genoese version was complete, but the others did not go beyond the first volume. They were produced in quarto format—the same size as the Spanish

[18] On Spanish literature in British periodicals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Perojo Arronte and Flores Moreno (2022).

[19] Founded in 1731, this magazine was extremely important to women writers (who contributed to it—Elizabeth Carter, for example) and readers.

publications and larger than the French and English translations, which were in pocket format (octavo or duodecimo)—high in price and quality (good paper, excellent typography, adorned with small engravings). For example, the Genoa edition is a beautiful set of eight leatherbound volumes, with red-edged pages and the title engraved in gold on the spines. Seemingly aimed at an erudite or aristocratic readership, they had small print runs (hence few copies have survived), and achieved only relative success. The three translators are obscure figures, probably clerics, with no other known works to their names: we have no information about Francesco Maria Bisogni, author of the Neapolitan version; Antonio Eligio Martínez, responsible for the Genoese version, may have been an exiled Jesuit, while Marcantonio Franconi, who translated the Roman edition, was a member of the Accademia dell'Arcadia.

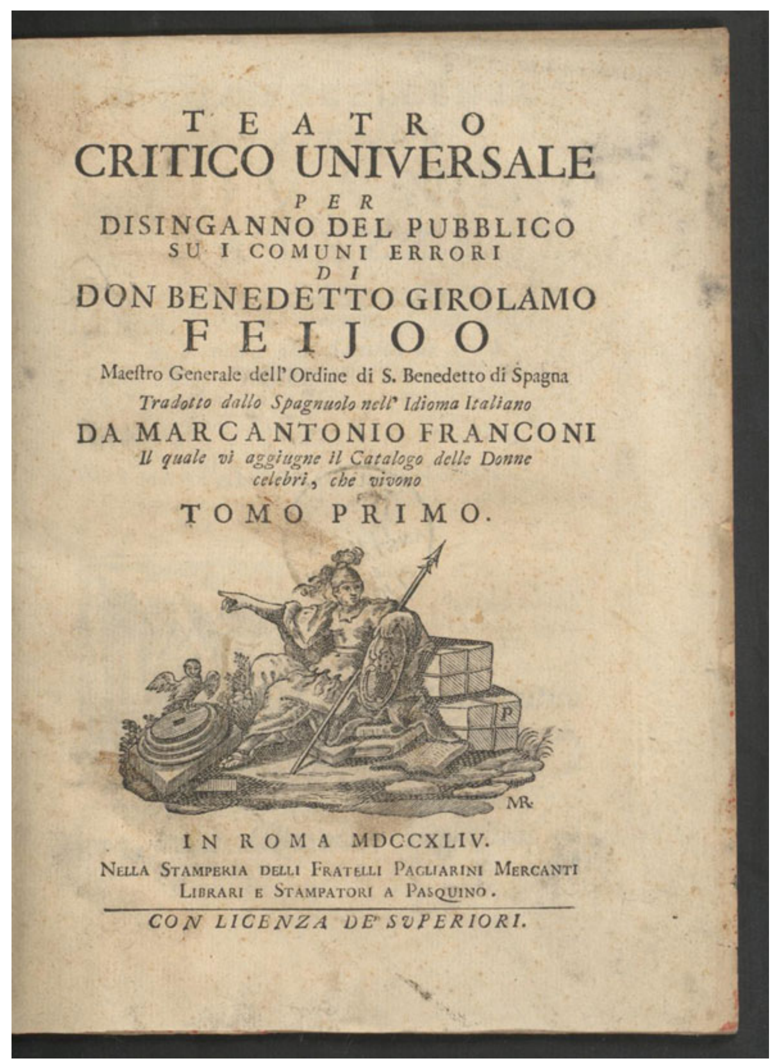
The three versions appeared in cities that were prominent publishing centres and had special links with the Hispanic monarchy: Naples (1744), at the time when Charles of Bourbon, the future Charles III of Spain, was King of Naples and Sicily; Rome (1744); and Genoa (1777–1782). These were cities in which women participated in sociability and cultural life, albeit in different ways (Betri and Brambilla 2004). In Naples, female thinkers, translators and aristocratic patrons were key figures in the intellectual circles in which Cartesianism and, by the 1740s, Newtonianism flourished: among their number were Giuseppa Eleanora Barbapiccola, translator of Descartes (1722); Faustina Pignatelli, princess of Colubrano, admitted to Bologna's Academy of Sciences in 1732; and natural philosopher Mariangela Ardinghelli, who was part of the Prince of Tarsia's circle, translated various works from English to Italian and acted as mediator between the French Académie des Sciences and Neapolitan intellectuals (Findlen 1995; Cavazza 2009, 232; Bertucci 2013). Genoa's noblewomen played a central role in the city's salons and their practices of mixed sociability, as symbolised by the custom of *cicisbeo*—the accepted form of companionship between a married woman and a male friend (Bizzocchi 2005; Betri and Brambilla 2004). In Rome, meanwhile, women from the great noble families, often linked to the Curia, were part of the various networks that revolved around the Arcadia. Founded in 1690 as a private and exclusively male group in the garden of the Franciscan monastery of San Pietro in Montorio, over time the Arcadia developed a double soul: alongside the institutionalised academy there were broader, mixed meetings, whose tentacles infiltrated the social fabric of the city and promoted politeness and "good taste"—with the active

intervention of a female elite—rather than pure erudition (Graziosi 1992, 2004).

The Genoese translation of the *Teatro crítico* is the only one to include a subscription list showing the interest of an aristocratic and ecclesiastical male elite in Feijoo's work: of the 83 subscribers (23 of them clerics), most are from the Republic of Genoa (63), led by the doge (chief magistrate) Giacomo Maria Brignole, while 20 come from other Italian cities (with Rome first, and Parma—ruled by a Bourbon, Duke Ferdinand I—a close second). The extensive translator's prefaces included in virtually all of the eight volumes reveal that Antonio Eligio Martínez was a Spaniard from Andalucía, probably a Jesuit in exile with previous experience in Spanish America. He emphasises the "general acclaim" with which Feijoo's works have been received "almost all over Europe, and in many cultivated provinces of the New World" (Feijoo 1777–1782, vol. V, "Prologo del traduttore", II). He also advertises his own scholarship and aspirations, in the form of extensive Latin quotations and lengthy reflections on the intricacies of the art of translation. However, his enthusiasm on the success of his work gradually diminishes: initially grateful for its "courteous reception", in subsequent prefaces he complains bitterly about not having achieved the expected number of subscriptions (and indeed about various cancellations), which ultimately prevented him from fulfilling his ambitious plan to translate Feijoo's *Cartas eruditas* as well.

It is the Roman version of the *Defensa de las mujeres*, however, that establishes a more explicit link with the specific local context in which it circulated (Fig. 2.4). The first and only volume published appeared in 1744, early in the pontificate of Benedict XIV (1740–1758), a learned and reformist pope who appreciated much of Feijoo's work—he cited his essay on church music in one of his encyclicals—and helped a number of female scholars. As archbishop of Bologna, he had supported the admission of Laura Bassi to the city's Academy of Sciences in 1732, working with the civil and academic authorities as they searched for a female figure who would allegorically embody the wise city (*docta Minerva*). After becoming pope, still concerned with Bologna's prestige, he arranged for Maria Gaetana Agnesi to be offered a professorship of mathematics at the city's university, and backed the request of Anna Morandi Manzolini, a renowned anatomical wax-modeller, to retain her post after her husband's death (Cavazza 2016; Mazzotti 2007).

Translating the work of a reputed scholar and cleric offered Marcoantonio Franconi, author of the Roman version, an opportunity to resume



TEATRO
CRITICO UNIVERSALE
PER
DISINGANNO DEL PUBBLICO
SU I COMUNI ERRORI
DI
DON BENEDETTO GIROLAMO
FEIJOO
Maeſtro Generale dell' Ordine di S. Benedetto di Spagna
Tradotto dallo Spagnuolo nell' Idioma Italiano
DA MARCANTONIO FRANCONI
Il quale vi aggiugne il Catalogo delle Donne celebri, che vivono
TOMO PRIMO.

MR.

IN ROMA MDCCXLIV.
NELLA STAMPERIA DELLI FRATELLI PAGLIARINI MERCANTI LIBRARI E STAMPATORI A PASQUINO.

CON LICENZA DE' SUPERIORI.

Fig. 2.4 [Marcantonio Franconi, tr.]. *Teatro critico universale per disinganno del pubblico su i comuni errori*. Roma: Fratelli Pagliarini, 1744. Zentralbibliothek Zürich

the defence of women's intellectual and moral capacity. This was a practice which had a long tradition in Italian courts and convents, involving figures such as Isotta Nogarola and Lucrezia Marinella, recognised by Feijoo, and had been represented in more recent times by such examples as Paolo Mattia Doria's *Raggionamenti* (1716), the speeches of Aretafila Savini de Rossi and Maria Gaetana Agnesi in the debate at the Accademia dei Ricovrati in Padua (1729) and Venetian Niccolò Bandiera's *Tratatto degli studi delle donne* (1740) (Guerci 1987; Messbarger 2002; Brambilla 2013). The translation also allowed Franconi and his potential supporters and patrons to create a link between that discourse and the local aristocratic networks, as well as construct an Italian cultural space based on the merits of the peninsula's female scholars by following in the footsteps of Venetian Luisa Bergalli and her anthology of works by female poets, *Componimenti poetici delle più illustri rimatrici d'ogni secolo* (1726). Franconi's additions to his Feijoo translation exemplify this. The translator's prologue and his dedication to the Venetian ambassador Giovanni da Lezze point to the author's renown in international scholarly circles and, in particular, in the Holy City. Above all, however, Franconi's seven-page "Elogio di alcune Donne celebri che vivono" expands and updates Feijoo's chapter on the learned women of the Italian Renaissance with a contemporary cast ranging from Venice to Palermo, focusing in particular on the papal protégée Bassi and on various Roman ladies: wives or widows of noblemen and scholars, or sisters of eminent churchmen, including female members of the Arcadia (Feijoo 1744b, 401–7).

In Italy, then, the *Defensa de las mujeres* enjoyed a limited circulation, restricted to erudite, clerical and aristocratic circles. Within these, its translators' efforts to give the text local relevance become doubly significant. Firstly, they explicitly linked the essay to social networks in which women played a sizeable role and which connected the nobility and intellectuals with the Curia. Secondly, they promoted the Italian cultural scene and its role in modernity by exploiting the fact that (via correspondence and travel narratives), there was considerable awareness across Europe of the exceptional admission of women to certain Italian universities (Padua, Bologna) and literary and scientific academies.

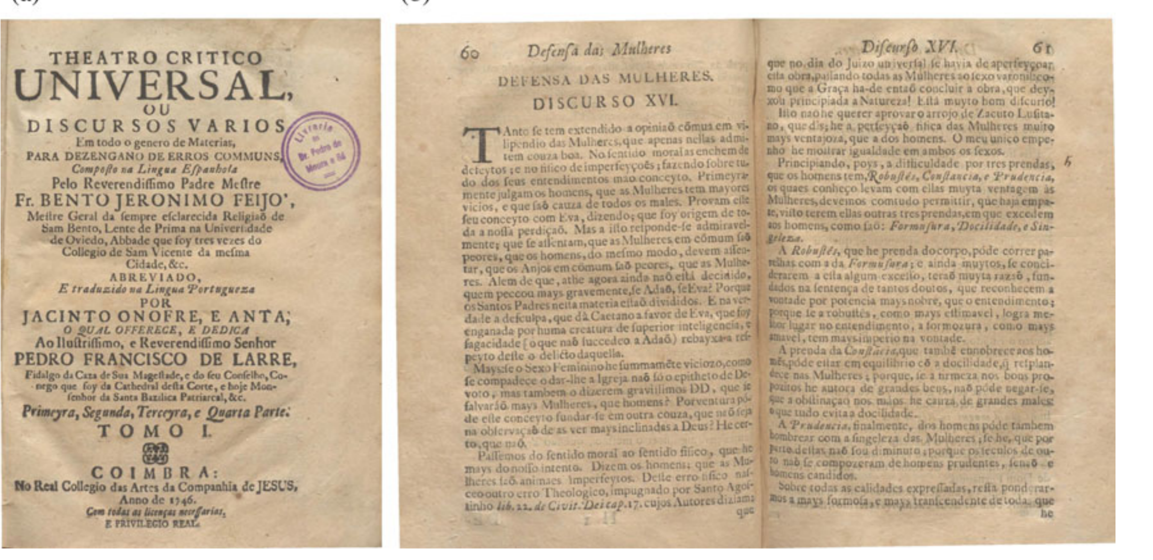
Portugal. Equality vs. Complementarity

By contrast, Feijoo's works enjoyed a very wide circulation in Portugal, aided by the country's geographic and linguistic proximity to Spain, the high level of knowledge of Spanish among its élites, and the various marriages between the Bourbons and the Braganças; indeed Feijoo congratulated himself on this in 1753 in the dedication of his *Cartas eruditas* to Bárbara de Braganza, wife of Ferdinand VI of Spain.[20] A two-volume Portuguese edition of the *Teatro crítico* was published by the Real Colégio das Artes in Coimbra and a printing house in Lisbon (Feijoo 1746–1748) as an "epitome", a substantially shortened and simplified version of the original (Fig. 2.5). The translator Jacinto Onofre (pseudonym of Carmelite friar Antonio Caetano) dedicated it to a canon of Lisbon Cathedral, Pedro Francisco de Larre, but his stated intent was to make the work more accessible to readers of modest means ("for the price at which [Feijoo's books] were being sold deprived many curious readers of his profitable teaching"). It was probably aimed at the middle classes and low clergy, readers who were intellectually curious, but more inclined to follow the main thread of an essay than to dwell on its more erudite references, and for whom an imported edition would have been too expensive. The *Defensa das mulheres* is a fluent, readable summary that reduces the 60-plus pages of the original to ten and captures Feijoo's fundamental ideas, stripping them of all scholarly trappings.

Although the *Defensa de las mujeres* was not published separately in Portuguese, it was well known and wielded an intense and lasting influence on debates about women's intellectual aptitude and education. In Portugal, such writings were published as chapbooks or so-called *cordel* literature, a genre that bridged the gap between academic and popular culture (Marques 2005; Anastácio 2018). For example, the *Espelho Critico* (1761), published under the pseudonym "Fray Amador do Desengano", adopts a title similar to that of the *Teatro crítico* but attacks the female vices that result in male misfortune. This misogynist text was countered by two *Cartas apologéticas em favor, e defensa das mulheres* (1761), both of which draw on Feijoo's essay to compose as erudite, lively and combative a contribution to the debate as the polemics the Benedictine monk had

[20] See Piwnik (2003) for more on the dissemination of Feijoo's ideas in Portugal via the circulation in Spanish of his works and those of his defenders and detractors, a Spanish index published in Lisbon, and translations of a few self-standing essays.

(a) (b)



THEATRO CRITICO
UNIVERSAL,
OU
DISCURSOS VARIOS
Em todo o genero de Materias,
PARA DEZENGANO DE ERROS COMMUNS,
Compoſto na Lingua Eſpanhola
Pelo Reverendiſſimo Padre Meſtre
Fr. BENTO JERONIMO FEIJO',
Meſtre Geral da ſempre eſclarecida Religiaõ de
Sam Bento, Lente de Prima na Univerſidade
de Oviedo, Abbade que foy tres vezes do
Collegio de Sam Vicente da meſma
Cidade, &c.
ABREVIADO,
E traduzido na Lingua Portugueza
POR
JACINTO ONOFRE, E ANTA;
O QUAL OFFERECE, E DEDICA
Ao Illuſtriſſimo, e Reverendiſſimo Senhor
PEDRO FRANCISCO DE LARRE,
Fidalgo da Caza de Sua Mageſtade, e do ſeu Conſelho, Conego que foy da Cathedral deſta Corte, e hoje Monſenhor da Santa Bazilica Patriarcal, &c.
Primeyra, Segunda, Terceyra, e Quarta Parte:
TOMO I.
COIMBRA:
No Real Collegio das Artes da Companhia de JESUS,
Anno de 1746.
Com todas as licenças neceſſarias,
E PRIVILEGIO REAL.

Livraria do Dr. Pedro de Moura e Sá

60 *Defenſa das Mulheres*

DEFENSA DAS MULHERES.

DISCURSO XVI.

TAnto ſe tem extendido a opiniaõ cõmua em vilipendio das Mulheres, que apenas nellas admitem couza boa. No ſentido moral as enchem de defeytos; e no fiſico de imperfeyçoẽs; fazendo ſobre tudo dos ſeus entendimentos mao conceyto. Primeyramente julgam os homens, que as Mulheres tem mayores vicios, e que ſaõ cauza de todos os males. Provam eſte ſeu conceyto com Eva, dizendo; que foy origem de toda a noſſa perdiçaõ. Mas a iſto reſponde-ſe admiravelmente; que ſe aſſentam, que as Mulheres em cõmum ſaõ peores, que os homens, do meſmo modo, devem aſſentar, que os Anjos em cõmum ſaõ peores, que as Mulheres. Alem de que, athe agora ainda naõ eſtá decidido, quem peccou mays gravemente, ſe Adaõ, ſe Eva? Porque os Santos Padres neſta materia eſtaõ divididos. E na verdade a deſculpa, que dà Caetano a favor de Eva, que foy enganada por huma creatura de ſuperior inteligencia, e ſagacidade (o que naõ ſuccedeo a Adaõ) rebayxa a reſpeyto deſte o delicto daquella.

Mays ſe o Sexo Feminino he ſummamẽte viciozo, como ſe compadece o dar-lhe a Igreja naõ ſó o epitheto de Devoto, mas tambem o dizerem graviſſimos DD, que ſe ſalvaráõ mays Mulheres, que homens? Porventura póde eſte conceyto fundar-ſe em outra couza, que naõ ſeja na obſervaçaõ de as ver mays inclinadas a Deus? He certo, que naõ.

Paſſemos do ſentido moral ao ſentido fiſico, que he mays do noſſo intento. Dizem os homens; que as Mulheres ſaõ animaes imperfeytos. Deſte erro fiſico naſceo outro erro Theologico, impugnado por Santo Agoſtinho *lib. 22. de Civit. Dei cap.* 17. cujos Autores diziam; que

Diſcurſo XVI. 61

que no dia do Juizo univerſal ſe havia de aperfeyçoar eſta obra, paſſando todas as Mulheres ao ſexo varonil: como que a Graça ha-de entaõ concluir a obra, que deyxou principiada a Natureza! Eſtá muyto bom diſcurſo!

Iſto naõ he querer aprovar o arrojo de Zacuto Luſitano, que diz; he a perfeyçaõ fiſica das Mulheres muito mays ventajoza, que a dos homens. O meu unico empenho he moſtrar igualdade em ambos os ſexos.

Principiando, poys, a difficuldade por tres prendas, que os homens tem, *Robuſtés, Conſtancia, e Prudencia,* os quaes conheço levam com ellas muyta ventagem às Mulheres, devemos comtudo permittir, que haja empate, viſto terem ellas outras tres prendas, em que excedem aos homens, como ſaõ: *Formuſura, Docilidade, e Singeleza.*

A *Robuſtés,* que he prenda do corpo, póde correr parelhas com a da *Formuſura*; e ainda muytos, ſe conſiderarem a eſta algum exceſſo, teraõ muyta razaõ, fundados na ſentença de tantos doutos, que reconhecem a vontade por potencia mays nobre, que o entendimento; porque ſe a robuſtés, como mays eſtimavel, logra melhor lugar no entendimento, a formozura, como mays amavel, tem mays imperio na vontade.

A prenda da *Conſtancia,* que tambẽ ennobrece aos homẽs, póde eſtar em equilibrio cõ a docilidade, q̃ reſplandece nas Mulheres; porque, ſe a firmeza nos bons propoſitos he autora de grandes bens, naõ póde negar-ſe, que a obſtinaçaõ nos màos he cauza de grandes males: o que tudo evita a docilidade.

A *Prudencia,* finalmente, dos homens póde tambem hombrear com a ſingeleza das Mulheres; ſe he, que por parte dellas naõ ſou diminuto; porque os ſeculos de ouro naõ ſe compozeram de homens prudentes, ſenaõ de homens candidos.

Sobre todas as calidades expreſſadas, reſta ponderarmos a mays formoſa, e mays tranſcendente de todas, que he

Fig. 2.5 [Antonio Caetano, tr.]. *Theatro critico universal ou discursos varios, em todo o genero de materias, para dezengano de erros communs*, vol. 1. Coimbra: Real Collegio das Artes, 1748. Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra

sustained with his own adversaries in Spain (Torres Feijó 2003). Their author, "Gertrudes Margarida de Jesus", may have been a nun or, more probably, a male cleric, whose use of the scholarly resources of the original suggests he had access to a complete edition. That would mean the text travelled around Portugal on two parallel circuits, with an abridged Portuguese version finding a wide readership, and an unabridged Spanish version reaching élite and learned circles.

In the last thirty years of the century, the debate became more widespread in Portugal, thanks to an upturn in commerce; the presence of foreign communities; the reconstruction of Lisbon after the earthquake of 1755, which in turn encouraged the new mixed sociability; and the accession of Maria I in 1777, which fuelled the discussion on women's ability to reign (Torres Feijó 2003; Bello Vázquez 2005). This period saw the translation of various French works presenting the latest ideas about the complementarity of the sexes and female sensibility and domesticity, such as François Boudier de Villemert's *L'Ami des femmes* (*O Amigo das mulheres*, 1795; reprinted 1818 and 1823) and Antoine-Léonard Thomas's *Essai sur le caractère, les moeurs et l'esprit des femmes dans les différens siècles* (*Apologia das mulheres*, 1805; reprinted 1818), whose Portuguese versions were dedicated to cultivated and influential women married to politicians (such as Catarina Micaela de Sousa César e Lencastre, Viscountess of Balsemão). In 1790, a *Tratado sobre Igualdade dos sexos* signed by "Hum Amigo da Razao" rejected, like Feijoo, the notion that there was any inequality between male and female intellectual aptitude based on differences in the organs of perception, while also echoing Rousseau's *Émile* in affirming that women's happiness lay in alleviating their husbands' workload and making their existence happy and comfortable. As late as 1805, a fictional woman defended her sex, seconding Feijoo's ironic assertion that only angels, who were genderless, could be impartial, because men, even self-proclaimed philosophers, acted in bad faith in not recognising women's abilities ("If the angels were to write, they would grant us equal merit", L.D.P.G. 1805). New thinking about the complementarity of the sexes did not, therefore, completely displace the assertion of rational equality or the glossing of illustrious women of the past, two central axes of Feijoo's essay—all three strands were instead interwoven in varying and uneven ways.

Creole Readings

In Spanish America, Feijoo was by far the most appreciated and cited peninsular writer, and America by turn occupied a very important place in his thinking (Fernández Abril 2017). Although he refused an appointment as a bishop in the Indies, he maintained epistolary relationships with intellectuals closely connected to the networks of institutional and ecclesiastical power in both the Viceroyalty of Peru and New Spain (San José Vázquez 2016; García Díaz 2017), and his works could be found in many libraries and private collections owned by male and female *criollos* or American-born Spaniards (Molleda Sabada 2019, 95).

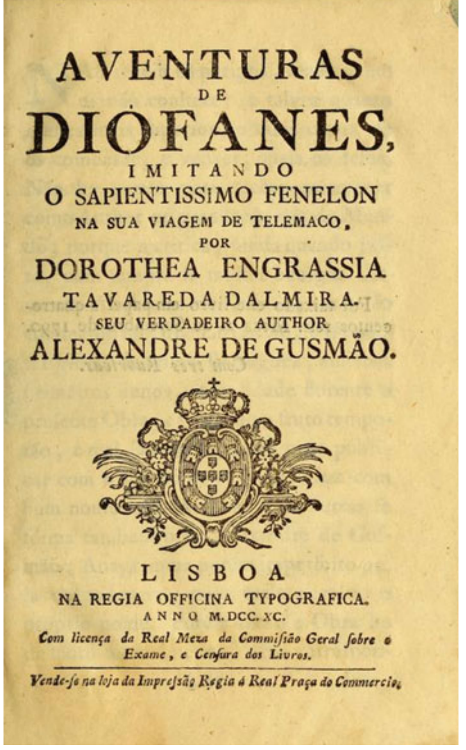
Despite his immense fame in Spanish America, none of the many written tributes to Feijoo and his work explicitly mentions the *Defensa de las mujeres*: I have found just one passage in the *Biblioteca Hispano Americana septentrional* (Northern Hispanic American Library), first published in 1816–1821 by New Spain-born cleric José Mariano Beristain, that expresses gratitude for the way Feijoo had praised the erudition and talent of the "celebrated Mexican nun Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz", the seventeenth-century poet and thinker whose work circulated widely on both sides of the Atlantic and influenced Feijoo's own poetry (Beristain 1883, vol. 1, 362). This side of his work does not therefore seem to have been the main source of interest for a predominantly ecclesiastical intellectual elite (Escamilla González 2010) whose members, mostly *criollos*, were attracted by other aspects of his thinking, such as his defence of Americans' moral and intellectual capacity, as opposed to European theories on the natural inferiority of the New World, a crucial intellectual and political issue in scholarly debates (San José Vázquez 2016; Cañizares-Esguerra 2001). It seems likely that Feijoo's views on gender intellectual equality did arouse the interest of a wider, lay readership—men and women who frequented mixed *tertulias* (in Mexico City, Santa Fe de Bogotá, Quito) and consumed the periodical press that emerged in the last decades of the eighteenth century, in which the debate on education and the respective roles of men and women in moral and social reform featured prominently (Meléndez 2009). Feijoo's American readers included women such as Leona Vicario in Mexico City, who made excerpts from his speeches (García 2020, 37–38), the Joaristi family in Zacatecas, who read him together at night (Molleda Sabada 2019, 20), and Lima noblewoman María Josefa Carrillo de Albornoz, whose father recommended the writer to her, as we know from a letter of 29 July

1780 ("I am continuing to read Feijóo, as you suggested"—Martínez Pérez 2020, 374). There seems, however, to be no written trace of the opinions of these or other readers of Feijoo in Spanish America about his ideas on gender difference.

By contrast, we do have two fascinating examples of the way in which Feijoo's arguments were recycled by two writers born in Brazil, where his work was also well known (Martínez López 1966). The first is Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta (1711–1793), who was born in São Paulo to a Brazilian mother and Portuguese father and moved as a child to Lisbon, where she mixed in court circles. The younger sister of essayist Matias Aires da Silva de Eça, an admirer of Feijoo, she drew on the *Defensa de las mujeres* in her *Aventuras de Diofanes*, published under a pseudonym in 1752 in Lisbon and reprinted in 1777 and 1790[21] (Fig. 2.6). The female protagonists of this moral and didactic novel in neoclassical style, inspired by Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque*, severely criticise the frivolity of aristocratic women and the disgraceful neglect of female education. In words very similar to those of Feijoo, Da Silva argues that souls are genderless ("they were created equal, and the disposition of the organs (from which I am told the goodness of the spirit comes) is as advantageous in women as it is in men") and that it is education which enables or prevents the full development of natural talent ("… because men occupy the universities, in which they would find no place if women were to frequent them, since our souls are equals and we possess the same right to the necessary knowledge", da Silva Tavares 1790, 79 and 80). She also firmly upholds the right to education from her own perspective: that of a cultivated woman, with life experience and social contacts, entirely convinced of women's abilities and angered by both the unjustness of men and the lack of intellectual ambition of many women.

The second Brazilian writer to draw on Feijoo's arguments in favour of women was Feliciano Joaquim de Sousa Nunes (1734–1808). Born in Rio de Janeiro, he travelled to Lisbon in search of a career and published his *Discursos político-moraes* there in 1758. That edition was destroyed and its author sent back to Brazil (where the text was republished in 1851) by order of the Secretary of State Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the future Marquis of Pombal, who considered his attitude

[21] The first edition (entitled *Máximas de virtudes e formosura*) and the second were signed "Dorotea Engrassia Tavareda Dalmira"; the third appeared under a male name, "Alexandre de Gusmão".



AVENTURAS
DE
DIOFANES,
IMITANDO
O SAPIENTISSIMO FENELON
NA SUA VIAGEM DE TELEMACO,
POR
DOROTHEA ENGRASSIA
TAVAREDA DALMIRA.
SEU VERDADEIRO AUTHOR
ALEXANDRE DE GUSMÃO.

LISBOA
NA REGIA OFFICINA TYPOGRAFICA.
ANNO M.DCC.XC.
Com licença da Real Meza da Commissão Geral sobre o Exame, e Censura dos Livros.
Vende-se na loja da Impressão Regia á Real Praça do Commercio.

Fig. 2.6 [Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta]. *Aventuras de Diofanes*, 2nd edition. Lisbon: Na Regia Officina Typografica, 1777. Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra

towards the metropolis to be subversive. Sousa seems to have been a self-made man, resentful of a Portuguese administration which denied its American subjects printing presses and universities and convinced of his individual merit as opposed to the privileges enjoyed by the nobility. This adds personal emphasis to his passionate defence of understanding as a natural faculty and may explain his empathy with those women who were demanding their talents be recognised. Sousa vigorously upholds the intellectual equality of "all rational creatures, regardless of sex or status" as evidence that can only be ignored by those blind to evidence and enslaved to unfounded prejudices (Sousa Nunes 2006, 144). In that regard, he quotes Feijoo several times, but intensifying his combative style and drawing on his own reality, taking pride in his American heritage and

arguing with conviction that female aptitude was not restricted to heroines of the past but visible in everyday life. He therefore includes among his examples of learned women several Portuguese women of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and the New Spain-born Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695), as well as poet Ângela do Amaral (c.1725–?), a contemporary of his and, like him, a native of Rio.[22]

These examples show that, in the sphere of the gender debate too, Feijoo's work was subject to readings and reworkings within the framework of a Spanish and Portuguese American Enlightenment which, far from being a pale imitation of the European Enlightenment, was very much an original and critical response to it.

Conclusion: Faces of Modernity

The way Feijoo's essay in defence of the rational equality of men and women echoed around Europe and America throughout the eighteenth century and, in some cases, even into the nineteenth century, does not of course mean it had universal validity: no text has that. It does however mean that the interest his work aroused in Spain even at the end of the nineteenth century cannot be seen as related exclusively to the cultural backwardness of the Iberian world, where ideas that had fallen out of fashion elsewhere lived on. Either of these two readings would mean assuming that a text has a stable meaning—in this case, that the meaning of the *Defensa de las mujeres* remained unchanged since its original publication in 1726, throughout its various editions and translations. On the contrary, the uses to which it was put, both in its immediate environment and in other cultural, linguistic and political contexts, say much about its capacity to challenge new generations, who saw it less as something to be confined to the past and more as a repertoire of arguments to be reinterpreted or reformulated in the light of the present. Its extensive refutation of the Aristotelian principles on which the notion of female inferiority was based ceased to be of interest, due to the obsolescence of the scholastic system, but its examples of learned women continued to be invoked as evidence, and updated to suit national or local contexts. Above all, Feijoo's defence of intellectual equality, even if couched in outdated

[22] An overview of eighteenth-century Portuguese and Brazilian women writers can be found in Bello Vázquez (2013).

language, must still have seemed a useful antidote to the new medical and philosophical theories which argued that the sensitivity of the female nervous system meant women had less aptitude for learning.

Many ages coexist within each age. The different readings and uses to which the *Defensa de las mujeres* was subjected challenge the idea of a linear history of thinking on gender difference. From the final decades of the eighteenth century onwards, the cultural and political ideal of complementarity between public and private, based on the idea of a naturally domestic and sensitive femininity, gained increasing hegemony in Europe and the Americas. It was disputed, however, not only on the basis of Enlightenment, radical or revolutionary principles, but also on that of material recycled from various earlier intellectual traditions (rationalism, Puritanism, Stoicism, Augustinianism…). The translations and adaptations of Feijoo's essay over the course of almost a century, and the opinions generated by it, confirm—as does research into physiological discourses of sexual difference and into friendships between educated men and women—that gender models continued to be a subject of discussion, whether in scholarly circles, among lay readers or for the emerging public opinion. While some saw the text as outdated or irrelevant, others (especially women) read it with fresh eyes in a debate that raged on, and thus it continued to be reinterpreted and rewritten in the light of new preoccupations.

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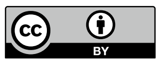

CHAPTER 3

"Man, Secluded from the Company of Women, Is… a Dangerous Animal to Society": The History of Women in Scotland's Enlightenment

Silvia Sebastiani

Introduction

For many years now, scholars have acknowledged the historiographical revolution that occurred during the Enlightenment, while also emphasising the plural character of this movement. Many different forms of history developed in the eighteenth century, expanding far beyond the boundaries of traditional narratives and addressing the interests of a larger readership, which also included cultivated women. Manners, customs, modes of subsistence, laws, commerce, daily life, family, passions, thoughts and sentiments became objects of historical enquiry (Phillips 2000, for the British context). Excluded from archetypal accounts, largely centred on the (male) political arena, women entered history. The history

S. Sebastiani (✉)
École Des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France
e-mail: silvia.sebastiani@ehess.fr

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of the "female sex" (in the language of the eighteenth century) developed as a new historical genre, placing women centre stage in various and contradictory ways. Some women also became historians in their own right (Knott and Taylor 2005; O'Brien 2009). My interest here, however, lies in the historiographical focus on women in Scottish Enlightenment thought.

This chapter examines how the history of women emerged in 1770s Scotland as a crucial but ambiguous chapter of the history of civilisation. I shall concentrate on the writings of a small group of male philosophers who were at the heart of what is now known as "the Scottish Enlightenment".[1] Seminal thinkers such as Adam Smith, Lord Kames (Henry Home), William Robertson or John Millar, to name but a few, wrote progressive histories mapping out the steps of humanity's social and economic development from primitive "savagery" to "civil society". This historical process, shaped by the new concept of "civilisation",[2] was characterised by the expansion of commerce and the softening of manners, in which women were deemed to have played a fundamental role. In the same move, women were described as improving their status and treated as a key barometer of social improvement.

Similar views were widespread far beyond Scotland, advanced by writers such as the Frenchman Antoine-Léonard Thomas, German Georg Forster, Spaniard Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos and Italian Pietro Verri, among many others.[3] What is distinctive in Scotland's Enlightenment is the elaboration of an influential theory of stadial progress, in which modernity was labelled, for better or for worse, as feminine. In an insightful article charting Enlightenment "uses of women", historian

[1] The Scottish Enlightenment was established as an academic field at the end of the 1960s by the almost contemporary works of Hugh Trevor-Roper in Oxford and Duncan Forbes in Cambridge. Both paid great attention to the shaping of modern historiography. See Trevor-Roper (2010 [1967]) and Forbes (1954, 1975).

[2] Much has been written on the history of the concept of "civilisation" and the role it played in the Enlightenment, starting with Lucien Febvre's influential 1929 essay (Febvre 1962 [1929]) and Norbert Elias's *Civilizing Process* of 1939 (Elias 1982 [1939]). From a now vast literature, see the recent contributions by Binoche (2005) and Lilti (2019, 87–113; 139–158).

[3] See, for example, Barker-Benfield (1992), Knott and Taylor (2005), O'Brien (2009), and Bödecker and Steinbrügge (2001); Bolufer (1998, 2018). For the Italian debate, see Guerci (1987, 1988), whose focus is on "the other eighteenth century", that of the "obedient bride".

Barbara Taylor shows how two competing discourses intertwined with one another, "depicting Woman both as the extreme of acquisitive hedonism and as a paragon of self-sacrificial benevolence". If "this simultaneous degradation and exaltation of women" was neither new nor distinctive to Britain, it acquired a specific meaning in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment, which—in Taylor's words—"sponsored one of the most far-reaching and innovative enquiries into womanhood in western history", laying the foundations for what today we call "gender history" (Taylor 2012, 80, 83).

My claim is that the new focus on women's history went hand in hand with a new emphasis on women's nature, bodies and sexuality, raising the question of population increase—a specifically female type of production—as a social, political and economic issue. The discourse on the "female sex" became deeply entangled with the reflection on economic growth and political economy. Looking at women from this perspective leads us to reassess the intrinsic relationship between natural history and the history of civilisation, all too often treated by historiography as two separate domains. Yet in Scotland's Enlightenment, these were not seen as mutually incompatible approaches. On the contrary, most philosophers followed in the wake of the French naturalist Buffon in considering the human species as belonging to natural history along with other animals (albeit in a higher position). At the same time, they regarded civilisation as the "natural" outcome of human nature, to the extent that their approach might be defined as a "natural history of civilisation" (Sebastiani 2023a). Accordingly, the distinction between the sexes appeared to them both natural and historical, being embedded in the order of nature while changing over time.

Woman became a specific subject of historical enquiry once the universality of Man started to be questioned. When (Scottish) Enlightenment philosophers spoke about Man, the "science of man" and the "history of man", they used the language of universalism, aiming at a general and universal science and history. This science and history also included women. By contrast, they did not use the same universal language to speak about women, but rather the language of particularity and singularity: this singularity could be in tension with, and even work against, universalism. By emphasising the progressive emancipation of the "female sex" from the oppression of the master male, the new genre of the "history of women" made the frictions explicit, showing that women's

function was not only different from that of men: it was also competitive and challenged the leading role of the latter.

My aim is to explore the tensions and ambivalences surrounding gender which I consider structural to Scottish historiography. The main questions I pose to my sources are: what was the part played by women within the universal histories of civilisation? Did women act and change the course of history, independently from men? How did the relationship between the sexes change over time? How did Woman's nature interplay with Her history? My chapter is construed around three nodes, which reveal different but interlinked aspects of gender tensions:

1. First, I shall examine the civilising role assigned to women as agents of culture in the process leading to commercial societies, by also emphasising their crucial role as bearers of the human species. The changing relationship between the sexes over time made both men and women reach their full humanity within the historical process: while women freed themselves from the male yoke, men in turn adopted polite manners and became more humane. As a result, the process of "civilisation" was a process of "feminisation".
2. If potentially universal, this progress was the result of a history which was specific and situated: according to a shared narrative, it had taken place in Europe, or rather in a part of it, one to which Spain remained peripheral. The second section of my chapter will therefore address two interwoven questions: firstly, it will explore how the "progress of the female sex" has been inextricably associated with the peculiar history of European civilisation; secondly, it will demonstrate the different geography of civilisation emerging within Europe. The relationship between the sexes played its part in crystallising the differences between peoples.
3. My final section will deal with the other side of this same discourse: the ambiguities and instabilities of civilisation in the modern and commercial societies of Europe. These were expressed in the fear that progress could be reversed, turning civilising femininity into decadent effeminacy. The same natural characteristics of women that had allowed the whole of humanity to progress could lead to the collapse of advanced societies, corrupting manners and causing a decrease in female reproductive capacity. The revaluation of women's nature and history had its downside in the Scottish

Enlightenment, which, in a contradictory move, ultimately set the limits of civilisation.

Civilising Woman

In his lectures on jurisprudence, given at the University of Glasgow in the early 1760s and perhaps earlier, Adam Smith formulated an idea of human progress that was to become a shared historical framework for the Scottish Enlightenment. It outlined the development of humanity from savagery towards civil society, through successive stages of socio-economic development:

> There are *four distinct states* which *mankind pass* thro: 1st, the Age of Hunters, 2dly, the Age of Shepherds, 3dly, the Age of Agriculture; and 4thly, the Age of Commerce. (Smith 1978, 14)

This process was both natural and historical. It was the result of uniform and perfectible human nature, which evolved by degrees from the simple and rough life of "savages" to complex and polite commercial societies. Smith explained that in the first stage, peoples lived within simple tribes, with no institutions, no laws and no property: they were few in number, because this precarious way of subsistence could not guarantee the survival of the many. The increasing population required a more secure source of subsistence and triggered the progression to the second stage based on pasturage. In the age of shepherds, legislative and political systems started to develop. With agriculture (the third stage), the political body became more complex, and the activities in which peoples were engaged diversified, resulting in the division of labour. This led to the age of commerce, at the apex of which stood Britain. The transition from one mode of subsistence to another depended on population growth in early stages, whereas the shift from farming to commercial society was linked to the division of labour (Smith 1978, 14–16, on which see Meek 1976).

This schematic description, from which women are apparently absent, raises an issue which has not been sufficiently emphasised by historiography but which, in my view, is crucial if we are to evaluate the role played by the "female sex" within stadial theory, namely that in their reproductive capacity as bearers of the species, women were the *cause* and the *engine* of human progress. Indeed, without population growth,

the savage stage would have been perpetual—as it supposedly was in the case of the Amerindians. Historical progress that relied upon male productive activities of hunting, herding, farming and trading was enabled by, and so depended upon, the earlier sexual and reproductive labour of women. Despite its significance, this female labour was never fully acknowledged by Smith or other Scottish historians, perhaps because they regarded breeding as a passive act, a mere natural instinct. Yet the issue of population acquired enormous importance in eighteenth-century political economy and was central to the debate on "the wealth of nations".[4] The shift of vocabulary from "generation" to "reproduction"—a new concept that Buffon placed at the heart of natural history and used to define the term "species"[5]—was crucial in this context. By understanding procreation as a dynamic process taking place over time (in contrast with any creative act), the focus was on the perpetuation of the species (whether vegetable, animal or human), its control and its improvement.[6]

Smith's emphasis on the productive labour of man, driven by nature to be active and constantly "better his condition",[7] had the consequence of concealing female reproductive labour. His posture changed radically, however, when he dealt with advanced market-dominated societies: women were no longer invisible and passive forces in history, but had become prominent historical subjects owing to their links with luxury and consumption. Their influence was here fully recognised and emphasised. The new commercial rules of modern societies were interpreted as markedly feminine, and women were seen to embody the ethos of transaction and conversation within a single semantic field: the term "commerce", the essence of the awareness of the modern for Scottish

[4] See Tomaselli (1988) O'Brien (2009, ch. 6) ("The history women and the population men, 1760–1830"). My sincere thanks go to Catherine Packham for having encouraged me to pursue enquiries in this direction. Her fine work on vitalism is another way of focusing on the human body by bringing philosophy into dialogue with science and medicine in Britain's Enlightenment. See Packham (2012, part I).

[5] Buffon defined the "species" as a constant succession of similar individuals able to reproduce. Buffon (1749–1789, vol. 2, (1749: 10–12), vol. 4 (1753: 385–386). See Roger (1989: ch. 9).

[6] According to Susanne Lettow, "the whole enterprise of the temporalization of nature builds on the concept of reproduction". See Lettow (2014: 2, 2015).

[7] This is a central argument of the *Wealth of Nations*. See Smith (1976, vol. I, Book II, ch. 3: 341, 343, 345; Book IV, ch. 5: 540).

philosophers, meant not just economic exchange, but also social, cultural and sexual intercourse (Pocock 1983).

This was an aspect that David Hume had begun to elaborate in a series of influential essays from the 1740s onwards, and which found its full formulation in the 1750s, outlining the agenda for Scottish historical debate. In "Of Refinement in the Arts" (1752), originally entitled "Of Luxury", Hume put the relationship between men and women at the foundation of a new ethics, which became paradigmatic of civilisation and modernity as such. He construed a direct parallel between the refinement of the arts and the expansion of human sociability. "The more these refined arts advance"—writes Hume—"the more sociable men become", developing a new taste and entering the society of conversation, made accessible to them by women. Female company shaped the distinctive features of modern commercial societies, which were driven as much by pleasure and kindness as they were by knowledge and industry:

> Both sexes meet in an easy and sociable manner: and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace. So that … they must feel an encrease of humanity, from the very habit of conversing together, and contributing to each other's pleasure and entertainment. Thus *industry, knowledge,* and *humanity,* are linked together by an indissoluble chain…. (Hume 1985, 271, emphasis in the original)

Luxury, associated with the image of women, became a dynamic element of well-being and social mobility, sharply differentiating modern liberty from ancient liberty. In John Pocock's formulation, Hume, followed by Smith and John Millar, "replaced the *polis* by politeness, the *oikos* by the economy. In place of the classical citizen, master of his land, family, and arms, … appeared a fluid, historical and transactional vision of *homo faber et mercator*, shaping himself through the stages of history" (Pocock 1983, 242–243). The clear distinction between civilisation and barbarism was grounded on the different relationship between the sexes, as Hume had stressed in an earlier essay on the "Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" (1742):

> As nature has given *man* the superiority above *woman*, by endowing him with greater strength both of mind and body; it is his part to alleviate that superiority, as much as possible, by the generosity of his behaviour, and by a studied deference and complaisance for all her inclinations and opinions. Barbarous nations display this superiority, by reducing their females to the

> most abject slavery; by confining them, by beating them, by selling them, by killing them. But the male sex, among a polite people, discover their authority in a more generous, though not a less evident manner; by civility, by respect, by complaisance, and, in a word, by gallantry (Hume 1985, 133, emphasis in the original)

The divergence between "barbarous nations" and "polite people" revealed a clear improvement in manners, where women's influence on men was crucial in producing sympathy and sensibility, so that the new *homo economicus* was "a better citizen and a better man". However, Hume was making "a polite plea for greater politeness" in the relationship between the sexes and not "a call for a correction of the fundamental social, political, and legal inequalities that structured relations between men and women in eighteenth-century Britain"—as James Harris has rightly stressed in commenting on Hume's essay "Of Love and Marriage" (1741) (Harris 2015, 161). Indeed, for Hume, man's superiority remained rooted in nature.

Hume's remarks found a fundamental place in the diachronic model of stadial histories. John Millar, a former student of Smith and later professor of Law at Glasgow, opened his *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771) with a chapter on "Rank and condition of women in different ages". The Judge of the Court of Session, Henry Home, Lord Kames, devoted one of his *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774) to the "Progress of the female sex". The Edinburgh physician William Alexander published, in two volumes, the first work in Scotland entirely dedicated to the *History of Women* (1779), encompassing all nations, times and spaces, "from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time". John Gregory, also a physician, gave the "female sex" a pivotal role in his *Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World* (1765), and authored one of the most influential eighteenth-century conduct books, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774). Many other Scottish literati dealt directly or indirectly with the progress of women through history, in multiple and often contradictory ways.[8]

[8] I deal here with just one aspect of Scottish historiography, that linking women to modernity and civilisation. For a more comprehensive view, see Rendall (1998, 1999), Knott and Taylor (2005) and Sebastiani (2013: ch. 5). Moreover, an equivalent of the historiographical focus on women and reproduction can be discerned in various medical and anatomical works of the time, such as Hunter (1774).

In the picture emerging from stadial histories, women were condemned to a state of misery among "savages", who lived in hostile environments, coupled promiscuously and disregarded family. Millar defined this as a "mortifying picture" (Millar 2006 [I ed. 1771], 114). Being naturally inferior in physical strength and courage (as presumed by many Scottish historians), women were treated as slaves or helots by the opposite sex. However, the stadial model promised their emancipation from the very beginning, in connection with the gradual development of human societies. As William Robertson summarised in his highly influential *History of America* (1777), while dealing with "savage" Amerindians:

> That women are indebted to the refinements of polished manners for a happy change in their state, is a point which can admit of no doubt. To despise and degrade the female sex, is the characteristic of the savage state in every part of the globe. (Robertson 1788, book IV, vol. 2: 103)

With the historical process, the feminine values of sociability, kindness and conversation gradually gained ground and the relationship between the sexes was moralised, thereby bettering women's position. The entire social body benefited from this improvement: female company alone was deemed capable of engendering "civil manners", "high feelings" and "fine arts", so that no society could ever rise if women were excluded. As noted by Alexander in the passage from which I have borrowed the title of this chapter:

> Man, secluded from the company of women, is not only a rough and uncultivated, but a dangerous, animal to society. (Alexander 1782, vol. I: 492)

The process of civilisation was so dependent on the status of women that the latter became the parameter used to measure the degree of civilisation attained by a society. Alexander expressed this question in the clearest and most unambiguous terms. It is worth recalling his entire passage:

> As strength and courage are in savage life the only means of attaining to power and distinction, so weakness and timidity are the certain paths to slavery and oppression. On this account, we shall almost constantly find women among savages condemned to every species of servile, or rather, of slavish drudgery; and shall as constantly find them emerging from this state, in the same proportion as we find the men emerging from ignorance

> and brutality; the rank, therefore, and condition, in which we find women in any country, mark out to us with the greatest precision, the exact point in the scale of civil society, to which the people of such country have arrived; and were their history entirely silent on every other subject, and only mentioned the manner in which they treated their women, we would, from thence, be enabled to form a tolerable judgement for the barbarity, or culture of their manners. (Alexander 1782, vol. I: 151)

In a pioneering essay that questioned the overly simplistic association between women and nature, Sylvana Tomaselli suggested that for Alexander, as well as for a number of Enlightenment historians, the process of civilisation corresponded to a process of "feminisation". Society became "civil", when it abandoned its masculine features of war and violence for the feminine values of commerce, conversation and sympathy.[9]

Rather than being assimilated into nature, women were placed at the heart of the historical progress: not only did they benefit from culture, "they were its agents" (Tomaselli 1985 121). Modernity was thus distinctly feminine.

Geography of Civilisation

The process of civilisation/feminisation was, however, far from universal. Firstly, the "emancipated" Woman who had been placed at the pinnacle of historical progress and at the heart of commercial society belonged to a specific rank, namely "the middle condition"—never to the labouring classes, rarely to the aristocracy.[10] Secondly, She was a distinctive feature of a small portion of the world, corresponding to Europe, and more precisely to its north-western corner. She was conceived as both the historical *product* and the historical *cause* of Europe's modernity. At the

[9] Yet civilisation was also consistent with war. Scottish historians believed that the means of waging war improved over time, becoming less cruel and brutal, i.e. more humane and "feminine". The castigation of the brutalities of wars waged by "savages" had its counterpart in the lurid descriptions of "savage" violence against women. The violence of savagery thus seems to represent—in some ways—a hypermasculine condition. See Buchan (2013).

[10] The protagonists of the new histories of women were members of the gentry, wives or daughters of lawyers, physicians, investors in commercial enterprises and holders of offices (La Vopa 2017, 18–182).

same time, She divided the European space, as not all the regions of Europe were deemed to have reached the same degree of civilisation, and so not everywhere was the "female sex" free from the patriarchal yoke. National characters were also affected by the relationship between the sexes. Through the image of modern Woman, Enlightenment philosophical history built conflicting identities and hierarchies.

The comparative approach on which stadial history was construed made it possible to examine the relationships between the sexes as changing over time and throughout space, with a specific focus on manners and sexuality. Scottish historians looked at Asia as the realm of luxury, while associating polygamy with the barbarism of the early stages, hostile to the "female sex"[11]: shut up in the seraglio, women were mere instruments for the sexual pleasure of men (Alexander 1782, vol I: 90, 421; Kames 1778, vol. II: 79). Africa was described as dominated by promiscuity and excessive sexuality. Travel writings disseminated the myth that African women gave birth without pain and that their "pendulous breasts" allowed them to nurse children over their shoulders while working in the fields (Morgan 1997). Also endorsed by natural histories, this fiction provided a formidable justification for slavery. By virtue of their sex and body, African women were reduced to the role of female animals and depicted as fit for both productive and reproductive labour, as convincingly demonstrated by Jennifer Morgan (Morgan 2004). Sexuality, savagery and slavery converged in the construction of the economic and political order of the Enlightenment (Curran 2011). The myth of orangutans "carrying off Negro girls" became, unsurprisingly, an important component of the discourse concerning the diversity of Africans and their supposed proximity to apes (Schiebinger 1993, 40–74; Sebastiani 2021). The purportedly inadequate sexuality of Amerindian men constituted the opposite extreme of African excess. With their long hair and beardless faces, they appeared cold, effeminate and "destitute of one

[11] In this respect, they were critical of Montesquieu's relativist explanation of polygamy. See, for instance, Smith (1978, 143–63; Kames 1778, vol. II: 26, as opposed to Montesquieu 1950, book XV, ch. 1–16).

sign of manhood and strength", as Robertson put it.[12] In the materialistic logic of the four stages theory, the most important consequence of the indifference of male Amerindians towards the female sex was the lack of population increase, and then, as previously stressed, the lack of progress itself. To be imprisoned in the savage stage, as Scottish historians understood the Amerindians to be, was a negative fulfilment of history's promise of human progress.

Europe stood out in contrast to the other three parts of the world and their imperfect and static gender relationships. Not only had the status of women profoundly improved there, but the "progress of the female sex" was at the heart of the new histories of Europe developing at the time (Lilti and Spector 2014). The parallel emergence of the history of women and the history of Europe would merit a chapter of its own. What matters here is that Scottish historiography placed the origin of the modern world at the crossroads between Roman law and the German political systems that arose in the aftermath of the fall of the Roman Empire. The first step in the transition to modernity was identified in the Crusades, which—as Robertson wrote in his influential introduction to the *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769)—restored the "spirit of commerce" and had in turn "considerable influence in polishing the manners of the European nations" (Robertson 1769, 76). Chivalry, in its close association with Christianity, marked the turning point for the revaluation of women, prompting a revolution in the customs of war and love—according to what became an Enlightenment topos, far beyond Scotland. The combination of commerce, Christianity and chivalry, which occurred in the "Gothic age" (as Millar called it), shaped the specific traits distinguishing modern Europe from the rest of the world, as well as from its own barbaric past: temperate and refined manners; civility; humanity in warfare; respect for the "female sex"; gallantry; justice and honour; chastity and monogamy (see for example Millar 2006, 135–42; Kames 1778, vol II: 90–97; Ferguson 1966, 199–202; Gregory 1774, vol. I: 153–60). All these were considered universal values. The stadial

[12] Robertson (1777, Book IV, vol. 2: 63–64, 103). According to Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, their lack of virility and strength made of them a "species" apart (see "Preliminary Discourse" and "Progress of the American Nations"). On this Scottish debate, see Sebastiani (2013: ch. 3); on the French debate, see Duchet (1995). For a fine analysis of the case of Spain's Enlightenment and its view of indigenous Amerindian women, see Soriano (2022). See also Cañizares-Esguerra (2001), focusing on the Iberian Atlantic.

narrative historicised and at the same time legitimised the structure of "monogamous and permanent marriage", considered a clear improvement for women (La Vopa 2017, 281). The same applied to chastity. The medieval legacy, to which women were primarily indebted, according to these narratives, was historically and geographically situated, and virtually inaccessible to non-European peoples.

The expansion of trade and crafts, and the ensuing multiplication of exchanges and relationships, fostered peaceful inclinations and increased sociability and sensibility, further enhancing the specificity of Europe. However, this also brought up divisions within the European space. For not all European countries had achieved the same progress in trade and taste. Consistent with their stadial view of social development, Scottish historians believed that only in commercial societies could women assume their full functions as wives and mothers, companions and friends of the opposite sex, as well as consumers and stimuli for a modern economy. "In this situation,"—wrote Millar—"the women become, neither the slaves, nor the idols of the other sex, but the friends and companions" (Millar 2006, 143ff, quotation p. 151. See also Kames 1778, vol. II, 90–97). Where this stage had not yet been reached, the process of feminisation remained incomplete, as was true of Catholic southern Europe, which Scottish historians placed on the periphery of the European map of civilisation.[13] Historical, political and economic motives were adduced to justify this move. Millar explained that the female condition had been improved in all "the different nations of Europe", but not always to the same degree (Millar 2006, 151). In Spain, "from the defects of administration, or from whatever causes, the arts have for a long time been almost entirely neglected", which in turn explained why women's ranks had developed less quickly than elsewhere (Franceespecially). A number of Scottish historians repeated the leitmotif of "women's confinement and men's jealousy as constitutive characteristics of Spanish society" and that of Spaniards' "national character", as disseminated by travel literature (Bolufer 2016, 459). But—Millar assured his readers—"even in Spain",

[13] See, among a now extensive literature, Xavier Andreu and Mónica Bolufer (2022). Much has been written on the Enlightenment perception of Europe since Federico Chabod's pioneering work in 1959. On the question of peripheries, see Butterwick et al. (2008); on Eastern Europe, see Wolff (1994) and Todorova (1997); on the Ottoman Empire, see Çirakman (2002).

women had ultimately been granted "that freedom which they have in the other countries of Europe" (Millar 2006, 151).

While Alexander also acknowledged that the practice of segregating women seemed to have fallen into disuse, he deplored the fact that Spain was "a kingdom whose inhabitants we are less acquainted with, and less able to characterise, than the Hottentots, or the Indians on the banks of the Ganges"—although it was located "almost in our neighbourhood".[14] The association of Spain with Asia and Africa and its portrayal as an obscure and unknown country were part of a clear strategy to defamiliarise, as well as marginalise the nation. Yet, its status as part of Europe was never questioned. On the contrary, Spain was regarded as integral to the history of modern Europe, born from the fall of the Roman Empire and marked by the ethos of chivalry. Indeed, it was on this basis that Alexander distinguished the national character of the Spaniard from that of any other people: centuries on, "the Spaniard […] retains still a tincture of the spirit of knight-errantry", so that "the whole [female] sex is to him an object of little less than adoration".[15] In other words, the Spaniard remained imprisoned in a spirit made obsolete by the dynamism of commercial society: it was his excessive and inappropriate adoration for the "female sex" that prevented him from giving women their due rank and consideration.

Spain's defeat in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) deepened the view of the country as the paradigm of modern decadence—in parallel with the classical parable of ancient Rome. Modern historiography has paid much attention to the development of the *leyenda negra* (Black Legend) across Europe: while in the fifteenth century Spain's backwardness was mirrored in the violence and cruelty of the conquistadors of the New World, in the eighteenth century it was first and foremost expressed by the "declassification" of science (García Cárcel 1998; Villaverde Rico and Castilla Urbano 2016; Pimentel and Pardo-Tomás 2017). Knowledge, arts, forms of government and refined manners went together in the history of stadial progress and were faithfully reflected by the status of women.

[14] Alexander 1782, vol. I: 454. The reference to a "country … almost in our neighbourhood" appears in the first edition of the *History of Women* in 1779 (vol. I: 363), but is omitted in the 1782 edition.

[15] Alexander 1782, vol I: 318. On the association of Spanish national character with chivalry, see Bolufer (2016).

What arises from this long excursus around the globe is an unequal geography of historical progress, supported by the variegated landscape of the sentimental world: America appeared as the land of defective love; Asia and Africa as the realms of carnal excitement and unbridled sexuality. North-western Europe was portrayed as the location of "true Love", the historical result of the refinement of passions over either the "dispassionate coldness" or the animal appetite of "savage" and "barbarian" societies. Spain remained somewhere in between: what prevailed was love as possession and excessive devotion. But women had progressed "even in Spain", confirming that Europe was a, if not the, historical region.

Limits of Feminisation

If "commerce" between the sexes was vital to civil society and to progress *tout court*, a constant sense of danger and instability accompanied Scottish Enlightenment discourse about civilisation/feminisation. The new status and influence acquired by women in advanced societies induced anxieties in even the most convinced supporters of modernity, including Hume, Smith and Millar. They all worried that the positive process of feminisation could spill over into a frightening effeminacy. Fear about a confusion of gender roles was a leitmotif, one to which Scottish historians responded by invoking the necessity to establish checks and balances to regulate relationships between the sexes, and to safeguard the institution of the family: without such controls, society risked dissolution.

The very logic of Scottish stadial typology can help to explain these profound concerns. The stage theory—as should be clear by now—assigned women a past and a history, which began ineluctably with their enslavement and moved gradually towards their emancipation from male masters. This suggests that the history of women was not only distinct from, but also conflicted with, that of men. Again, Sylvana Tomaselli's words are apposite here:

> The history of the tyranny men had exercised over women and its gradual reversal by women with the advancement of polished society became constitutive of the knowledge about her, or of her as an object of knowledge. (Tomaselli 1991, 196–98)

The inherent risk of the process of feminisation had, since the outset, been an inversion of the balance of power between men and women,

leading to what the Scots considered a highly problematic consequence of civilisation: competition between the sexes. Rooted as it was in natural history, Scottish historiography found in the complementarity between the sexes the key for a just social balance. It was women's "natural" difference that established their distinct social roles, and marked the perimeter within which they had to remain, as Rousseau had taught and as both anatomical studies and handbooks of good manners confirmed throughout Europe. Physical fragility, delicacy and sensitivity destined the "female sex" to be confined to the household and family relations: women were first and foremost mothers, who had to be engaged in domestic duties, and be chaste and modest. The entry of women into history was directly linked to the new role of the family, considered as the pertinent framework for thinking about gender relations, while the complementarity between the sexes also corresponded to the rationalisation of the division of labour in the new economic and social order of eighteenth-century European societies.

The analogy between humans and animals, derived from Buffon's "Les animaux carnassiers" (1758), confirmed that family was the natural and necessary place for women—a point reasserted by a large number of Scottish philosophers, including Kames, Robertson and Smith (Kames 1778, book I, vol. 2: 9–11; Robertson 1788, book IV, vol. 2: 101–102; Smith 1978, vol. 1: 141–42). Linnaeus' observations about female apes confirmed that chastity, modesty and good manners were the "natural" characteristics of the "female sex": the celebrated case of Madame Chimpanzee, drinking tea like a high-society lady in 1730s London, helped disseminate this image (Schiebinger 1993, 74–114; Sebastiani 2021). The characteristics ascribed to eighteenth-century polite women were thus naturalised.

Even when chastity was not considered a natural attribute, it was nonetheless judged to be a social necessity for women. As Hume explained, the security of lineage and property depended on this very aspect. He justified, then, the sexual double standard by grounding it in a "trivial", but "structural", characteristic of human anatomy:

> Now if we examine the structure of the human body, we shall find, that this security is very difficult to be attained on our part; and that since, in the copulation of the sexes, the principle of generation goes from the man to the woman, an error may easily take place on the side of the former, though it be utterly impossible with regard to the latter. From this

> trivial and anatomical observation is derived that vast difference betwixt the education and duties of the two sexes. (Hume, 1985b, 571)

The appreciation of female qualities was constantly accompanied by profound concerns about women's ascendency, which undermined the potential for their emancipation inherent in the progressive vision. In the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, even Smith expressed worries about the emasculating effects of social progress, stating that "the delicate sensibility required in civilised nations sometimes destroys the masculine firmness of the character" (Smith 1984, 209). Alexander highlighted the problem of intellectual competition between the sexes, both perpetuating the prejudice against the *femme savante*, petulant, pedantic and charmless, and pointing up the confusion of roles (Alexander 1782, vol. 1: 65–66, 87–88; see Barker-Benfield 1992, 104ff). Female culture was designed to benefit the progress of men, to "soften *our* hearts and polish *our* manners" in Gregory's words (Gregory 1774, vol. I: 157, emphasis added). As Alexander put it:

> Woman … was not intended solely to propagate and nourish the species, but to form *us* for society, to give an elegance to *our* manners, a relish to *our* pleasures, to soothe *our* afflictions, and to soften *our* cares. (Alexander 1782, vol. I: 475, emphasis added)

For Gregory and Kames, as for Alexander, it was women's duty to render their husbands' character more humane, by guiding their feelings and polishing their way of life. Power and authority, both in public affairs and in the private domain of the family, should remain in male hands. "The empire of feeling"—as John Dwyer called it—required a more sophisticated justification for men's dominance, without questioning it (Dwyer 1987, 1998).

In Europe's civil societies, luxury—which Hume, Smith and Robertson had seen as one of the main factors leading to the collapse of feudalism—had started to affect the crucial issue of women's capacity for breeding. In contrast with the regular reproduction of female animals, women's fertility was, according to Smith, inconstant and dependent on many variable factors, such as ways of thinking, passions, fantasies, capriciousness and fear of loss of looks. While labourers' propagation responded to the laws of the market, like any other commodity, upper-class women escaped the general rule, thus exposing society to major risks:

> Poverty, though it no doubt discourages, does not always prevent marriage. It seems to be favourable to generation. A half-starved Highland woman frequently bears more than twenty children, while a pampered fine lady is often incapable of bearing any, and is generally exhausted by two or three. Barrenness, so frequent among women of fashion, is very rare among those of inferior station. Luxury in the fair sex, while it inflames perhaps the passion for enjoyment, seems always to weaken, and frequently to destroy altogether, the powers of generation. (Smith 1976, 96)

The difference in reproductive capacity between African women—alleged to be particularly prolific, despite the low rate of reproduction in all American enslaved societies (Morgan 2021)—and European women, considered as weak and lacking in fecundity, was therefore echoed in the contrast between the infertile "pampered fine ladies" and fertile poor women of Europe's advanced societies. If the reproductive powers of women's bodies had allowed history to avoid being trapped in the savage stage, those same female bodies were also the reason posited for the collapse of historical progress. This happened when sexual enjoyment was disconnected from procreation. "Women of fashion" were responsible for the degeneration of the commercial stage into effeminacy.

Natural history confirmed, once again, the very point that female sexual enjoyment put restrictions on breeding. Buffon made this explicit in the crudest of ways in a discussion about the procreation of asses. The chapter on the ass was central to the argument of the *Histoire naturelle*, because it was there that Buffon formulated his conception of "species", defined no longer by visible appearance but by the reproductive capacity of the offspring: the ass and the horse were not of the same species, despite their close resemblance, as they generated the barren mule. By contrast, all human beings, however distinct in physique and habits, belonged to one single species as they could mix together and produce fertile progeny. This is why the article on the ass is one of the most cited and commented on by historians of science. Yet what, to my knowledge, has so far been disregarded is the point I want to make here: the incompatibility of female pleasure with the reproductive task. With an explicit causal link, Buffon stated that "*l'ânesse [est…] lascive; c'est par cette raison qu'elle est très-peu féconde*" ("the she ass [is…] lustful; this is why she is so

lacking in fecundity").[16] Although she was "capable of perpetually nourishing and engendering", being in heat again one week after delivery, she produced only one colt; very rarely, two. Buffon's explanation, and proposed solution, are very disturbing: "*elle [l'ânesse] rejette au dehors la liqueur qu'elle vient de recevoir dans l'accouplement, à moins qu'on n'ait soin de lui ôter promptement la sensation du plaisir, en lui donnant des coups pour calmer la suite des convulsions et des mouvemens amoureux, sans cette précaution elle ne retiendroit que très-rarement*".[17] The fear that the "care" taken to repress the sensation of pleasure could be extended to the entire female sex is all the stronger if one considers that the whole article is built on a close parallel with the human species, and that women are also "capable of perpetually nourishing and engendering"… The physical details of female pleasure, recorded by Buffon, were omitted in the sociological and historical analyses of the Scots, while the Scottish translator of the *Histoire naturelle* into English, William Smellie, abbreviated the explanation of how to prevent the female ass's enjoyment. Yet the central point remained: procreation was the goal; pleasure threatened to undermine it and had to be limited, if not prevented.[18] The close relationship between natural history and the history of civilisation was central to understanding the new focus on women, both in their role as bearers of the species and as agents of culture. By resorting to the moral authority of nature (Daston and Vidal 2004), the empire of sentiment was naturalised as the new form of male dominion and female servitude.

Conclusion

Scottish Enlightenment historiography contributed to shaping a narrative of modernity which took European civilisation as its model and made European womanhood its essential element. Yet women remained

[16] Buffon, vol. IV (1753): 395.

[17] A literal translation here might be: the female ass "rejects the liquid she has just received in the mating process, unless care is quickly taken to repress her sensation of pleasure, by beating her to subdue her convulsions and amorous movements. Without this precaution she would only very rarely retain the liquid". See Buffon 1749–1788, vol. IV (1753): 395.

[18] According to Smellie's abridged version: "she [the female ass] rejects the cause of conception, unless the ardour of her desire be repressed by blows" (Smellie, vol III (1785): 415).

ambivalently placed in relation to civilisation. Their primordial reproductive labour, and then their connection with commerce, taste and politeness meant they were the *conditio sine qua non* for historical progress; but their excess and ostentation in advanced stages engendered the emasculation of manners and morals, finally leading to the collapse of society itself. Male fear that the refined sensibility of the commercial woman might degenerate into savage passions and sensual pleasures made manifest the potential circularity of historical progress. With the spread of unregulated sexuality, egoism prevailed, and sympathy and feeling disappeared, just as had been the case "in the ages of rudeness and barbarism"—as Millar explained.[19] If man was "a dangerous animal" when deprived of women's company, he became an endangered species when exposed to excessive female influence and power. Anxieties about depopulation led (Scottish) Enlightenment thinkers to point to the dark side of modernity. By sharing the same methods and sources, natural history and the history of civilisation concurred in shaping the new image of woman, while revealing that "the general interest of society" required female sexuality to be kept under control. While man freed himself from nature through the historical process, woman found that nature placed insurmountable limits on her own history.[20]

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[19] Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, p. 225.

[20] This chapter develops some of the arguments I advanced in Sebastiani (2023b).

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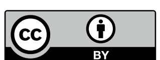

CHAPTER 4

Gender and Education in Eighteenth-century Spanish American Newspapers

Mariselle Meléndez

Eighteenth-century Spanish newspapers were established under the pursuit of cultural and social reform centered upon Enlightenment views of religion, politics, science, literature, art, education, economy, and philosophy. Within this frame, women many times became the focal point of discussion and a pretext to discuss the current state of their respective nations. Race, gender, sexuality, and particularly education became some of the most prominent key topics in these discussions which ultimately contributed to the construction of diverse patriotic epistemologies. The challenge when studying these newspapers is to find publications authored by female authors. It is interesting to note, that if we look at colonial legislation since the sixteenth century, one cannot find any laws banning women from publishing or getting involved in the printing business. For example, in the case of New Spain, women particularly widows of printers were involved in the printing business (Meléndez 2016, 99). Their job involved deciding what was worth publishing and subsequently requesting

M. Meléndez (✉)
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL, USA
e-mail: melendez@illinois.edu

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official licenses for their publications. This demonstrates their active role in deciding what publications became available. This also proves that women were not disassociated from the dissemination of knowledge in colonial Spanish America even if except for religious writings, and of course, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, publications authored by women were very scarce. It is for this reason that looking at eighteenth-century newspapers and colonial litigations is a way to find other female voices not yet acknowledged.

This chapter focuses on how the role of women regarding education was discussed in articles published about women and by women in *Mercurio Peruano* (1791–1795) and *Papel periódico de la Ciudad de Santafé de Bogotá* (1791–1797). My critical intervention centers on capturing what male and female contributors had to say about the role of women in their respective countries. Particular attention is paid to how such gender constructions were in dialogue with European debates at the time about how women ought to be educated. On this topic, Mónica Bolufer reminds us that in Spain and as the rest of Europe, "Reflection over the 'nature,' capabilities, education, and social function of women was ever present in texts of varied content and style" with the aim to propose "new models of femininity for a modern and Enlightened society" (2018, 38). In the case of Spanish America, debating the role of women in an enlightened society was also at the heart of many of these newspapers. Although names of contributors were not openly disclosed in many of these news articles, this does not preclude us to observe how fully informed many of these authors were regarding the debates that were taking place at the time about the role of women in a society.[1] Again, these debates were not unique to the case of colonial Spanish America as they were connected also to the ones taking place in Europe at the time where the same topics were discussed from different localities. Newspapers indeed functioned as discursive platforms par excellence to exchange Enlightenment's ideas about women's role in society albeit grounded in very particular loci of enunciation.

[1] Bolufer also mentions that in Spain many foreign texts on this subject "were translated, paraphrased, adapted, or cited" and in many cases without sources being unidentified (2018, 39).

Mercurio peruano: Educating Women

The prospectus that accompanied one of the most successful eighteenth-century newspapers in Peru, the *Mercurio peruano* (1791–1795), was authored by Jacinto Calero y Moreira.[2] In his prospectus, he made clear that newspapers functioned as discursive platforms par excellence to show the enlightened character of a nation (1791, n.p.).[3] The major goal of their newspaper was to educate the public about what made Peru such an enlightened nation. For the editors, education encompassed their social manners, poetry, cultural entertainment, the arts including painting, sculpture, architecture, and sciences such as botany, mechanic, urban policy, natural science, and astronomy in addition to religious matters. Although the newspaper was mainly geared to the educated male sector of the population, the editors also viewed Peruvian women of the upper class as important interlocutors of their publications. In the prospectus, Calero y Moreira made clear that although the stereotypical idea at the time was that women were only inclined to superfluous and "trivial matters" ("frivolidades"); the case of the Peruvian women from Lima was different. According to him, their female "Compatriots" ("Paysanas") have always been interested in issues pertaining "to the common good and Enlightenment" so these issues indeed had always been "of great concern to the women from Lima" (1791, 170, n.p.). For this reason, Calero y Moreira urged the female sector of the population to take advantage of what the newspaper had to offer. As he added, "it would be of great Fortune to the Homeland that our kind female Compatriots take advantage of the *Mercurio*" so they were able to realize "that there is no subject as difficult as it is that is not within reach of their Principles and excellent Judgement" (1791, n.p.). The emphasis on the words "Homeland" ("Patria"), "Compatriots" ("Conciudadanas"), "Principles" ("Sistema"), and "Judgement" ("Criterio") underlined the

[2] The *Mercurio peruano* was founded by the *Sociedad Académica de Amantes del País*, a group of young intellectual Creoles largely from Lima. The founding members of the *Sociedad Académica* later became the founders of *Mercurio peruano*. These founders were Hermágoras (José María Egaña and president of the Academic Society), Aristio (José Hipólito Unanue, the Secretary), Hesperióphilo (José Rossi y Rubí), and Homótimo (Demetrio Guasque).

[3] All Spanish quotes from the *Mercurio Peruano* follow original eighteenth-century orthography. All translations from eighteenth-century texts to English are mine unless otherwise specified.

author's beliefs that the female sectors of the population were also their compatriots, and as such, they were intellectually capable of taking advantage of the enlightened content of the newspaper by making their own judgments.

In fact, the newspaper included women in the list of their subscribers which attested that they were following the news that the newspaper had to offer. Of equal importance was the fact that the newspaper published articles authored by women. Although some critics tend to believe that as was the case with other newspapers especially in the nineteenth century, these types of articles were authored by male authors who used female pseudonyms, and I find it quite problematic to assume that this was always the case, especially when women were indeed among the subscribers of the newspapers. Financially, the *Mercurio peruano*'s survival depended on its subscribers and for that reason their names were published at the beginning of each volume in an effort to publicly recognize their important commitment to make the newspaper publication a reality. As Bolufer explains in the case of Spain and the rest of Europe, in the eighteenth century, women became gradually "an increasing and influential part of an ever-expanding reading audience," figured as subscribers in many publications and "were a targeted audience for journalists, who competed to secure women's support for their periodicals" (2009, 21). This was the case as well in late colonial Spanish America.

The subject of education served as recurrent topic of debate when talking about women in the newspaper and one of the discursive themes through which women's role in society was discussed and debated. One of the most common arguments that appeared in the newspaper was the idea that in Peru women were challenging how education was to take place in the domestic space especially when it came to linguistic norms. For example, in a letter published under the section "Education" entitled "Carta escrita à la Sociedad sobre el abuso de que los hijos tuteen a sus padres" (Letter Written to the Society about the abuse with which children informally address their parents) (1791, 36), the father of four children complained that after a seven-month hiatus from the house because of his business trip to Cuzco, he noticed how his children were addressing him in the informal "Tú" form. After consulting with his male friends, he realized that this linguistic practice was common in Lima and fully endorsed by mothers, grandmothers, and aunts. In fact, he recounted a confrontation he had with his mother-in-law when she yelled at him after he scolded his youngest daughter because the child addressed her aunt in the "Tú" form. When the father proceeded to yell

at the girl, the mother-in-law intervened and insulted him for being an abusive father and yelling about something so insignificant. In fact, she called him a tyrant and proceeded to tell him that, "If you want to teach others about educating children well, you should know first, that it is quite ill-mannered to correct a linguistic custom that is so prevalent in Peru, but even if this were not the case, it is my believe that is totally fine that children address anybody informally as they please" (1791, 37).

What this confrontation underscored was the fact that women were contesting the extent to which formal Spanish education was interfering in local linguistics matters and specifically in the domestic space, which had always been part of women's domain. The female protagonist's reaction made clear that local customs could certainly transform traditional educational norms and should be taken into consideration when talking about matters of education in any household in Lima. Education within the domestic space was at the hands of women and for this reason the mother-in-law argued that this was a space in which women exercised power through their own local perspectives. Her stance aligned with Spanish eighteenth-century circulating ideas based on Jean-Jacques Rousseau that "women had a unique role as mothers within the private sphere of the family" and as such they had the right to determine their own rules (Jaffe 2020, 70). What this female character argued was that education embraced more than what was learned from books and extended to everyday social interactions, that in the case of Lima, were transformed by their particular local customs.

In February 1791, the editors of the newspaper followed up this conversation with a letter entitled "Carta escrita a la Sociedad sobre los gastos excesivos de una Tapada" (Letter written to the Society about the excessive expenses of a *Tapada* woman).[4] The letter was accompanied also with a message encouraging those illustrious women from Lima to submit letters defending their own from accusations they received from male contributors about their propensity towards vanity, luxury consumption, and inefficiencies in their domestic roles of educating their children. The letter received a strong response from one woman who signed with the pseudonym of Antispasia.[5] The name derived from the Greek word

[4] For a thorough analysis of this letter along with a married woman's response to it, see Meléndez (2018).

[5] In 1793, issue number 209, the editors published an article that disclosed the pseudonym of many of the members and *socios* of the Academy and contributors of

"antispasis" which meant "to draw in the opposite direction" (Meléndez 2018, 182). The woman proceeded to accuse the male editors of not doing enough in publishing articles centered on women's intellectual capabilities. She added that the male editors had published only three letters that overtly criticized women for their ineptitude in educating their children and for their excessive passion for luxurious clothing. She found hypocritical that in the prospectus the editors invited her female compatriots to submit publications, but they instead decided "to publish three letters panning our most esteemed female manners and habits of our country" (1791, 161). The editors failed in their intention to include and praise women and opted into an opportunity to only criticize them. It was for this reason that Antispasia stated that she agreed with old and ugly women when they said that men's words were always guided by "false praises and deceit" (1791, 161). What the letter was pleading was for the male editors' commitment to offer women a nondiscriminatory public forum in which they could address their true interests and concerns.

To this regard, the editors published a letter they received from someone in Cuzco who signed as a "passionate servant" and initials "M.Y.C.Y.V." conveying a strong criticism of the first five issues of the *Mercurio peruano*. The author expressed his strong displeasure about the lack of news authored by women especially taking into consideration that women constituted a big sector of Lima's population. To this regard he asked: "Is it possible that in a Capital like Lima, where keen understanding, inquiry and good taste are associated with the precious and kind gender (i.e. women), there have not been even twenty Ladies, capable of making their names appeared in the front page of the newspaper?" (1791, 152). According to the author, women in Lima were known for their acute discernment ("viveza"), their intelligence ("penetración"), their will, determination, and good judgment ("buen gusto"). Based on these attributes, there was no reason for not having more female subscribers occupying a more prominent role in the *Mercurio peruano*'s publications. Regarding the criticism shared with the editors, this was the only one that revolved around the much-needed presence of female contributors.[6] Important to note is the fact that the letter came from an

the newspaper were disclosed. However, the identity of who wrote under the name of Antispasia was never revealed.

[6] In the case of female subscribers, there were six names that consistently appeared in the list, including, Doña Xaviera Alerse y Rimador, Señora Doña Manuela Cayro, Señora

outside resident of Lima which in the editors' views was much praised as a unique enlightened place. Ironically, an outsider had to point to them their own oversights.

In a later issue, the editors addressed the female readers by inviting them to take advantage of the opportunities available in the capital city to enlighten themselves. In an article published in May 1791 entitled "Nuevos Establecimientos de Buen Gusto" (New Establishments of Good Taste), the editors stated that one of the places in which enlightened instruction could be achieved was the Escuela de Diseño established by a member of the Real Academia de Sevilla and professor of drawing and painting Don José del Pozo (1791, 64). They described both arts as a "useful and enjoyable study" (1791, 66). They also informed that those women who were interested in pursuing these fine arts should notify the professor directly, as he would be glad to offer courses for women between 4 and 6 pm and to men between 7 and 9 pm. The costs were eight pesos a month. They believed many women in Lima would be interested in pursuing these lessons. Another activity that the editors mentioned that was available to both women and men for three pesos a month was French dancing, taught in an academy opened by an Italian instructor named Vicente Bertarini. The editors noted that dance lessons of local and foreign dances were extremely popular in Lima as the classes offered by Black instructors were very well attended. Dance was seen as an activity that nurtured mind and body and allowed women to acquire "good taste" while also contributing to "the pursuit of their public happiness" (1791, 67). But how did women respond to what these reformers had to say regarding the education of women and their role in society?

In April 1794, the newspaper included a poem written by a woman. The poem was entitled, "CARÁCTER DE CIERTA SEÑORA ILUSTRE, PINTADO por ella misma en las siguientes Seguidillas: *Inéditas*." The focus of the poem was on the female author herself as she sought to describe her character and temperament as an educated woman. The only information given about the author is that she was an "enlightened woman." There was no hint if the woman was a subscriber or just a woman who accessed the newspaper through other means. The poem began stating how she wanted to be seen as a woman: "He who wants to

Doña Josefa Díaz, Señora Doña María Gertrudis Escalante y Llave, María Luisa Ezterripa y Ramira (lady in waiting of the Queen), and Señora Doña Rita Unamunzaga. Again, this did not mean that they were the only female readers the newspaper had.

love me should know/that my temperament is such/that I demand to be respected/ to the point of contempt" (*Mercurio peruano* 1794, 269). The woman was referring here to her "genio" (temperament) which implied at the time having the inclination, taste, disposition, and the interior capacity towards something (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, 43). The woman used the poem as a discursive vehicle to demand to be highly respected even if that prompted disdain in others. Immediately, she made clear that others must value her as she thought she deserved. Respect and admiration were to be concomitant to any act of love she received from men. She also promised no mercy to any lover who was not willing to respect her wishes. Furthermore, she warned that no lover should expect continuous praising from her as she preferred to stay away from recurrent acts of attention. In sum, she underlined that she owed nothing to any men, and they should not have any false expectations when it came to her.

The poem continued by emphasizing her exceptionality as a woman as she portrayed herself as outside the norm. She made clear that she only cared for herself and was not to be bothered by what others thought or expected from her. To this regard she stated, "The lover who doubtful/ beats himself trying to figuring me out/ because I am so rare,/ I say to him that I very much enjoy/ that he get frustrated at me/" (*Mercurio peruano* 1794, 270). To be considered "rara" at the time implied to be "extraordinary and very uncommon" as well as "distinguished" (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, 491). What the female voice wanted to underline was that she was indeed extraordinary and did not fit the mold of a prototypical woman as she demanded to be recognized as an illustrious woman due to her knowledge, attitude, and respect. She made clear that her goal in life was not to seek love for love's sake because love was always blind, and blindness was in itself a dangerous condition. However, she acknowledged that she only was to choose a "fine lover" if the man was willing to accept her as she was. In fact, she concluded the poem stating that even if her character was labeled as one "with faults" ("tachas"), and she refused to succumb to the traditional female model and preferred to preserve her free will. She seemed to emphasize that for a woman to demand respect she needed to value herself first. To be valued meant to reject any compromises and to abide by her own rules, which in this case implied to be respected by her intellectual capacity and to be recognized as an independent educated woman.

This poem encapsulates the change in women's attitudes regarding how they wanted to be seen and understood. Along these lines, one of the

last issues published in the *Mercurio peruano* when it was clear that the publication was going to cease due to the lack of revenue in covering the costs of production, the editors published an article indicating the impact that the newspaper was having on Peruvian society, and especially women. To this respect, the article said, "*Patriotic Love, public Enlightenment, promotion of literature*, were all phrases that became popular in mouths of women and even in the ones of the Palangana Mulattoes" (*Mercurio peruano* 1794, 265). In this quote, women were grouped with a racial group that had always been marginalized in colonial society ("mulatos") to underscore the extent to which society had circumscribed them but also emphasizing how they had transgressed social norms. The editor implied that women who traditionally were kept away from the realm of enlightened discussions as active agents, now thanks to the newspaper were able to engage in discussions about patriotic love, public Enlightenment, and love for literature which had been usually reserved to male citizens. The article acknowledged that women in the Viceroyalty of Peru were interested and versed in matters of science, arts, and erudition thanks to the circulation of the newspaper. The *Mercurio peruano* in this sense served as an effective public platform to educate its citizens including women.

Papel Periódico de Santafe de Bogotá: Women and Education

Papel periódico de la Ciudad de Santafé de Bogotá appeared in the capital city of the Viceroyalty of New Granada in 1791. Manuel del Socorro Rodríguez (1718–1859) served as his editor. On January 6, 1792, the newspaper published a very interesting letter entitled "Carta de un vecino de la ciudad de Panamá dirigido al Autor con fecha de 22 de Julio próximo pasado" ("Letter from a citizen of Panama addressed to the Author dated last July") (1792, n.p.). The writer offered fascinating comments regarding the lack of attention paid by the newspaper to the role that women ought to have in educating the country's population. For this Panamanian contributor, the *Papel Periódico*'s attempts to enlighten their audience had failed as they had not discussed the potential role older women ("Viejas") in particular could have in educating young women in political, moral, and economic matters, and he warned the editor not to dismiss him by considering the argument ridiculous (1792, n.p.). Again, we find another outsider indicating to the urban intellectual elite in Santa

Fe de Bogotá what they had failed to do in their newspaper. One of the reasons as to why he deemed this topic important was because women themselves read the newspapers in their *tertulias* and even in Panama, women carried the newspaper with them (1792, n.p.). This is another example that helps us to understand the impact of the circulation of eighteenth-century newspapers in Spanish America beyond the list of subscribers. As noted by the editors of the *Mercurio Peruano*, many times one person read the newspaper aloud to others or passed it to others as subscriptions were expensive. For this reason, it would not be outrageous to assume that more women read these newspapers beyond the names that were included in the list of subscribers.[7]

The author built his argument by stating first, that "old ladies are teachers of virtues and vices. They are the mirrors in which Young Ladies look at themselves. They are a type of book from which Young Ladies can learn about how to conduct their lives" (1792, n.p.). According to him, older wiser women served as mirrors through which young women could reflect upon themselves. They also acted as a type of book from which they learned both virtues and vices as well as how to behave. With "Viejas" he was referring to those who as former mothers had the experience and knowledge to teach virtues to younger women. His views coincided with those in the Enlightenment that argued that the mother should have a pivotal role in raising useful citizens. The figure of the mother was read within the context of Enlightenment ideas about female education. As Elizabeth Franklin Lewis explained regarding Spain, "Virtually every important advancement of eighteenth-century Spain involved the participation of women: a renewed interest in education, the development of an industrial economy, the establishment and growth of learned societies and literary salons, university reform, and the growth of the periodic press" (2004, 2). This was also the case in eighteenth-century Spanish America. For this reason, in this particular article, motherhood was rethought within the confines of the well-being of the country. As the author indicated, "it is evident that a good Mother gives the Republic irreprehensible Priests, honorable Judges, exemplary Wives, honest Husbands, and ultimately, Citizens that make their Homeland proud" (1792, n.p.). The mother ultimately ought to contribute with raising useful and productive citizens who consequently were to become great contributors to their

[7] It is important to note that in the sporadic lists of subscribers that the *Papel Periódico* posted are Doña Rosalía Aranzazugoytia and Doña María Rosa Arce.

homeland. Education provided at home by the mother was crucial for the prosperity of any republic.

Again, as it was the case in Spain, we witness as Catherine Jaffe states, "the acknowledgement of women's rational equality and of their importance to their children's formation as citizens accorded women a socially significant role and authorized their education, even though the extent of that education remained undefined" (2020, 70). For this contributor from Panama, every woman in Spanish America from Santa Fe to Quito to Cartagena had the potential to play the same role. However, one aspect that the author wanted to call attention to was the fact that the *Papel Periódico* in their first publications were not including articles about female matters, failing in this way to positively contribute to circulate popular ideas about the role of women when it came to educating future citizens. The newspaper had the responsibility, according to him, to serve as both a type of a "philosopher" and a "doctor" ready to cure the diseases present in society; otherwise, "everything will be lost" (1792, n.p.). The newspaper had a public obligation to educate the country and to achieve that it was important to include women as interlocutors.

On July 24, 1795, the topic of educating young woman resurged again in a brief article entitled "Consejos de una Anciana a cierta Señorita" (Advice from an Old Lady to a Young Lady). The article captured the dialogue between an older woman ("Anciana") speaking to a young lady referred to as "Señorita." The Anciana began by conveying that when she was young, she behaved exactly as the "Señorita" especially when rejecting all men who wanted to marry her because she thought she deserved something better. She added that she found enjoyment in saying "no" to all of them. However, as time passed, and she thought she was ready to commit, she noticed that those men who used to want to marry her now were despising and ignoring her, and even worse, they proceeded to marry other women. After so much rejection she found herself old, sad, and unable to get married and consequently without children. She said her vanity ("vanidad") cost the opportunity to have grandchildren and now she was alone and old. She advised the Señorita to do not follow the "crazy whim" that she chose to pursue in her own life because, "the girl that long waits, becomes old and desperate" (1795, 1103). The article aimed to educate young women in general about the need to see marriage as the ultimate goal. The message enforced was that women should marry young and should stay away from vanity, caprice, and arrogance or any

other desire to live a free life for their own enjoyment; or else, they will end alone and old.

What is fascinating is that immediately following this brief article another very brief article entitled "Conversación de una Señorita Casada" (Conversation with a Young Married Woman) introduced the voice of a young married woman herself contesting the so-called advantages of being married in general. I see this other article as a response to what the old lady had to say about marriage. In this case, the "Señorita Casada" engaged in a heated argument with her father-in-law regarding the idea that marriage equaled happiness arguing that in her case her husband was to blame for failing to make that a reality. With a very cynical attitude, the young married woman told her father-in-law: "It is very true what your son says that we live a peaceful life; but this might be because we spend our lives with neither food or clothing, or because he does not understand what to live peacefully is" (1795, 1103–1104). What this "Señorita Casada" emphasized was that having a spouse did not guarantee happiness but could instead bring discontent as she added, "I must confess that I do not lack anything except when it comes to difficulties" (1795, 1104). She seemed to blame society's inclination "to respect men as de facto heads of the Household" (1795, 1104). The young married woman found quite ironic such normative conception of who was to have command of the household as for her, common sense and reason should govern the house and should not be determined by traditional gender parameters. If the woman possessed the brain and the capacity to govern better, then, she should be considered the head of the household. Knowing how to govern the household was not a matter of gender expectations but rather of good judgment. The father-in-law had nothing to respond except that she should have felt fortunate that she had a husband. However, this anecdote underlined that when it came to women's happiness, marriage did not guarantee it. Marriage then had to be rethought within a more equaled sharing of responsibilities especially when it came to decide who had the right to make informed decisions that could eventually contribute to a successful marriage.

In an effort to be more inclusive of female matters, the editor informed the readers in the following issue of the newspaper dated July 30, 1795, that he had selected a series of excerpts from different authors and members of the Royal Academy of Sciences in France that spoke about women's role in society so readers could get acquainted with

these ideas. According to him, the selection was based on "the philosophical rigor in which they are written and because they are not as obscure as others" (1795, 1107). Among these excerpts he included one entitled "Del carácter y talento de las Mugeres. Rasgo juicioso de Mr. Tomás, individuo de la Academia Francesa" (Of the character and talent of Women. Judicious outline by Mr. Tomàs, member of the French Academy, *Papel Periódico,* 1795, 1107; from *Essai sur le caractère, les moeurs et l'esprit des femmes* by Antoine-Léonard Thomas). The selection focused on determining the extent to which women despite "their passion for beauty or natural fragility," their "restless imagination," and their "various emotions" were able to reflect and develop profound ideas (1795, 1109). The question was, were women able to discern and to reason among various ideas to then produce a rational argument? Or would they confound all ideas into a single general one without discerning properly among them?

These questions were followed by another one asking if the fact of not finding a good number of celebrated women in history as it was for the case of men was due to "the poor education women receive or because the nature of their gender?" (1795, 1110). To answer this question, he mentioned that Descartes praised the philosophical spirit of certain women and "their clarity, order and method" with which they were able to reason (1795, 1110). However, the author also suggested that Descartes might have forgotten to question if women had the ability to execute rational thoughts without being guided by feelings or emotions. The author proceeded to argue that women lacked the ability to calm down and to patiently reach meticulous conclusions because they let themselves follow their imagination. To this he added that it was his belief that women in general should try to find easy topics that did not require ample consideration because their character was more suited to excel in the arts. On this he concluded that women were known for "giving themselves up to ephemeral thoughts" so they were not able to fully discern on philosophical matters due their inability to deliberate thoughtfully and carefully. The excerpt ended with the author underscoring that it was only in matters of passion such as love that woman were able to excel. His view coincided with the tendency at the time "that men inclined towards action, abstract reflection, and exterior activity, while women tended towards inferior life, the world of emotion, and the family" (Bolufer 2018, 42). The editor of the *Papel Periódico* chose to include only this section of the French author's dissertation to inform their readers about

recent findings that still viewed women as intellectually inferior to men. This dissertation clashed with the other letters previously discussed where women contested their role in society and claimed their crucial contribution in the production of useful citizens. Contesting the capacity of women to reason was still a common argument in the eighteenth century.

Both newspapers illustrate that despite enjoying a female readership most news articles included were not geared towards women and when they were, they tended to put into question the intellectual nature of women in matters of philosophy, economics, and politics. As Catherine Jaffe observes, "The defense of women's nature, rights, and role in society in eighteenth-century Spain and Latin America invoked Enlightenment's ideas of reason, equality, social utility, and individual improvement through education" (69).[8]

On this idea of education as a utilitarian vehicle for societal improvement and women's impact on progress, the *Papel Periódico* published in 1796 a critical reflection about public education but this time written by a woman. The essay was entitled, "Reflexiones de una Dama Filósofa sobre un punto importante de Educación Publica" (Reflections by a Female Philosopher about an important aspect of Public Education) (1796, 1387–1394).

In this article, the "Dama Filósofa" offered a critical interjection on the issue of public education; a topic dominated by male intellectuals. One must remember that one of the definitions of philosophy at the time implied "the manner in which one apprehends or ponders about a specific question or science" (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, 251). For this reason, the name "Dama Filósofa" alluded to a lady who felt confident in offering her opinion about a particular issue or science. The main point of contention for this woman was if poetry, eloquence, and history should occupy the most important intellectual components of what was considered literature at the time, and if it should rest at the core of the goal of public education. It is important to remember that "literatura" was understood in the eighteenth century as "the knowledge and science of letters" which included sciences, arts, and erudition (*Diccionario de*

[8] Jaffe also reminds us, that these "intellectual debates" albeit transformed by Enlightenment ideas of "gender as a social construct," date back to "the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the discourse of seventeenth-century rationalism, which argued against the assumption of women's natural moral and intellectual inferiority to men" (2020, 69).

autoridades 1990, 417). What she wanted to discuss was if indeed "literatura" should be the most important component to provide a solid education with the aim to form useful citizens. In her opinion, it was the cardinal virtue of prudence what was most beneficial when forming good citizens. Distinguishing between what was good versus what was evil in order to make correct choices, ought to be in her view at the basis of any public education and at the formation of an enlightened citizen.

The female author proceeded to propose a thesis that prudence as a virtue was to occupy a privileged position in all catholic nations who were interested in fostering Enlightenment and culture as part of their education. Characteristic of the Enlightenment in Spain and its colonies religion was viewed as another way to enlighten a society. As Bolufer points out, "the majority of enlightened Hispanics (Spaniards and *criollos*, American-born descendants of Spaniards) positioned themselves within orthodoxy" and "opposed the more ritualistic showy manifestations of Catholicism in favour of a more internalized, sober spirituality, Christ-centered and devoted to the Bible" (2020, 5).[9] In the case of our female interlocutor, she believed that the main precepts of "the sacred sciences are the ones that truly guide the human spirit by making it happy in all conditions and fate" (1796, 1388). To this she added that "public happiness" could not reside only, as male philosophers argued, on the realm of sciences or non-secular literature because religion was indeed an important component of public happiness which concerned society in general. As Lewis reminds us, in the eighteenth century, "Individual and collective happiness were considered inseparable– both integral parts of our physical 'social' bodies" (2004, 3). In this particular newspaper's article, happiness was associated with "the reflection of an ordered, harmonious and God-centered universe" (Lewis 2004, 3). About this issue the "Dama Filósofa" concluded that theology was to be part of the equation as a science that also formed useful citizens because it strengthened the spirit, kept the individual away from excessive passions and it guided them "to the true path of Wisdom" (1796, 1391). It was religion that was ultimately going to bring happiness to society.

Another issue that the female author denounced in her essay was the attitude of those "male intellectuals" who bragged about their "encyclopedic and omniscient erudition," instead of focusing more on

[9] For a more recent and comprehensive discussion of the Hispanic Enlightenment. See Lewis et al. (2020).

incorporating their practice and knowledge of theology in general to the formation of responsible citizens (April 6, 1796, num. 238, 1391). This encyclopedic attitude was just in her opinion, "the latest fashion" that was prone to foster vanity instead of true knowledge (1796, 1391). She claimed that true philosophers were those religious figures such as John Chrysostom (c.347–407), Jerome of Stridon (c.342- c. 420), Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and Basilius or Saint Basil the Great (329–379), among others. The writings of these influential religious thinkers had in her view much to contribute to the education of good citizens. Alluding to Plato, who most critics believed influenced early Christianity trough his belief in the existence of absolute truth, she argued that absolute truth was to be found in the science of theology and should be achieved through the exercises of logic and reasoning. In her view, "the true and solid wisdom" could only be attainable through the practice of the cardinal virtue of prudence which consequently was to form the exemplary citizens of the nation (1796, 1392). One must remember as Lewis explained that virtue "for the intellectuals of the Enlightenment was not religious or pious" but rather "it was civic-minded, leading to the collective happiness of society through individual actions" (2004, 4). Sacred sciences, our female author added, should be the core "of the diverse study areas that we name *humanities*" and understood as a civic tool for the pursuit of an effective education (1796, 1392).

The essay concluded with an interesting twist in which the female author offered a harsh criticism of intellectuals' obsession towards the "bellas letras" which she associated with France and consequently with the path to moral downfall (1796, 1394). Instead, she urged the reader to return to the study of the Classics ("estudios Clásicos") which in her view could guide individuals to a prudent and virtuous behavior ("conducta prudente y virtuosa"). It could also prompt a desire to devote the acquired knowledge to the study of useful sciences ("ciencias útiles"), with most attention paid to the science of theology (1796, 1394). She referred to the study of theology as a form of philosophy centered on the discourse of God (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, 268). At a time when in many European countries, natural sciences were contesting religion as a prime source of discursive authority, and eighteenth-century intellectuals in Spanish America as well as Spain were advocating for its useful role in the formation of good citizens. Some might ask if the editor was trying to hide behind a female voice to defend what could have been considered at the time a traditional point of view. There is no evidence to prove that,

however, even if that had been the case, what it matters here is the fact that the message was conveyed by a female voice that was advocating for what type of education was applicable to local needs of men as well as women.

Concluding Remarks: The Long Eighteenth Century

Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru accurately states that in the case of colonial Spanish America, the period of the Bourbon regime was one in which economic and political reforms brought a transformation in the area of education and, in particular, the rethinking of the role of women in society, even though marginalization of women in the intellectual and public spheres was still rampant (Gonzalbo 1987, 292). Education was a topic that gave women at the time a voice to express their views on the nature of it and how to acquire it. It is a discussion that continued throughout the nineteenth century. An example is the essay published in 1823 in Mexico and written by Ana Josefa Caballero de la Borda entitled *Necesidad de un establecimiento de educación para las jóvenes mexicanas* (The need of an educational institution for young Mexican women). Caballero de la Borda still criticized the insufficient education women were receiving and that were keeping them in a state of "barbarous ignorance" that did not allow them to effectively contribute to the nation (1823, 1). She argued, as it was popular at the time, that even in the role of a mother it was paramount for a woman to be educated to better contribute to the formation of her children and therefore to society. According to her, a big mistake made by authorities was to circumscribe women as "heads of the household" who could only educate their children morally. This type of education she added, fell short of contributing to the formation of "virtuous citizens" who could demonstrate their "love for their homeland" by devoting themselves to the science of education (1823, 2).

Caballero de la Borda was very emphatic in her denunciation that the type of education that "women of the Americas" had received had served only to foster an inclination for luxury, vanity, and other "lesser passions" that had not served well to form productive citizens (1823, 2). It was the inclination for fashion, beauty, and superfluous matters what had contributed to men's view of women as objects, and ironically it was a strategy consciously promoted by men themselves. To this regard she

stated, “one can certainly say that men have used their female partners like pieces of furniture for the sake of personal taste instead of seeing them for their useful value” (1823, 3). The author blamed men for taking advantage of the lack of education women had received as it turned women into objects of desire. In fact, she added that the education that had prevailed for years had made women in the Americas fanatics, hypocrites, libertines, presumptuous, flirtatious, and ignorant human beings and for this reason the education that had been provided to them needed to be reformed. She referred to this antiquated type of education as “indolent education” meaning an education that served no purpose as it did not foster progress (1823, 3). But what proper education looked like in her view?

Caballero de la Borda proposed what she described as “a Christian and refined education” in which religion played a crucial role in providing a more rounded instruction (1823, 3). As the “Dama Filósofa” had proposed regarding the case of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, religion and Enlightenment were not incompatible. Caballero de la Borda claimed that it was time for women “to be free” and to fulfill their role as educators of productive citizens of the nation. Referring to the case of post-independence Mexico she underlined that it was crucial for the government to engage in reforming the education system of “our young female compatriots” (1823, 4). The author offered a detailed plan for the creation of a new Mexican academy for the education of girls. I will not delve into details here for the sake of time,[10] but my intention in referring to Ana Josefa Caballero de la Borda’s work in my concluding remarks is to emphasize the connections that existed between the female voices who lent to the topic of education in eighteenth-century Spanish American newspapers and Caballero de la Borda’s plan to reform education in the nineteenth century. Their views were centered on the role of religion as a science (i.e. theology) instead of on the notion of religion as a pure practice of moral behavior. This knowledge came to represent an important factor of the understanding of religion within a broader context of a supreme science.

[10] The plan she proposed was composed of 15 different articles that included instructions on where the academy was to be established, how it should be governed and administered along with the executive board’s responsibilities, the financial sustenance of the institution and how much instructors were to be paid, who were to teach, and how to academically reward through a literary competition. The purpose was to provide “the cultural knowledge needed to form enlightened female citizens” (Caballero de la Borda 1823, 5).

In a recent essay, Elizabeth Franklin Lewis argues, that in eighteenth-century Spain and Spanish America

> the women who hosted *tertulias*; the women who subscribed and contributed their letters and poems to newspapers; the women whose paintings were shown in public exhibits in the art academies; the women who delivered official speeches; the young women whose intellect was put on public display; and the women who published their own original texts as well as those who chose foreign texts to translate and publish–also exercised to varying degrees 'the public use of their reason' (2020, 121)

The articles discussed in this essay are prime examples of how in late colonial Spanish America discussions pertaining to women's role in society and their responsibility in educating the future citizens as well as themselves were part of lengthy and sometimes contradictory discussions in which gender roles were denounced, contested, and reformulated again and again. The subject of education played a major role in such debates. Male and female voices engaged in redefining the role of women in domestic and public spaces that despite its colonial locus of enunciation were also deeply connected to the debates taking place simultaneously at the other side of the Atlantic.

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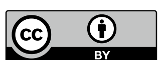

PART II

Women of Letters Across Frontiers

CHAPTER 5

Female Faces in the Fraternity. Printed Portraits Galleries and the Construction and Circulation of Images of Learned Women in the Republic of Letters

Lieke van Deinsen

Collecting portraits of the learned was a popular practice in the early modern Republic of Letters. By the eighteenth century, it proved to be such an essential part of the prevailing intellectual habitus, that the German philologist Sigmund Jacob Apin (1693–1732) published a treatise on how to assemble these collections. Contrary to what the title—*Anleitung wie man die Bildnüsse berühmter und gelehrter Männer mit Nutzen sammlen* (Instructions on how to usefully collect the portraits of famous and learned men)—suggests, Apin adopts an more open view on who could become part of these intellectual "group portraits" in terms of diversity: "Since at all times various women have manifested

L. van Deinsen (✉)
KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium
e-mail: lieke.vandeinsen@kuleuven.be

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themselves who have practised and excelled in theology, philology, philosophy, and, especially, poetry", he states, "a *Collector Imaginum* makes his collection even more impressive by including them" (Apin 1728, 44–45).[1] A rather progressive viewpoint in a period learned women were still regarded as anomalies in an institutionalized intellectual context and it was far from evident portraits presenting them as established scholars would be received withsole enthusiasm. The prominent historian of philosophy Jacob Brucker (1696–1770), nevertheless, took Apin's words by heart.[2] Anticipating the growing demand for likenesses of the learned, he co-initiated a project that would result in one of the most ambitious printed portrait collections of the time. Between 1741 and 1755 Brucker, together with the Augsburg engraver and publisher Johann Jacob Haid (1704–1767), published a portrait gallery presenting the famous learned of their days entitled *Bilder-Sal heutige Tages lebended, und durch Gelahrheit berühmter Schrifftsteller* (Portrait gallery of living writers, famous for their learning). Building on a longstanding tradition, the initiators intended to innovate this popular genre: they wanted to present the Republic of Letters through the most resembling portraits of the learned yet, both in word and image, and to do so they closely collaborated with the selected scholars (or their nearest and dearest). Also, in reach the project wanted to surpass its predecessors. The editors aimed to reach all the corners of the Republic of Letters with their ambitious enterprise: ten instalments, published simultaneously in German and Latin—as the *Pinacotheca Scriptorum* (Portrait gallery of writers)—each containing ten carefully produced portraits and biographies of a wide variety of scholars from different national (albeit with a strong German bias), religious and academic backgrounds.[3] Driven by their borderless and inclusive ambitions and in line with Apin's advice, from the very start the compilers decided to include also learned women.[4] "Because our times, too, are so lucky that here and there a woman gloriously

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

[2] For an extensive overview of Brucker's biographical background, scholarly network and philosophical ideas, see: Schmidt-Biggemann and T. Stammen (1998).

[3] In addition, eleven portraits were added in a later supplement that only appeared in German, see: Brucker and Haid (1766).

[4] On Brucker's emancipatory programme, see also: Hagengruber (2019), Iverson (2006), esp. 37–39.

presents herself on the stage of learning", Brucker states in the introduction to the first volume, "a place in this collection is also reserved for her" (Brucker 1741, [5]).[5] This is their full right, he emphasizes later, since by nature, both men and women are given equal intellectual capacities and the only reason learned women are still underrepresented is because societal order and traditions dictate them to take over duties that prevent them from fully dedicating themselves to their studies (Brucker 1741, on Luise Gottsched, [1]).

In the end, four contemporary women became part of the *Bilder-Sal*: the German poet, essayist and translator Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched (1713–1762) in the first instalment, the French Mathematician Émilie du Châtelet (1706–1749) and the Italian physicist Laura Bassi (1711–1778) in the fourth instalment, as well as the German Pietist poet Magdalena Sibylla Rieger (1707–1786) in the fifth instalment, agreed to be part of the prestigious project. Brucker had set his eyes on a least one other women, the German poet and writer Christiane Mariana von Ziegler (1696–1760), but eventually she—nor any other women—did not make the final cut (Döring 2013, 306. Letter from Brucker to Gottsched, 11 January 1741). Was the inclusion of these four ladies of letters a sufficient fulfilment of Brucker's promise to give learned women a permanent and prominent place in the project? And can the female imagery of the *Bilder-Sal*, as Ruth Hagengruber has argued in her analysis of its textual content, be seen "as an endeavour [...] to transform the cultural atmosphere and awareness with regard to women's participation in intellectual pursuits" (Hagengruber 2019, 124)? By analysing their conceptualization and circulation, this essay argues that, despite their limited number, learned women's portraits included in the highly ambitious and internationally orientated *Bilder-Sal* indeed marked the opening of a new chapter in the visualization of female intellectual authority in eighteenth-century Europe. Conceptualized and published in direct dialogue with the imagery of learned men included in the same instalments, these portraits visually presented learned women as equal participants to the intellectual debate. In addition, since the editors tried to actively involve the selected scholars in the making of their portraits and biographies, many letters survived providing unique insights into the ways

[5] Unless otherwise noted, citations from the *Bilder-Sal* have been taken from the German edition.

these learned women themselves (Gottsched and Du Châtelet in particular) thought about being presented as intellectual authorities and their inclusion in this group portrait of the contemporary European learned elite.

The Republic of Faces: Embodying Intellectual Authority in the Republic of Letters

As a printed portrait gallery, the *Bilder-Sal* was part of a longstanding tradition inspired by the more general popularity of likenesses of the learned in the early modern Republic of Letters. Although portraits of the learned had been circulating since classical antiquity, the genre gained significance from the sixteenth century onwards.[6] Both scholars' biographical details and physical features became increasingly important as the idea gained ground that intellectual inspiration was not drawn from some external source but from the individual's own inner, evocative powers. Consequently, portraits of the learned started to circulate widely in the Republic of Letters, being included in letters (the picture serving as the face-to-face introduction between colleagues that were unlikely to meet in person) (Waquet 1991, 22–28) and displayed in libraries and study rooms (Le Thiec 2009; Waquet 1998). Viewing the faces of like-minded contemporaries as well as learned predecessors from all corners of the learned world was assumed to act as inspiration and spark one's own mind, as the humanist Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) already explained in his *De Bibliothecis syntagma* (1602) (Hendrickson 2017, 120–121). The increasing prominence of portraits of the learned was also reflected in the book and print production: supported by technological innovations of the printing presses, engraved author portraits became omnipresent in the early modern period (Howe 2008; Griffiths 2016). Prominently placed in front of a text, these portraits were used to glorify and ennoble the author, forcing the reader to recognize the authority conveyed by their gaze (e.g. Chartier 1994; Burke 1998; Enenkel 2011). As a result, not only profit-driven publishers and booksellers, but authors themselves started to get actively involved in the construction, production and distribution of their public visual image (e.g. van Deinsen and

[6] See, for example, Jardine (1995) and Pettegree (2015) for the importance of portraiture in the authority constructions of Erasmus and Luther.

Geerdink 2021).[7] Consequently, the purpose of printed author portraits changed from predominantly memorializing the commendable dead to depicting the intriguing living. As such, these popular printed likenesses of the learned—which were not only included in books, but were also sold, collected and displayed separately—became an essential part of the public image of authors, both on an individual and a collective level (e.g. Enenkel 2015; Rößler 2018).

The increased significance of scholarly portraits in the representation of the intellectual collective became most evident in the growing number of printed portrait galleries of the learned and literate that were published throughout the period. In the introduction to the *Bilder-Sal*'s first instalment, Brucker explicitly places the project in this longstanding humanist tradition.[8] As the visual revitalization of the older (predominantly textual) genre of the collective biography—with roots in both Classical Antiquity (e.g. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*) and Christian hagiography (e.g. Jerome's *De Viris illustribus*)—the "catalogue of the learned" developed as a subgenre of the popular Renaissance *viri illustri* (e.g. Fulvio's *Illustrium Imagines*, 1517; Giovio's *Elogia* 1546/1551 and Vasari's *Vite* 1550; 2nd ed. with portraits 1568) (Fumaroli 2015, 365–96). It proved an ideal medium for the strongly internationally orientated early modern learned community to showcase their identity: as visual genealogies able to cross dimensions of both time and space, portrait collections not only provided the abstract notion of the Republic of Letters with actual faces; in presenting it as a collective image and defining it through examples they also actively shaped it (Solleveld 2022, 158). As such, they functioned, as Françoise Waquet has argued, as "le lien organique du monde savant" (The organic link of the learned world) (Waquet 1991, 24) and enhanced the public visibility of an intellectual community through a set of recurring and recognizable characteristics and collective display. These publications, at least at first, were often directly linked to an academic context (e.g. Kirwan 2022; Testa 2016) and published, as Anthony Grafton has argued, as the early modern equivalent of an academic website and presented an appealing collective image of the university's intellectual community to a broad audience (Grafton

[7] On the commercial purpose of the author portrait in the early modern period, see: Griffiths (2016, 396–97); The Multigraph Collective (2018, 143–44).

[8] For a discussion of the position of the *Bilder-Sal* in the broader tradition of printed portrait galleries, see also: Solleveld (2022, 158–63).

2003). Needless to say, women, who were generally excluded from the academic system, were absent from these collections. Because of that, a strong, consistent and, of course, masculine stereotypical image of the intellectual emerged that functioned as a direct reference for new generations of (aspiring) men of letters who wanted to become part of this visual genealogy (van Deinsen 2020, 2022, 85–86).

Although textual catalogues of "famous women" flourished as a subcategory of the *viri illustri* throughout the early modern period[9], the lives of learned women were (albeit sporadically) included in biographical overviews of scholars all over Europe; they long stayed exceptions in visual portrait galleries of the learned, especially when they focused on contemporary scholars.[10] More generally speaking, the increased importance of portraiture to the representation of intellectual identity presented early modern learned women with a challenge (e.g. Trotot 2016; Vanacker and van Deinsen 2022). While a rapidly growing number of female intellectuals found their way to the presses and published their works, printing their likeness complicated their public presentation (Simonin 2002; van Deinsen 2022). The increasing autonomy of the individual notwithstanding, the opportunities for women to participate in the early modern public and intellectual domain remained limited (e.g. Goodman 2009). The demand for visual imagery of the learned proved to be a new hurdle: if speaking and writing were already considered challenges to the prescribed definition of modest female behaviour, printing one's picture for purchase and distribution among a wide and often unknown audience, seemed all the more scandalous (Ezell 2012; Schneikart 2018). Learned women who wanted to use their portraits to embody intellectual authority

[9] Inspired by Boccaccio's influential *De Claris Mulieribus* (On Famous Women, 1374) and, later, Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*—(The Book of the City of Ladies, 1405) numerous publications all over Europe had highlighted the lives and accomplishments of women of letters. The genre particularly flourished from the seventeenth century onwards Woods (1987), Rang (1988). For an extensive overview of the German catalogues, see: Woods and Fürstenwald (1984).

[10] Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that catalogues of famous women, which include so many learned women, usually had their own purpose they primarily functioned as an argument in the debate whether women were actually well-suited to engage in the sciences. For a discussion on the role of these catalogues in the *querelle des femmes*, see, for example, Gössmann 1984. There are some noteworthy exceptions. Isaac Bullart's *Académie des Sciences et des Arts* (Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1682), for example, included the biographies of nine women, of which three were represented with their portrait (Solleveld 2022, 160).

often struggled, as I have argued elsewhere, with meeting social expectations at the same time (van Deinsen 2022). When a portrait of a learned woman was printed, even when it was constructed with the utmost care, it could easily meet with public disapproval. Numerous examples have survived containing mutilations and harsh remarks (van Deinsen 2022).[11] Most portraits of early modern learned women, then, were published posthumously, their likeness predominantly serving a memorial function. It was only by the eighteenth century that learned women's aversive attitude toward printing their portraits changed on a large scale, and the number of circulating printed portraits of *living* European female authors quickly increased (van Deinsen 2019).

Female Faces in the Fraternity: Including Learned Women in the *Bilder-Sal*

By the time Brucker and Haid initiated their printed portrait gallery in the 1740s, perhaps for the first time in history, the time seemed ripe to include contemporary learned women structurally from the start and even count on their active participation. By not giving them a volume of their own, but rather incorporating them in a commonly accepted canon, the collection presented them with a rare opportunity that allowed them to present themselves openly as equal participants of the Republic of Letters. Despite this progressive choice, however, Brucker did ignore one of Apin's advice with regard to the optimal inclusion of women in a portrait collection. Whereas Apin suggested to incorporate their portraits amidst their male colleagues, in alphabetical order, in the *Bilder-Sal* a special spot was reserved for them near the end of every instalment, underlining they were still a category of their own.

Perhaps even more than their written portraits—which presented these women not only as learned individuals but also as representatives of an ongoing lineage of female intellectuals in history—their visual images contributed to their singular public display as an intellectual authority.[12]

[11] Adding such comments was not exclusively reserved for the portraits of female authors. Although systematic research on the matter is currently lacking, at first glance the remarks on the likenesses of women writers seems harsher. For a general discussion of reader comments on printed author portraits, see Rößler (2021).

[12] On the paradoxical dimensions of Brucker's emancipatory programme, see Hagengruber (2019).

Seamlessly fitting his general template, Haid portrayed each of the learned women in three-quarters, in the midst of their study room. Like their male counterparts, they are placed behind a stone portal adorned with their family coat of arms and credentials (i.e. full name, function and date of birth), with the difference that—apart from Du Châtelet—the names of their husbands were also included. In addition, in his attempt to present the selected women in the best possible way, Haid seemed to have paid more attention to iconographical details. Whereas only about half the portraits of the male scholars produced for the *Bilder-Sal* contained meaningful attributes, Haid made sure all portraits of the learned women highlighted their specific fields of expertise. Both Gottsched and Rieger are depicted as successful writers; the former at her desk studying a book; the latter with laurel wreath, the symbol of poetic honour and a wax seal in a wooden box attached to a deed, alluding to the fact she had been given the title "Kaiserliche Dichterin" (Imperial Poetess) by the University of Göttingen following a privilege by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI (1685–1740) (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2).

In line with the widely circulating imagery of Du Châtelet, then, Haid presented the Marquise in front of her books and sphere, referring to her contribution to the study and advancement of Newtonian physics.[13] Finally, in the case of Laura Bassi, whose appointment as the first (honorary) female professor in Europe in 1732 had also made her name in the regions above the Alps (Cavazza 2014, 76–78), he went a step further.[14] The "Bolognese Minerva" is presented sitting in her study, holding a book in her hand, an armillary sphere in the background, and another book resting on the sill, partially covering a sheet with several geometrical symbols. By including Newtonian-inspired figures, references to Euclidean geometry, the Pythagorean equation, and—so it seems—a

[13] In including the globe, Haid presumably drew inspiration on the example provided by the Marquise. Which exact portrait was used is still unclear.

[14] Haid based his engraving on a portrait that was already present in Augsburg at the time and, according to a letter from Gian Lodovico Bianconi to Giuseppe Verati, was "most resembling" (Cenerelli 1885, 201, Letter from Bianconi to Verati, 26 November 1744). The inscription on the engraving mentions one "Litters" ("Litters pinx") as the painter. This portrait nor its maker, however, has been identified. It has been suggested a work by Carlos Vandi, nowadays in the collection of the University of Bologna functioned as the example (cf. Döring et al. 2015, 169–71, note 19). For an elaborate discussion of the iconography of Laura Bassi, see: Cazzani (1960).

Fig. 5.1 Johann Jacob Haid (after Elias Gottlob Haussmann), Portrait of Luise Adelgunde Victoria Gottsched, 1741. © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Fig. 5.2 Johann Jacob Haid (after Wolfgang Dietrich Majer), Portrait of Magdalena Sibylla Rieger, 1746. © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

few random propositions, Haid ostensibly wanted to present the attentive observer with an anthology of Bassi's physics, highlighting her broad contribution to the field (Figs. 5.3 and 5.4).[15]

Although, at first sight, these women seemed to blend in easily in the intellectual group portrait as presented in the *Bilder-Sal*, behind the scenes, there was often more going on. This becomes all the more apparent from several letters leading up to the publication of their individual portraits. As was the case with the male scholars, Brucker and Haid spared no effort to involve the selected women actively, making use of their extensive scholarly network to get into contact. The first woman selected for the ambitious project, Luise Gottsched, came from Brucker's inner circle. He maintained a longstanding intellectual friendship with her husband, the distinguished writer Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766). From the early stages, he kept the famous Gottsched couple closely informed on the latest developments of the project in general, and their own portraits in particular.[16] In the case of Du Châtelet, Johann II Bernoulli (1710–1790), a member of the prominent Swiss family of mathematicians that was well represented in the *Bilder-Sal*, was asked to act as an intermediary.[17] Between June 1743 and January 1745, he exchanged several letters with the Marquise on her becoming part of the collection.[18] For the portrait of Bassi, the editors reached out to the Augsburg-based canon Giovanni Battista de Bassi (1713–1776), a cousin of hers, who in turn, due to a lack of time, would leave the job to his trustee, Giovanni Luduvico Bianconi (1717–1781), a Bolognese physician who resided at the Augsburg court. These efforts to get the women to participate actively were crucial since the initiators had set the unprecedented goal to provide the Republic of Letters with the most resembling portraits of its key members, both textual and visual. When

[15] With thanks to Marieke Hendriksen and Sweitse van Leeuwen for unravelling these figures.

[16] The portrait of Johann Christoph was included in the *Bilder-Sal*'s third instalment. For the portraits of the Gottsheds in the *Bilder-Sal,* see also Otto (2007).

[17] The Basel-based Bernoulli family was represented in the project with portraits of both the father Johann I Bernoulli (1667–1748) (second instalment) and son Daniel Bernoulli (1700–1782) (third instalment).

[18] Bernoulli had most likely met Du Châtelet, when he accompanied an apprentice of his father, Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1698–1759) during a visit to her chateau in Cirey. Afterwards they maintained epistolary contact. See also, Iverson (2006).

Fig. 5.3 Johan Jacob Haid, Portrait of Emilie du Châtelet, 1745. © The Trustees of the British Museum, London

Fig. 5.4 Johann Jacob Haid, Portrait of Laura Maria Caterina Bassi Verati, 1745. © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

it was within the realm of possibilities, the editors wanted the selected authors to be involved in every step of the process: from providing them with the best portrait and comprehensive biographical information, to commenting upon the proofs.[19] As such, the included scholars (or their advocates) were explicitly invited to shape their own imagery. "It would take too much of me to list all the Lady's merits one by one, nor would a notary's protocol prove sufficient. Therefore, add to it what you consider most suitable", Bianconi writes to Verati (Cenerelli 1885, 201, Letter from Bianconi to Verati, 26 November 1744). How far Rieger influenced her portrait is, as of now, unknown and due to an unforeseen confluence of circumstances, Bassi's portrait was eventually published without her input.[20] But in the cases of Du Châtelet and, especially, Gottsched, the correspondence leading up to the publication of their portraits provides unique insights into their ambivalent attitude toward their visual public imagery.

Disappointing Displays: The Continuing Struggle to Visualize Female Scholars

At first, both Gottsched and Du Châtelet proved enthusiastic about the request to become part of the intellectual group portrait Brucker and Haid had planned. The invitation reached Luise Gottsched, via her husband, in the very early stages of the conceptualization of the *Bilder-Sal*. In a letter dated 27 March 1740, Brucker informs his good friend Gottsched that the engraver and publisher Haid had approached him

[19] Judging by a letter from Bianconi to Laura Bassi's husband, Giuseppi Verati, it was the ambition to systematically map out the biography down to the smallest detail (Cenerelli 1885, 201, Letter from Bianconi to Verati, 26 November 1744).

[20] In a letter to his friend Gottshed, Brucker complains about the delay of information (Döring et al. 2015, 294, Letter from Brucker to Gottshed, 14 August 1743). Apparently, something went wrong: the letter from the Canon to his cousin including the proofs of the portrait engraving and the request for biographical information went missing. Through Bianconi, he had the request repeated months later, but—as far as we know—without quick success. In the end, Brucker was, as he mentioned in the preface to the fourth instalment—forced to include the portrait of Bassi without her feedback (cf. Brucker 1745, [1]). Perhaps the lack of response had to do with the intermediary's somewhat clumsy phrasings. When concluding his letter, he asked Verati to pass on his congratulations to the again pregnant Bassi, while in the same breath remarking it might be better for her if her husband were to be sterilized (Cenerelli 1885, 202, Letter from Bianconi to Verati, 26 November 1744).

with the exiting idea to publish jointly a new printed portrait gallery. Haid himself would fabricate the state-of-the-art portraits and take care of the overall production and Brucker was asked to employ his extensive network and expertise as a historian to select and contact the authors. Overtly enthusiastic, Brucker directly started to plan the first programmatic instalment in which he wanted to highlight the project's inclusive ambitions, by also incorporating a woman. His thoughts went out to *Frau* Gottsched:

> I have not been able to think of a better candidate than your wife. I know and admire her merits and characteristics so highly that I consider it a privilege to present the portrait of such a rare adornment of our fatherland to the world through an artistic hand, and the meritorious depiction of her glorious achievements through my little pen. (Döring et al. 2012, 446, Brucker to Gottsched, 27 March 1740)

If Luise was willing to cooperate, it was important that she send a painted portrait of herself as soon as possible, as well as a biographical sketch, so Haid and Brucker could get to work. After a little persuasion, Luise gave in, and by July, a freshly painted portrait reached Haid (Döring et al. 2012, 500–02, Brucker to Gotthed, 20 April 1740). Du Châtelet, as well, proved eager to accept the request without giving it a second thought. "I am very flattered", she replies to Bernouilli, "by the company in which they want to put me and that they thought of including me in the collection you spoke of". She promises to send a copy of a recent portrait of her by the famous artist Jean Marc Nattier ("who is at present the best for portraits") from Strasbourg (Du Châtelet 2018, 123, Du Châtelet to Bernoulli, 3 June 1743).

Despite their initial enthusiasm, however, upon receiving the proofs, both women were eventually disappointed. Notwithstanding the egalitarian ideals behind the project, in the case of the women, it still proved difficult not to let their appearance prevail over their inner qualities. Especially Gottsched was unhappy with how her appearance was depicted. In transposing the sample portrait (depicting Gottsched from the waist up) to the "three-quarters" (i.e. from the knee up) *Bilder-Sal* template, Haid had been forced to adjust her posture. And although Brucker had explicitly promised several times that the changes would by no means impact the authenticity of the likeness, upon viewing the proofs Luise did not recognize herself (Döring et al. 2013, 29, Brucker to Gottsched,

17 August 1740; 254, Brucker to Gottsched, 29 November 1740). Not only was the wrong family coat of arms included, but the portrait also confronted her with a woman "too large and stiff of posture" (Döring et al. 2013, 304, Brucker to Gottsched, 11 January 1741). This extraordinary physiognomy was only enhanced by the fact the depicted was presented against a background of—what the Gottscheds interpreted as—four shelves filled with titleless folio-size books (305). Having not seen her in real life, Haid had transformed the *petite* woman into a giant. Although he did not consider all the comments valid, Brucker promised to get the necessary adjustments made in order "to present the image of such a great person perfectly to the scholarly world" (306). After consultation with Haid, however, this was easier said than done. The minor flaws (such as the family coat of arms) were easily fixed, but the problem with Gottsched's giant stature required a whole new design. Running out of time, Haid's only feasible solution was to add a very short arm to indicate the person was not tall at all (Döring et al. 2013, 316, Haid to Gottsched, 14 January 1741). These adjustments could not prevent the final portrait from disappointing again. And when sometime later another portrait of Luise was transferred to the copper by the Leipzig artist Johann Martin Bernigeroth, the couple did not miss the opportunity to send a copy of the new likeness to Brucker to show him it was in fact possible to portray a female scholar accurately (Döring et al. 2013, 464, Brucker to Gottsched, 19 June 1741).

It would not be the only time that Haid struggled with depicting scholars he had not seen in the flesh before, women in particular.[21] Upon viewing the proofs of her portrait, Du Châtelet proved also not impressed. Due to logistic issues, she had not been able to send over the preferred Nattier portrait but was forced to provide a copy she liked less (Du Châtelet 2018, 135, Du Châtelet to Bernoulli, 1 October 1743).[22] When Du Chatelet received the proofs in the winter of 1745 she seemed

[21] A similar situation had arisen when creating the portrait of the German Lutheran church historian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755), see: Döring et al. (2013, 464–67), Brucker to Gottshed, 19 June 1741; Brucker to Gottshed, 13 September 1741.

[22] Although Du Châtelet had promised to send a picture by the popular French painter Jean Marc Nattier, she had to divert to another one, due to logistic issues. Judging by the inscription "Natier pinxit Parisüs" on his engraving, Haid was not aware of this last-minute change. It has been suggested a bad copy of the famous painting by Marie-Anne Loir, presenting Du Châtelet in a similar fur-lined gown fastened with bow and a fur choker, was used. See also, Iverson (2006, 44–45). The representation shows strong

not surprised the printed portrait was not to her liking. In her response, she makes no bones about it: “I received, sir, the six portraits that you announced to me. I admit that they are frightening” (Du Châtelet 2018, 190, Du Châtelet to Bernoulli, 25 January 1744). In contrast to Luise Gottsched, this French mathematician did not entirely blame the engraver (“but it is less the fault of the engraver than of the painter”). The confident Marquise even proved able to see some humour in it: “My self-esteem is still at stake, because those who will see me [in real life] will find me less bad, since one always assumes that the portraits are embellished”. For Du Châtelet, both the prestige of being counted among the most important learned of her day brought together in the *Bilder-Sal*, and of having the most flattering biography, partly written by Voltaire, highlighting her intellectual accomplishments, proved more important than the portrait engraving that was only one of many. Although she expects Nattier—who was wrongly named in the print as the creator of the original—would not be very happy to see his name associated with the resembling likeness, she admitted looking forward to the moment it would be published.

“I Hope it Finds Its Way to Every Studyroom”. The *Bilder-Sal*’s Circulation

Both Gottsched’s determination to make her likeness to her liking and Du Châtelet’s delight at the publication of her portrait—despite its mediocrity—are rooted in the potential resonance the *Bilder-Sal* could have in the scholarly world. As mentioned before, from the start the initiators cherished great international ambitions and the project was carefully designed to have the widest possible reach in the Republic of Letters. Not only were the instalments printed in both German and Latin, the *lingua franca* of the international scholarly community (Döring et al. 2012, Brucker to Gottsched, 27 March 1740), Haid’s presses also proved capable of producing portrait engravings in unprecedented numbers. “For Haid is it no effort to deliver 800 to 1000 prints, he is unmatched in this”, Brucker writes to Gottsched (Döring et al. 2016, 568, Brucker to Gottsched, September 1745). The choice of authors was also made with

commonalities with the engraving Étienne Fessard produced to accompany the Dutch translation of the Institutions physiques (Amsterdam 1741).

an international audience in mind. On the one hand, compatriots were sought "whose beautiful writings have also been well received among foreigners" (Döring et al. 2014, 189, Letter from Brucker to Gottsched, 8 April 1742); and, on the other hand, foreigners were included "so that it may also be sold in France and Italy" (Döring et al. 2014, 465, Letter Brucker to Gottsched, 14 October 1742).[23] Their portraits, then, were brought from all over Europe to Augsburg.[24] This meticulous publishing strategy could not, however, prevent that the sale of copies did not always go as planned. In a letter to Gottsched, Brucker complained about the fact their Latin edition was less popular than expected, whereas the German edition, to his great surprise, was eagerly purchased in Holland, Sweden and Hungary (Döring et al. 2016, 226, Brucker to Gottsched, 22 September 1744). In addition, the ongoing War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748) made international circulation more difficult.[25] He nevertheless had little to complain about the resonance that the *Bilder-Sal* enjoyed abroad:

> Perhaps God will soon help us to peace [...] I would bring [...] many copies to Italy, since Venice, Florence, Livorno, Lucca and Genoa have already written to me about it, and the work is eagerly read by Italians. (Döring et al. 2016, 315, Bruck to Gottsched, 17 December 1744)

Despite their modest number and sometimes poor execution, the portraits of learned women included in the series particularly proved to catch the eye of the international public. Brucker had been betting on this from the start. Already in his first letters to Gottsched, in which he tried to entice Luise to participate, he repeatedly pointed out the possible impact the project could have on her international reputation. He promised her it could even help her to gain "the glory of all foreign women" (Döring et al. 2012, 446, Brucker to Gottsched, 27 March 1740). That her portrait, indeed, was well received by the scholarly world became

[23] In the end, the *Bilder-Sal* consisted of 75 German, 11 Italian, 5 Swiss, 4 French, 3 Dutch, 1 Hungarian, 1 Spanish and 1 Polish scholar(s). For a detailed prosopography of the scholars included in the *Bilder-Sal*, see: Solleveld (2022, 156–58).

[24] They even wanted to bring the portrait of Alexander Pope over from England (Döring et al. 2015, 464, Letter Brucker to Gottshed, 1 January 1744).

[25] Because of the war, booksellers did not dare to take delivery of international goods. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, books were usually distributed by trade, by the exchange of an equal quantity of printed sheets between publishers.

clear shortly after the first instalment was published. In October 1742, the euphoric editor could update the Gottsched couple on its success. Especially in Italy the volume was "very well received". Particularly, the portrait of the German poetess had provoked positive responses (Döring et al. 2014, 465, Letter Brucker tot Gottsched, 14 October 1742). In its detailed review of the series' Latin edition, the Florentine scholarly journal *Novelle letterarie pubblicate*, for example, had highlighted Gottsched's likeness to emphasize the important contribution of contemporary learned women to the Republic of Letters more generally:

> …and finally, Vittoria Lodovica Adelgunda Gottschedia, since erudite women are also given a place in this noble collection. And it is a rare delight of our time to be able to, even among the weaker sex, boast such universal literature that the admiration of the ancients can be greatly diminished, to save now even more powerful expressions. (*Novelle letterarie pubblicate* 1742, 256)

It seemed that Brucker's figurative promise that Luise's portrait would find its way "to every study room" in the Republic of Letters and inspire contemporaries came true (Döring et al. 2013, 255, Brucker to Gottsched, 29 November 1740). Judging by the frequent reference to the portrait in the correspondence of the Gottscheds, many of the prints Haid had provided fell in the eager hands of the learned.

As was generally the case with portraits of the learned, the likenesses of learned women in the *Bilder-Sal* were particularly popular because they provided the public with a rare opportunity to meet an admired scholar whom they were unlikely to ever meet in person. As such, they could function as a substitute. "I hope Sir Haiden's burin and knife […] have depicted in copper what Leipzig has the good fortune to admire in the original", Brucker wrote to Luise (Döring et al. 2013, 285–86, Brucker to Luise Gottsched, 21 December 1740). Her portrait, indeed, was regarded as a potential worthy substitute. When the royal counsellor in Dresden, Johann Christian Benemann (1683–1744), lamented in a letter to Gottsched about the missed opportunity to meet Luise, he admitted having found comfort in the idea that he would hold her portrait shortly: "I am looking forward to seeing her soon in the copper" (Döring et al. 2013, 197, Letter Benemann to Gottsched, 31 October 1740).

Although it is difficult to gain systematic insight into the exact circulation of printed portraits in the private context, the references to Luise's likeness in the correspondence offer a good idea of the potential reach and functions they acquired after publication. In addition to contemporaries who managed to lay their hands on the image, the Gottscheds themselves—despite their initial dissatisfaction with the result—turned out to be eager to distribute the portrait among their friends and colleagues. They often gave it a prominent place in their study so that it could serve as intellectual inspiration or conversation piece (c.f. Döring et al. 2013, 542, Rosner to Gottsched, 22 September 1741). The Swiss historian Johann Georg Altmann (1695–1758), for example, admits in a letter to Luise having her portrait on display:

> I am not insensitive by nature and, allow this widower the pleasure of displaying your picture, as engraved by Mr. Haid, in my room in such a way that it catches the eyes of all those who visit me, so that I am always given the pleasant opportunity to praise your merits. (Döring et al. 2014, 6, Altmann to Luise Gottsched, 1 November 1741)

That the portraits indeed drew attention there is shown by a remarkable and somewhat humorous story that reached the couple via the German Germanist Cölestin Flottwell (1711–1759). Whereas Flottwell had previously reported with great enthusiasm that Luise's portrait had been given a place of honour in his study, next to that of the prominent philosopher Christian Wolff (1679–1754), he now had to urge his good friends to send "a few copies of her beautiful copperplate engravings [...] as soon as possible. A Fräulein v. S. has taken my copy by force" (Döring et al. 2015, 448, Flottwell to Gottsched, 14 December 1743; Döring et al. 2016, 261, Flottwell to Gottsched, 17 November 1744) (Fig. 5.5).

The Gottscheds saw the comedy in it and in return, and they sent him some new copies: "The requested portraits, bad as they are, also follow here; and we consider them fortunate that they have been deemed worthy of a robbery by such beautiful hands" (Döring et al. 2016, 293, Gottsched to Flottwell, 1 December 1744). Such "fan-like" situations would continue for years and invariably caused Luise to oscillate between flattery and discomfort. Illustrative is an ironic reaction to praise of her portrait by Dorothea Henriette von Runckel (1724–1800) where the female modesty topos with which women writers have dealt for centuries with compliments on their behalf emerges again: "The little idolatry you

Fig. 5.5 Johann Jacob Haid (after Gottfried Boy), Portrait of Christian Wolff, 1741. © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

are practicing with my picture is flattering. Your husband could do me a great favour if he threw this engraving into the fireplace" (Kording 1999, 181, Luise Gottsched to Von Runckel, 26 May 1753). Despite her inclusion in the ambitious *Bilder-Sal*, Gottsched remained susceptible to the female modesty topos.

How women tried to secure a place in the early modern male-dominated learned community has been the subject of numerous studies over the last decade. The most visible sign of their growing presence in the intellectual field—their printed portraits—has, however, received surprisingly little critical attention. Yet, due to their visual nature, their portraits proved ideal vehicles to disseminate representations of female intellectual authority easily across regional, national and linguistic borders and were displayed in the study rooms of prominent (male) scholars. One could argue that by including the portraits of contemporary female scholars in the *Bilder-Sal*, Brucker and Haids' project marked a new emancipatory stage in the acceptance of learned women as the embodiments of intellectual authority. Within this "intellectual group portrait", their portraits presented the public with an unprecedented image that merged two hitherto long seemingly incompatible socio-cultural categories: being a *woman* and being *learned*. By including living female scholars to the visual genealogy of the learned, the *Bilder-Sal* opened a new chapter in the visualization of female intellectual authority in Europe.

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CHAPTER 6

A Woman Between Two Cities: Louise d'Épinay, Paris and Geneva

Anthony J. La Vopa

Why not begin recklessly—with a generalization that is bound to get me in trouble? There is, I want to argue, a good reason to distinguish between early modern feminism and modern feminism, one that seems to me vital to understanding the career of feminism in France and perhaps in Europe over the long term. To understand early modern feminism, our point of departure has to be a foundational fact of life for elite women, not easy to fully grasp from within our modern cultures that put so much value on self-validation through labour: in the culture of France's old regime elite—the titled aristocracies of robe and sword and the *haute bourgeoisie* that strove to emulate their way of life—protocols of gender and protocols of status interlocked to make it virtually impossible for cultivated women to perform strenuous and sustained intellectual labour, whether in the oral performances of polite society or in writing in the world of letters. As Mónica Bolufer has argued, in the early modern era the traditional granting of women's "spiritual" equality with men as

A. J. La Vopa (✉)
North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA
e-mail: ajlavopa@ncsu.edu

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recipients of divine grace sometimes shaded into claims for their "intellectual" equality (Bolufer 2005; Stuurman 2005). It was still assumed, however, that women's minds were too weak for the educated professions; their sphere of equality in cognition, perhaps even superiority, lay in taste, where spontaneous intuition in aesthetic appreciation, not reasoned judgement, was decisive, and in the art of conversation, for which women were seen to be far more naturally gifted than men.

We find this gendered differentiation challenged at several moments in the three decades prior to the French Revolution. One such moment—the one we will concentrate on here—is recorded in two private letters that Louise d'Épinay wrote to her close friend the abbé Galiani, the first dated January 4, 1771, and the second March 14, 1772, to be found in a remarkable correspondence the friends sustained from Galiani's recall to Naples from diplomatic service in Paris in 1769 to d'Épinay's death in 1783. In the letter of January 4, 1771, d'Épinay protests the injustice of women being excluded from all "useful occupations", though they are not only as intelligent as men but also have a greater capacity to communicate ideas. The letter of March 14, 1772, has a more theoretical reach. Conventional gender differentiations have denatured women; if women were raised as nature intended, they would be as qualified as men for "serious occupations" (La Vopa 2017, 285–88).[1]

D'Épinay was emphatic that Galiani keep the two letters in question absolutely secret. It was not simply that she feared ridicule by the public in general if she exhibited her intelligence publicly. Over the previous fifteen years or so she had become an active participant in the world of the *philosophes*; notably in her intellectual presence in the socially uninhibited gatherings she arranged at her father-in-law's chateau La Chevrette, which sometimes went on for days, and in co-editing with Diderot the *Correspondance littéraire* during her partner Grimm's absence from Paris on diplomatic missions in 1770 and 1771. Frequently making her own polite but intellectually pointed contributions to the journal, she became a "woman of letters", though not one who dared to be recognized as such on the public stage. During her stay in Geneva from November, 1757 through September, 1759, she became a friend of Voltaire and a frequent guest at his home at Ferney. Voltaire liked to play the gallant with most women, limiting himself to amusing wit, but he called d'Épinay a

[1] The correspondence is given an informed reading in Steegmuller 1991.

"truly philosophical woman" (Weinreb 1993, 109–10). These credentials notwithstanding, d'Épinay knew that on the issue of women and work her friends among the philosophes would not support her.

To understand how d'Épinay came to her modern feminist conviction, we have to operate in two interpretive registers at once. One is intellectual history as it has usually been practiced. In its view of influence, we demonstrate that X read Y's text and derived certain ideas from it. By itself, that would put us in a straitjacket in this case. In her writings d'Épinay had remarkably little to say about what she learned from specific texts in her readings, and in participation in conversations (and arguments) among Enlightenment men of letters. Discussing in her writing what she learned from specific texts would have been superfluous. In the second interpretive register, we find d'Épinay and the people around her immersed in rhetorical cultures, by which I mean shared resources of meaning that historical agents have to draw on in the social and cultural webs of their worlds. The resources did not produce a consensus, but they did allow shared perceptions of choices, and a shared language with which to make them (Manning 2013).

D'Épinay was raised in the rhetorical culture of polite sociability at the pinnacle of French society, which had embedded assumptions about how rank and privilege constrained one's self-fashioning, plotted one's life possibilities and perched one above the common need to perform "useful" work. It coexisted uneasily, and sometimes in open conflict, with another rhetorical culture—one that made utility and the labour it required the measure of a person's social and moral value. It was in negotiating these tensions that d'Épinay found her way to a modern feminist logic of self-validation, and to a way of life that lived that logic without depriving her of the kind of sociability that came to matter to her.

Antoine Lilti has shown us in rich detail that the motive force in *le monde* was the pursuit of "reputation" (Lilti 2010*)*. To rise in reputation was to ascend the pyramid of "honour" over which the Crown at Versailles presided, distributing titles and monetary rewards, and resting financially on the sprawling sale of offices (*venalité*) requiring considerable investment by families to secure lucrative positions in a bloated state bureaucracy. Marriageable daughters were subject to the family's "dynastic" impulse to maintain or heighten its social status through marital alliances. It was not simply that the choice of a marriage partner was in the hands of the parents and other relatives. Making a daughter marriageable meant breeding her in polite self-representation—a virtually unceasing

self-performance—that made the art of pleasing (*complaisance)* the sine qua non of female “honour”. For women (as for men in polite company), *complaisance* required that everything be done with seeming *aisance*. In polite sociability, and especially in polite conversation, a woman who appeared to make an effort in thinking or in speaking risked debasing herself. The politeness practiced in aristocratic sociability was not simply leisured; it was incompatible with an ethos of labour that was gaining purchase in eighteenth-century bourgeois society.

There was an underlying cultural logic to *aisance* that makes it, for us moderns, as hard to grasp as the apparently impenetrable logics of primitive cultures; however contrived it might actually be, seemingly effortless performance was valued as a natural exercise of freedom, in contrast to the determinism that labour to satisfy basic needs imposed on the great mass. Women’s role was to please effortlessly, and that required that they practice an aesthetic of play that had no room for even the appearance of disciplined effort. The woman who violated that taboo—who revealed herself to be seriously engaged in “study”—risked being stigmatized and perhaps ostracized as a *femme savante*, an unnatural creature (La Vopa 2017, 19–38).

An increasing number of women from the middle ranks of society did try to make a living by writing for a market, and especially by writing novels, but for women of the aristocracy and the *haute bourgeoisie* this kind of self-employment was virtually unthinkable, a complete violation of the aristocratic code of social honour. What became thinkable—or at least more thinkable—was concentrated and sustained labour in reading and writing in frequent periods of solitude. Whether the woman could expose herself by publishing the work, even anonymously, was a vexed question; perhaps better to read it to a select group of friends. What matters for my purposes is the emancipation of the female mind that the work itself signified. Gradually for some women at the top of the social pinnacle, social self-validation pivoted from natural freedom from labour to natural freedom through labour. However inconsequential this might seem, it was an act of existential defiance, a psychic condition in the transvaluation of values that made modern feminism possible.

The agenda of early modern feminism rarely took this turn; the agenda of modern feminism did take it, making women’s self-fulfilment through disciplined labour one of its central goals. In my sweeping generalization, the turn to emancipation through labour has its breakthrough moments in the second half of the eighteenth century. François Poullain de la

Barre's three feminist treatises of the 1670s might seem to fly in the face of this claim. In *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (On the Equality of the Two Sexes, 1673), Poullain did argue without qualification that women were as capable as men to engage in the strenuous Cartesian meditation that would free them from reigning social prejudices; and that that liberation would qualify them to exercise their critical faculties in all the educated professions that had been to that point exclusively male. It was a utopian vision of a new social order, aimed at eventually making "birth" irrelevant to access to positions in the entire occupational world. But in the treatise *De l'éducation des dames* (On the Education of Women, 1679), Poullain, looking for a way to make a start, backtracked to a more practical social strategy. Even as he realized that only the elite women of *le monde* had the time and the means to engage in Cartesian meditation, he had to face the fact their aesthetic code of social performance simply did not allow them to serve openly, in their speech and their behaviour, as the vanguard for a rational reordering of society. He assures women with "leisure and means" that Cartesian study will provide "a gentle and pleasant intellectual exercise", entirely compatible with their usual "divergences". The new science would be "a gentle, easy exercise for ladies" (La Vopa 2017, 51–60). It was a measure of the strength of the social aesthetic of play that Poullain, despite the stringent idealism of his commitment to Cartesian principles, had to accommodate to its code. While not implying that Cartesian study could be another worldly amusement, he knew that he could not ask the polite women he was addressing to tear away their inbred consciousness of breeding, and indeed of selfhood, as social beings.

Montbrillant and Character

The monumental edifice to d'Épinay's commitment to freedom through labour was her *Histoire de Madame de Montbrillant*, an epistolary novel not published in her lifetime and first published in a reliable unabridged edition in 1951. The 1989 edition has 1479 pages of text in small print, not counting the editor's notes (d'Épinay 1989). If it is monumental in size, it is still a work in progress that often seems temporally and spatially formless. Most of the letters are undated, though it is clear that they are arranged in a chronological order. The novel has a rich—perhaps too rich—tableau of characters drawn from her family, her friends, the people she encountered in *le monde* and the world of letters. They all revolve around Émilie, the main character, through whom d'Épinay represents

herself. Over the course of the text we watch d'Épinay learning to be a novelist; the character portrayals become increasingly well-etched and lively as Émilie sheds the naivité of her youth, especially in exchanges of letters that have acute psychological drama. The role of invention in her portrayal of characters was not limited to adding fictional detail to the personalities and lives of real people. She also created characters, though they did not come into being ex-nihilo; she surely drew their attributes from the actual people of her social world. Not surprisingly, the novel has drawn the scrutiny of feminist scholars, whose valuable studies I have depended on. They have effectively brought both the novel and its author out of the shadows cast by the usual cast of male *philosophes*.[2]

D'Épinay originally conceived *Montbrillant*, one might say, to outdo Rousseau. In 1756 she had offered Rousseau a refuge from Paris in a cottage on her father-in-law's estate, where he read to her drafts of the first parts of the novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). With *Montbrillant* d'Épinay wanted to experiment in the psychological realism and the true-to-life epistolary dialogue that she found lacking in Rousseau's novel (d'Épinay 1989). Her characters would not be rhetorical mouthpieces for the author; they would speak for themselves, with the immediacy that the epistolary novel made possible. In this way, under the paper-thin cover of fictional names, she portrayed a number of Enlightenment luminaries in her circle of friends, including Rousseau, Grimm, Galiani, Duclos, Diderot, d'Holbach and Saint-Lambert.

I should note here that I am sidestepping a question that has preoccupied critics of the novel since its first appearance in 1812. It turns on the text's extensively documented account of the feud d'Épinay, Grimm and Diderot had with Rousseau from 1757 on. Well into the twentieth century Rousseauists made d'Épinay the liar in this affair; to admirers of d'Épinay the liar was Rousseau. The dispute cannot be resolved with documentary evidence. More important, we don't need to resolve it if we want to recover the full social and cultural meaning of the text. The

[2] I am especially indebted to Parker 1981; Caron 2017; Cazenobe 1996; Seth 2013; Nemeth-Badescu 2005; Trouille 1997. Still indispensable are Badinter 1983, Badinter's Préface in d'Épinay 1989, and Weinreb 1993. Badinter tends to take *Montbrillant* as factually reliable autobiography, while Weinreb reads it as literary fiction and emphasizes its value as such. I have learned much from the tension between these approaches.

dispute threatens to deprive the author of the right to use fictional techniques to convey with imaginative immediacy the meanings she actually lived in her social and cultural milieus.[3]

Since Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748–49) had become virtually obligatory reading in a new age of sensibility, there had been a proliferation of epistolary novels (Stewart 1969). Even in this crowded field, however, Épinay made an original literary contribution to the genre. There is no other eighteenth-century fictional character quite like the Marquis de Lisieux, an old family friend who serves as Émilie's tutor when she is a young girl and remains her indispensable mentor for rest of her life. Lisieux is at once an aristocratic man of the world, respecting *l'usage* of his social milieu, and a detached voice of reason. He pulls her away from the corruption of her social circles, even as he keeps warning her that she must remain a social being following *l'usage* of her world. He is a rationalist in two senses: as a man with clear and steady moral principles, and as a moral pragmatist. Émilie must find a way to live within that tension-ridden rationalism.

Lisieux is not simply one of the cast of characters whose letters appear in the novel; he has in effect created the "history" of Émilie by serving as its (fictional) editor in the aftermath of her death, having put together their letters to each other, the extensive journal he has had her keep only for his eyes, and her correspondence with a wide range of characters. At an early stage in this process, Émilie, exasperated by being slandered by her husband and other family members, makes a declaration of independence in her journal: "I will no longer take my family or my mother as judges … From now on I recognize only justice to judge between my husband and me" (d'Épinay 1989, 587).

It is Lisieux's efforts that make the novel a complex exercise in self-reflection through memory. Its full complexity becomes apparent when we compare it to the famous discussion of "identity" at the conclusion of Book I of David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), though d'Épinay was not likely to have had a first-hand familiarity with Hume's text. Hume the philosophical sceptic rejects the idea that "we have access to a SELF" that is "unitary" (a core substance that does not change over time) and has "simplicity" (its indivisibility bounds it, insuring against its being conflated into other selves). All we have is "a

[3] For excellent discussions of the need to renew our attention to the centrality of "character" in fiction, see Anderson, Felski, and Moi 2019.

bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity and are in perpetual flux and movement". It is the active force of the imagination, using the residue of perceptions stored in memory, that forms what is left of the inchoate bundle into the usable fiction of an integral self (Hume 2003, 165). The process is fictional in the sense that the storage of sensations in memory is random, and that the imagination forms the stored sensations into a pattern they do not actually have. If this self is fictional, however, it is indispensable to a person's functioning in the material world and in her social field.

D'Épinay, of course, thinks that in writing *Montbrillant* she is recovering her real self, the essential person nature meant her to be. But the recovery is more mediated by artifice than it may at first appear to be, as it is the fictional Lisieux, not Émilie, who speaks for its authenticity, and he has made all the decisions about the epistolary flow of the narrative. Lisieux is insistent that he is giving the reader documentary fact in the letters and journal entries he himself possesses, and in the ones by d'Épinay and others that he has taken pains to retrieve. The art of this narrative trope—this illusion of strict attention to evidentiary fact—lies in making the reader feel that she is watching Émilie through the texts Lisieux has laid out, and indeed plumbing her consciousness, without her knowing it. In the documents the editor claims to have found and ordered, we watch her achieving an increasingly confident awareness that, looking back, she can judge her past self, with all its flaws, and can trace the interactions with others that have made her what she has become. There is a paradox here. Even as d'Épinay assumes the existence of a self whose ontological reality Hume has denied, she engages in an imaginative process of constructing the self in memory that is a variant on the process Hume had in mind. The fictional techniques narrate the very fact of selfhood that Hume denied.

Character

The key word in *Montbrillant* is not the self, but character, which appears often in d'Épinay's self-reflective exchanges with her tutor. Its resonances are not epistemological in Hume's sense, but emphatically social. With the inter-lacing of documentary fact and imaginative fiction d'Épinay narrates an interior moral *progression*; Émilie confirms to herself and to others that, against all the odds, she has acquired a "character" in social interactions;

and above all that, shedding a virtually pathological youthful naivité, she has learned to read character or the lack of it in others.

The word character was then, as it still is today, the repository for a cluster of moral attributes that made a person's behaviour consistent and trustworthy. The attributes of character were assumed to embody universal moral principles, but in *Montbrillant*, as in many other novels of the era, they take on meaning as they are refracted through quotidian detail and the language specific to rhetorical cultures, which individualizes character in a specific social field. The underlying question was about the relationship between the individual and society. It was not of course specific to eighteenth-century France; arguably it has been one of the central themes of western religion, philosophy and literature. How far could one detach oneself from society and its norms (the norms of *l'usage*) without sinking into a delirium of self-absorption? Lacking nourishment from others, did not the self consume itself? On the other hand, how far could the self conform to others' expectations without emptying itself of any capacity for autonomy? (Seigel 2005).

For women in France's eighteenth-century elite of birth and great wealth, this question was not speculative. Some of them, even as they had no choice but to engage fully in the practice of *complaisance*, yearned to withdraw from it. This is the framework for understanding d'Épinay's and Lisieux's perception of choices, which were much discussed in literature offering moral guidance, and fiercely debated in Diderot's dispute with Rousseau over the latter's decision to leave Paris for a secluded life in the country (in the cottage Émilie provides for him). To be a woman of character Émilie has to learn to walk a fine line between a hermitic solitude that would remove her from sociability and a hyper-sociability that would leave no room for the solitude essential to moral autonomy.

In the very first letter in the novel, Émilie's great aunt the Marquise de Beaufort—who for lack of "fortune" has withdrawn to a "convent" where she can live a respectable aristocratic life without making a splash in *le monde*—has learned of the death of Émilie's father and urges the Marquis de Lisieux to serve as her tutor. Due to her "sweetness" and "weakness of character", the girl's mother has failed to cultivate the right people and to "inspire in her the dignified sentiments of her birth". Now Lisieux must prepare her to marry "some gentleman who will hold still to the honor of a military career and his family name" (d'Épinay 1989, 7–8).

As her tutor Lisieux becomes Émilie's interlocutor in her struggle within herself. We might liken him to the impartial spectator in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), guiding her to develop an independent conscience, an inner voice that when necessary ignores the mere "opinion" of others, but at the same time keeping her attached to the social duties of "propriety". Lisieux honours the spirit rather than the letter of the Marquise's request, which is to say that he is less concerned with saving the honour of a family in the nobility of the sword than with giving her character a social solidity in her performance of a way of life, a "station" to which she has responsibilities.

His end in publishing Émilie's "history", the tutor tells us in a preface, "is to justify her in the eyes of the public that suspects her of fickleness, coquetry and lack of character" (d'Épinay 1989, xiv). Today, we sometimes use the word coquette to evoke a mildly mischievous teasing. In the eighteenth century, coquetry was a much more serious charge; it meant that a woman was character-less, lacking in sincerity in all her relationships, ruthlessly manipulative, not to be trusted about anything. In the early years of her marriage Lisieux is concerned that, in the efforts to please her husband, Émilie is being drawn too deeply into the *mondain* night life of Paris (d'Épinay 1989, 229–30). It is a world in which the art of pleasing all too easily stigmatizes a young woman as a coquette. Ironically it is René (Rousseau) who, with characteristic "frankness", describes the reputation she has acquired: "in general you have several faces … You are believed to be without character, a good woman but false, inclined to intrigue; inconstant, fickle, much finesse, much pretension to intelligence (*l'esprit*), which, it is said, is very superficial in you" (d'Épinay 1989, 867).

In her guilt about her new life Émilie yearns for "an absolute retreat", but Lisieux warns her off it (d'Épinay 1989, 364). She must maintain a life that honours *l'usage*, by which he means the social conventions of her station in a hierarchical society. Her retreat into herself cannot be absolute; there is a sense in which character exists only if it finds confirmation in the perceptions of others. And yet—here is the fine line she must walk—she cannot develop character unless she spends more time alone with herself than her station customarily permits. She must approach reading and writing not as *mondain* amusements, but as a solitary "occupation" requiring self-discipline for a serious purpose.

The act of writing does not simply produce a text; it is a form of introspection on the road to self-knowledge; it will habituate her to centre

herself despite the myriad social distractions that threaten to scatter her, and indeed to make herself an individualized self, a fixed character rather than a cameleon. In a letter to a friend soon before she leaves Paris for Geneva, she writes "I have begun to dare to be me … I no longer arrange my society for others, but for myself alone" (d'Épinay 1989, 1201–02).

The question I am posing is how this assertion of authenticity made discipline in work—the work that character requires—central to a modern feminist position.

Between Paris and Geneva

D'Épinay's youth and early adulthood made her an unlikely candidate for modern feminism. Both her parents were of the nobility of the sword, but the lineage was not backed by wealth. With the sudden death of her father in 1736, when she was ten, mother and daughter were taken in by the mother's sister and her husband, who as a farmer general was one of the richest men in France. From 1737 to 1744 d'Épinay lived in their imposing chateau on the outskirts of Paris. Her early education was limited almost entirely to books of devotion. Her mother's extreme piety and timid politeness, perhaps unavoidable in her close dependence on a sister who took on all the airs of a farmer general's wife, led her to teach her daughter to be ever-*complaisante*. She should always please others, never offend anyone, however much dissimulation that required.

One of the ironies of the novel is that Émilie falls victim not to an arranged marriage she has to enter against her will, but to a love match in the key of sensibility. With the parents on both sides giving their permission very reluctantly, she and her cousin Louis-Joseph—her aunt's eldest son—marry in 1745 in a rush of ardour. In the early years of the marriage, she tries to live in total devotion to her husband, in the spirit of her mother's piety and the ideal of marriage as a spiritual communion she absorbed from the culture of sensibility (d'Épinay 1989, 233). In 1746, in an act of nepotism typical of the old regime, Louis-Joseph becomes a farmer general. A future of wealth and luxury seems assured. In *Montbrillant* d'Épinay could only look back on herself as an absurdly naïve young woman. Given his behaviour to that point, it should have been obvious to Émilie that Louis would neglect his position and throw away their considerable fortune on gambling, mistresses and lavish consumption. Only tenuously attached to the titled nobility by birth, he flaunts the privileges of wealth in striving to live the reckless and dissipated life

of an aristocratic libertine. He sinks deeper and deeper into debt and at times creditors try to press their case by virtually occupying the reception hall at La Chevrette. D'Épinay makes it a measure of Émilie's helplessness that that she does not legally separate herself from his collapsing finances until 1749. She was, Émilie later recalled, a young woman without a will of her own.

A crucible in d'Épinay's efforts to make labour essential to "character" lay in her juxtaposition of binary imaginaries, one distilled from her life in Paris and the other from a two-year stay in Geneva from 1757 to 1759. La Chevrette was close enough to Paris for coach rides into the city to attend the evening entertainments with which *le monde* displayed itself to itself. In Geneva she received medical treatment for a chronic illness, probably stomach cancer. In *Montbrillant* and other texts we find her highly selective vision of the two cities, each fashioned as the foil to the other. To the visitor to Geneva, Paris meant *le monde,* and *le monde* was corrupt, a treacherous world of false appearances, a dystopia of idleness and absurdly excessive conspicuous consumption; to the alienated Parisian, Geneva was pure, simple, austere, a community of virtue and sincerity.

Rousseau, of course, was very much in fashion in the late 1750s and 1760s, particularly among women of *le monde*. It is striking that, at the very time when d'Épinay, Diderot and Grimm fell into a fierce dispute with him, she often echoed him in the writing of *Montbrillant*. This was not just fashion: she found in Rousseau an idiom for her alienation from Paris, which was rooted in her anxiety about the most heartbreaking and frightening events of her life. Chief among them was her husband's relentlessly profligate life, which repeatedly put the family on the precipice of a financial collapse that would topple her and her children from France's elite of birth and wealth. She spent many hours trying to straighten out the tangle of her husband's debts and warding off creditors. The irony about her escape to Geneva is that Paris accompanied her there in the person of her ten-year old son Louis-Joseph. She brought the boy with her to the city in the hope that its innocence and work habits would free him from his father's influence. Instead, he joined a group of boys from wealthy families who cavorted in the city in emulation of their Parisian counterparts. In the last two of her letters to him while they were in Geneva—a last-ditch effort to straighten him out—she stresses that he will need to work in a profession to prove his merit. "You are without birth", she warns him, "and merit approval of the public only by your efforts and your success". And she urges on him the Stoic ethos, "a sure

means to live with [oneself], to be free and independent" (d'Épinay 1989, 79–87). Again, there is a symbiosis between the freedom to be found only in inwardness and the social recognition earned in disciplined labour. Louis-Joseph was imprisoned for indebtedness in 1770, not for the only time.

D'Épinay did not discover in Geneva the ideas that gave her a critical distance on the world she had been brought up in. The distancing had begun in late 1740s, when engagement with the *philosophes* guided her into extensive reading. Soon after detaching herself from her husband, she began attending the salon of Mlle Médéric, a celebrated but, to some, notorious actress, where the free-wheeling conversation often ignored the boundaries of polite decorum. "I do not know", she wrote to her tutor, "but it seems to me that the conversation of Mlle Médéric and those I've seen at her place have given a new turn to my ideas. They have enlightened my spirit; my imagination is more alive, and I sense (*sens*) with more warmth" (d'Épinay 1989, 583). She was being pulled out of the orthodox religious culture of her childhood and into an Enlightenment world of letters, many of its members involved in the *Encyclopédie*. Her intellectual intimacy with her friend and later partner Grimm (Vaux in the novel) played the key role in this transformation. Upon hearing that in a particularly serious bout of her illness in Geneva she had called for a confessor, he is alarmed that she is backsliding into the superstition of her youth. She reassures him that she is not: she thinks there is a creator of the universe, although she is not sure; she's convinced that if there is one, "we can never have anything to untangle together" ("je suis très persuadée que nous ne pouvons jamais rien avoir à démêler ensemble", d'Épinay 1989, 1268). She is a *philosophe*, she is telling Grimm; all the devotional books of her youth have been thrown overboard. This turn away from orthodox Catholic fideism, and indeed from any version of Christian fideism, was a sine qua non for her reconception of herself and the reorientation of her way of life.

But what was the social meaning of her transformation? She felt she had found in Geneva an ethos permeating an entire society. It is well known that a principle of utility—a belief that all members of society should be useful by contributing to the common good—permeated the rhetorical culture of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, in an implicit and sometimes explicit rejection of the premium put on leisure and lavish outward display in aristocratic society. We also know that utilitarian logic drove the upsurge of patriotic sentiment in France in the second half

of the century. This is not the utility of present-day algorithmic market calculations; utility was a shorthand for a morally meaningful civic ideal. The Geneva d'Épinay imagined was a city devoted to the *practice* of civic utility—a community whose division of labour seemed entirely motivated by that principle, from top to bottom. The more Émilie admires the practice, the more she realizes that she has been living in a parasitical world that prides itself on its freedom from the demands of usefulness. That was a pivotal step toward the feminist thought she expressed to Galiani twelve years later. Usefulness of course required self-disciplined labour, without which one could make no claim to character and perhaps to the stable sense of selfhood around which character was built. It would be hard to exaggerate the degree to which d'Épinay's determination to acquire character by practicing labour of some sort was reinforced by those two years in Geneva. Notwithstanding the risk of being tagged a *femme savante*, the practice of labour in "study" and in writing becomes Émilie's existential centre of gravity, the opposite to the social life of Paris, the key to developing a sense of independence and indeed of autonomous selfhood. The more centred she feels in Geneva, the more she devalues *le monde* as a world working to decentre, to scatter the self by subjecting it to the myriad gazes of others, a world of false appearances, scandalous gossip and the quietly ruthless struggle for reputation.

When she returned to Paris in 1759, d'Épinay lived a life that was, by the standards of her upbringing and marriage, a kind of soft retreat from *le monde*. Freed from her husband and living on the modest but comfortable sum of 8000 *livres* she had secured from what was left of the family fortune, she moved to a distant quarter with her mother, her daughter's governess and four domestics, without an *équipage* (a carriage with horses and attendants). She wrote her tutor that she had "the space necessary to enjoy her books, her music, her papers, without disorder and without confusion; there are all the pleasures of this kind, of which the privation would cost me infinitely more than that of my *équipage*, of my valets, of devices (*appareil)* and opulence ….In truth I am curious to see the impression that this prodigious change of situation will have on all my friends, on my children, and even on my family" (d'Épinay 1989, 1430–31). "A little house between court and garden", she writes in another entry, "with good air and a good view. Our table is frugal, but properly served and good enough to receive one of two friends every day" (d'Épinay 1989, 1435).

The lack of an *équipage* is emblematic of how prodigious the change was for her. Her husband had spent a fortune on a lavish *équipage* he could not afford. She had had to deal with the irate creditors demanding payment.

Stoicism

Théodore Tronchin, the physician who brought d'Épinay to Geneva and treated her there, was the pivotal person in making her experience of the city at once transformative and bounded. Cushioning his medical expertise in a remarkably personal attention to care, Tronchin had gained European-wide fame, bringing to Geneva society women who found at least some relief under his tutelage. In July, 1756, before she came to Geneva, Tronchin wrote d'Épinay a letter advocating a Stoic ethos as the guide to her cure. The "truth" of Stoicism, he wrote, "is that our happiness will be in ourselves, and that it weakens from the support that comes from outsider itself". Tronchin had made the basic tenets of Stoic philosophy the lodestar of his therapy (Weinreb 1993, 30–31).

We must be careful not to exaggerate the degree to which Tronchin had committed himself to the Stoicism of the ancients. Eighteenth-century people selected from and melded the ancient philosophies. D'Épinay and others saw no need to master Stoicism as an intricate and internally consistent philosophy; what mattered was living an ethos of independence through self-command that could be reconciled with what her tutor called *l'usage*. He meant the demands of her station in life, which brought social responsibilities that could not be ignored. Falling into the great mass of labouring people without wealth was unimaginable to her. She wants to be free of the fear of falling. In a plea to her father-in-law to insure her a secure income independent of her husband, she writes that she is only asking for a way to secure her own and her children's "station" with "economy" (d'Épinay 1989, 517).

A highly successful physician in the Geneva patriciate, Tronchin practiced Stoic moderation in what remained a quite comfortable bourgeois life. We might call this patrician Stoicism. D'Épinay rejected his counsel to lessen her need for friends, but otherwise, feeling oppressed by the social regime of *le monde*, found relief in seeking this modified route to *apatheia*, or equanimity of the soul. Acting as a friend as well as a physician, Tronchin taught her not to mistake capricious desires for basic needs. He imposed on her a daily regimen, including a well-ordered

schedule for her day, an exercise routine and time for her reading. In the language of the eighteenth century, d'Épinay's alienation from the rampant luxury (or *luxus)* of her social circles and above all her husband was confirmed. In her self-defence as her marriage is crumbling, she writes that "my manner of life is proper to my station, my principles and my taste" (d'Épinay 1989, 538). This was still an aspiration, not a reality. But Tronchin's patrician Stoicism powerfully reinforced d'Épinay's wish to change her way of life within the framework of what she saw as her responsibilities to her station.

This is to say that the imagined community for d'Épinay's aspirations was hierarchical, not egalitarian; and that hierarchical distinctions were integral to her feminism. D'Épinay idealized Geneva during a fraught period of internecine conflict in its history, and she could do so because she saw the conflict from only one side. Thanks especially to the work of Helena Rosenblatt and Richard Whatmore, we now have an in-depth knowledge of the drawn-out struggles between Geneva's Council of 100, a governing body composed mostly of wealthy merchants, bankers and educated professionals with international dealings, and the merely advisory council of 1000, whose artisans and shopkeepers engaged in local trade demanded a more democratic government (Rosenblatt 1997; Whatmore 2012). In the detailed descriptions of the city's municipal organization that Émilie writes for Vaux (Grimm), she gives the democratic movement only a dismissive nod (d'Épinay 1989, 1297). She derived her impressions almost entirely from Tronchin and his patrician circle of relatives and patrician friends. She simply misses what the political conflict entailed, including the popular complaint that wealthy Genevans' entanglement in French state finances and copying of the *mondain* way of the life was making the city a little Paris, no less morally degraded than her Big Sister. What she admires is a materially comfortable but work-devoted elite who resists pressure from the lower orders—a counter-imaginary to her negative imaginary of the Parisian elite. From our standpoint, the transformation of her views may seem to have been blatantly elitist; coming at it from what preceded it, it is, despite its elitism, a marked turn for a woman of her background. It inspired her to embrace a work ethic she had already begun practicing in her earliest writings. A good part of *Montbrillant* was written in Geneva, despite Tronchin's efforts to limit her to a life of rest. She seems to have finished a full draft of the novel in 1762. Back in Paris, and all the more intent on demonstrating her "useful" character as a woman of letters, she worked steadily on *Conversations*

d'Émilie, based on her tutoring of her granddaughter, with an implicit refutation of Rousseau's views on the education of girls (d'Épinay 1774). The public vindication of her character finally came in January, 1784, just three months before her death, when the French Academy awarded *Conversations* the Montyon Prize for a work of exceptional "utility" for "the nation".

Conclusion

We can return now to the two letters to Galiani in 1771 and 1772, and especially to the second one. D'Épinay's commitment to the work ethic, I am arguing, makes her a prime example of the transition from early modern to modern feminism. Am I simply saying that she exemplified Enlightenment feminism? To be sure, her feminism was inconceivable without the Enlightenment. She was certainly a rare case of a woman directly involved in the intellectual life of the Parisian philosophes, in her relationships with Voltaire, Diderot, and especially Grimm, in the gatherings at La Chevrette, and in her work on the *Correspondance littéraire*. The fact is, though, that her feminist position was the exception to the rule among Enlightenment thinkers. Diderot's essay "Sur les femmes", which d'Épinay first read in a soon-to-be published version in March, 1772, puts him at the opposite pole from her feminism; however imaginatively some scholars have tried to read it against the grain, it is a fiercely misogynistic text. (La Vopa 2017, 256–97). It helps explain why d'Épinay was so insistent to Galiani that her letters be kept absolutely secret. There is no way of knowing whether she confided her feminist views to Grimm, though he did strongly support her writing of *Montbrillant*. I tend to doubt it.

D'Épinay's life and thought should make us especially cautious about drawing neat distinctions between "bourgeois" and "aristocratic" culture in the final decades of the old regime in France. Her birth and upbringing show us a bonding of the two that had practical advantages for both sides, with lineage and wealth mutually supportive in filling the need to exhibit "reputation" in social performance. But the bonding was fraught with tensions; the attributes of "character" seemed to make it the needed fixed point of moral reference in a society where reputation was becoming a commodity ever in flux. The idea of character in that sense seemed indispensable to an essentialist feminism, appealing to universalist qualities of a human nature that contingent social circumstances prevented women

from developing. Here too, though, there was tension, particularly as the practice of self-disciplined labour came to be seen as formative of character. Intellectual labour in writing gave women an interior freedom, an independence from the particular circumstances of their social being; and yet, as d'Épinay/Émilie has to learn from her tutor, the freedom has to be practiced in a relational social position, a particular manner of intersubjectivity with others. In the eighteenth century—and perhaps today—intersubjectivity necessarily positions her in a hierarchy that privileges her, even if it has room for her to distance herself significantly from the way of life she has inherited.

It is tempting to say that despite being raised in aristocratic privilege, great wealth and deeply rooted gender assumptions; d'Épinay committed herself to the way of life that was being preached widely by bourgeois authors. Men of letters were defining themselves as the nation's moral tribunal, in direct contrast to the aristocratic ethos of conspicuous leisure and *aisance*. It was central to their claims that public cultural and moral authority had to be grounded in concentrated and sustained intellectual labour (Bonnet 1998; Bell 2001; La Vopa 2017). It was a precondition of d'Épinay's feminism that she became alienated from an aristocratic way of life; but this is not to say that she was absorbed into a bourgeois alternative. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the bourgeois ethos confined women's work to the domestic sphere, in contrast to aristocratic women's parasitical life of scandal and promiscuity. D'Épinay's writings challenged that rising notion of a gendered division of labour, and so did her life. Her home, detached from the relentless perils of aristocratic sociability, became a haven for the solitude—the being alone with oneself and the shared solitude of close friendship—needed to develop a character in and through the labour of writing. Her juxtaposed imaginaries of Paris and Geneva played no small role in that quiet but resolute deviation.

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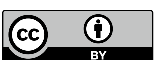

CHAPTER 7

Language, Gender and Authority in the Letters of Isabelle de Charrière

Amélie Jaques and Beatrijs Vanacker

"I enjoy myself like a queen when I discuss language" ("Je m'amuse comme une reine quand je disserte langage", van Dijk and van Strien-Chardonneau 2019, letter 1293, March 17, 1794).[1] With these words, the Dutch and Swiss writer Isabelle de Charrière (1740–1805) closes off a letter to her German translator Ludwig Ferdinand Huber (1764–1804). Charrière, who was born into a Dutch aristocratic family living at

[1] For the present research, we gained unrestricted access to the online edition of Isabelle de Charrière's correspondence (De correspondentie van Belle van Zuylen online), which is under the supervision of Suzan van Dijk and Madeleine van Strien-Chardonneau of the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands. Unless indicated differently, references are to this edition. Henceforth, we will only indicate the number of the concerning letter and the date, if not mentioned already in the text. All translations into English are, moreover, our own, unless indicated otherwise.

A. Jaques (✉) · B. Vanacker
KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium
e-mail: amelie.jaques@kuleuven.be

B. Vanacker
e-mail: beatrijs.vanacker@kuleuven.be

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Zuylen, was raised in French, the dominant language of the eighteenth-century Dutch upper classes (van Strien-Chardonneau and Kok Escalle 2010, Frijhoff 2017),[2] and the so-called *lingua franca* of the Republic of Letters (Fumaroli 2001). [3] Already at a young age, she started writing, for personal rather than financial reasons, in French: first fables and literary portraits, eventually plays and novels. Throughout her life, and especially after her marriage and move to Colombier with the Swiss Charles-Emmanuel de Charrière (1735–1808), Isabelle de Charrière corresponded also widely in French, not seldom with prominent figures from abroad. Her letters, of which no less than twenty-five hundred have been preserved, reflect, among many other things, the writer's interest in multilingualism. They not only uncover alternations between languages, but they also contain an exceptionally rich and nuanced discourse on language and translation choices.

As the opening quotation illustrates, Charrière's reflections on (foreign) language use reveal, furthermore, strategies of self-representation: in the closing-line of her letter to Huber, she presents herself as an established intellectual, who overtly claims her capacity to reflect and write on language ("disserter langage"), yet also associates that capacity to a personal enjoyment that is undoubtedly defined in both gendered and authoritative terms by the use of the word "queen" ("reine"). It is precisely this interplay between language, gender and intellectual authority that will be examined in the present essay through a comparative reading of two of Isabelle de Charrière's correspondences: With James Boswell (1740–1795), on the one hand, and with Ludwig Ferdinand Huber, on the other.

[2] It should be noted that while French was the dominant language of the members of the eighteenth-century Dutch elite, Dutch functioned as the "mother tongue" for many inhabitants of the Dutch Republic. Other languages, such as Latin, German or English, circulated in the Republic as well (Frijhoff 2017).

[3] Recently, scholars, such as Beaurepaire (2007) and Siouffi (2010), have nuanced the long-standing belief in French as a lingua franca. They put forward the image of a multilingual eighteenth-century Europe and illustrated how different languages (French but also English, German, Italian…) spread all over the continent. At the same time, scholars, such as Burke (2004), Anderson (2006) or Yildiz (2012), have pointed to the slow emergence of a monolingual rather than a multilingual paradigm in the second half of the eighteenth century, partly due to the rise of the vernacular in print, and the construction of national identities.

Our analysis aims to illustrate how early modern women's multilingual practices sometimes served a strategic purpose by informing women's intellectual or even authorial identity formation. Before drawing examples from Charrière's correspondences, however, we will put forward a tentative conceptual and methodological framework for the study of multilingualism in the letters of early modern women writers.

Self-representation and Multilingualism

For women in particular, securing a place in the intellectual and literary field of the Republic of Letters was not without difficulty. Long-standing debates about the social and intellectual position of women in society were ongoing in the Age of Enlightenment (Dubois-Nayt et al. 2016), and in many ways, women were expected to comply with standards of modesty that did not allow for strong (public) self-assertion (Pender 2012). Still, it has been illustrated that, despite those social and ideological barriers, more women than before succeeded during the eighteenth century in developing their intellectual and authorial self, and in exercising authority. Previous scholarship has convincingly argued that early modern women adopted strategies in their writing to establish a voice of their own and to negotiate authority (see, for instance, Hayes 2009 or Pender 2012). Letters proved an ideal environment for women to explore, shape and justify their intellectual and literary self, as "[t]he self-portrait […] is an obligatory and recurrent step of letter writing, as if it were the main purpose of, or driving force behind, writing; that is a paradox of entering into correspondence: one addresses the other in order to find the self" (Diaz 2006, 9).

The addressee played indeed an important role in early modern women's epistolary constructions of a self. According to Brigitte Diaz (2006), women in particular expected their addressees to acknowledge their self-images. The opening quote gives a—presumably tongue-in-cheek—illustration of the inherently relational nature of self-representation: in the sentence that follows the quoted line, Isabelle de Charrière anticipates Ludwig Ferdinand Huber's rather negative reaction to her long dissertation, thus immediately counteracting her self-image of a discursive sovereignty: "I enjoy myself like a queen when I discuss language. But perhaps, I bore you a lot, and luckily for you, Sir, the messenger is requesting me to finish my letter" ("Je m'amuse comme

une reine quand je disserte language. Mais je vous ennuie peut-être beaucoup et heureusement pour vous, Monsieur, la messagère me fait dire de donner ma lettre", letter 1293, March 17, 1794). By addressing Huber, Charrière expects her translator to acknowledge her self-fashioned image of a female intellectual.

The way in which multilingualism informed early modern women's epistolary self-representation remains relatively underexplored. Research has, however, already shown that educated women in the early modern period regularly found themselves at the crossroads of languages: through a wide range of mediating roles (as translators, editors, journalists, publishers…) women participated in transcultural (mostly intra-European) intellectual networks and contributed to cultural transfers (see, for instance, Dow 2007; Cossy et al. 2009; Cheek 2019). Furthermore, research has to some extent already pointed at the multilingual dimensions of early modern women's letters (van Strien-Chardonneau 2016). Drawing examples from the letters of Isabelle de Charrière, we will illustrate how eighteenth-century European women writers sometimes deliberately turned to multilingualism in their letters to establish themselves as female intellectuals and authors.

Isabelle de Charrière's correspondences with James Boswell and Ludwig Ferdinand Huber offer interesting points of departure. They give insight into the life and literary career of a renowned eighteenth-century woman writer, yet highlight different stages of her intellectual and authorial self-development. During her four-year correspondence (1764–1768) with James Boswell, future author of *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), Charrière is at the beginning of her career. She has just published the short story *Le Noble* (1763) and is still looking for a husband who will allow her to grow as a female intellectual and author. Boswell is one of her candidates for marriage. With Huber, Charrière is an already established author going through the final, particularly prolific, years of her career (1793–1803). Huber is the designated mediator and translator into German of her works. Bringing different moments in Charrière's life and career to the fore, the correspondences with Boswell and Huber differ in tone: where Charrière takes a more sentimental stance in her letters to Boswell, she adopts a more professional *posture* in those to Huber (on the notion of *posture*, see Meizoz 2007). Despite those differences in focus and tone, the letters with Boswell and Huber show many similarities when it comes to (reflections on) language use.

How shall we approach the instances of multilingualism in the letters of Isabelle de Charrière? In what follows, we will raise a series of research questions that will not only guide us through the many instances of multilingualism in Charrière's letters but can also serve as a starting point—or as a frame of reference—for broader (and more systematic) research on the forms and functions of multilingualism in early modern women writers' letters. Before turning to these questions, however, it is important to note what we understand by "multilingualism" in letter writing.

In its basic definition, multilingualism in literature refers to the presence of more than one language (or language variety) in a "literary" text (Rossich 2018). Yet, in our research, we adopt a broader definition, multilingualism in early modern women's letters being more than a mere concurrence of different languages. The early modern women under study also evoke multilingualism without actually alternating between languages by, for instance, deeply reflecting on, or simply hinting at, their own language and translation practices. Women's letters thus reveal a certain degree of what Lise Gauvin (2000) has called *surconscience linguistique* in her study of francophone (mostly contemporary) literature.

When one aims to grasp the effect of these multilingual practices on the epistolary self-representation of early modern women writers, several research questions come to mind: which information does the woman writer convey by means of multilingualism, or what type of *discourse* (e.g. sentimental, philosophical, political) is the multilingual practice related to? How does the writer *frame* the practice in the text: Does she announce the practice or does she in any way comment upon or even justify the multilingual choices she has made by pointing, for instance, at her profession (author, translator, editor…), social status or gender? What is the *extent* of the practice: in the case of alternation, for instance, does the writer write full letter(s) in a foreign language, or does she limit the extent to a number of paragraphs, sentences or even words? What is the *social context* of the turn to multilingualism, that is at which point in her life and career, and in correspondence to whom, does the writer resort to multilingualism? These research angles should allow us to answer the most fundamental question as to *why* early women writers resort to multilingualism in their letters. Does the use of multilingualism indeed serve a strategic purpose by contributing to women writers' epistolary self-representation, (re)shaping or confirming women writers' portraits of

the self as educated women or even *femmes de lettres*? To answer this question for Isabelle de Charrière, we will now turn to her correspondences with James Boswell and Ludwig Ferdinand Huber.

Letters to Boswell

In August 1763 the twenty-two-year-old Scot James Boswell arrives in Holland to study law at the University of Utrecht. Apart from studying Civil Law and the Classics, Boswell devotes himself to learning French. Developing a good command of French is particularly relevant for the young Boswell, as he often "pass[es] the evening in a literary society where it is not permitted to speak a word of anything but French", so he states in his journal on October 31, 1763 (Pottle 1952, 55). Not long after attending his first literary soirées, Boswell meets the twenty-three-year-old Isabelle de Charrière, who is then still known as Belle van Zuylen.

Charrière leaves a strong impression on Boswell. He feels both attraction and repulsion for the unconventional woman who, like himself, has intellectual and authorial aspirations. In fact, it is precisely Charrière's intellect that troubles him: "[Mademoiselle de Zuylen] is a charming creature. But she is a *savante* and a *bel esprit*, and has published some things. She is much my superior. One does not like that", confesses Boswell in a letter to his friend William Johnson Temple on April 17, 1764 (Pottle 1952, 222, italics in original). Even if initially, Boswell has no intentions of marrying Charrière, their four-year correspondence, which starts off in June 1764, when Boswell is on the verge of setting off for his Grand Tour across the Continent, gives clear insight into matters of the heart, and the way in which they are in multiple letters intertwined with matters of gender and language.

The opening letter by Charrière, written over the course of four days, sets the tone. On June 14, 1764, Isabelle de Charrière writes that she would like to enter into correspondence as friends only, to discuss matters of religion and morality. Yet, the next morning, when picking up the thread of her letter, she shares to detailed degree her views on love and marriage. She thereby consciously portrays herself as an independent woman who is not afraid to challenge conventional ideas about the roles of women in society. Young Isabelle is not looking for domestic happiness. She prefers to explore the boundaries of marriage instead and to develop herself intellectually. Developing a good command of foreign languages,

and of English in particular, will prove to play a significant role in her intellectual growth.

On June 17, 1764, Isabelle de Charrière adds the following lines to her opening letter, before sending it off to Boswell: “Write your rapid thoughts in English; when you wish to make grave reflections, the dictionary will do less harm, and you may write in French. I will do the same; that is to say, the opposite” (“Écrivez en anglais ce que vous penserez vite; quand vous voudrez écrire de graves réflexions, le dictionnaire fera moins de mal et vous pourrez écrire en français, je ferai la même chose, c’est-à-dire le rebours”, letter 0096, translated in Pottle 1952, 293). Charrière is aware that Boswell, like herself, is learning a foreign language, that is the dominant language of the other, and that writing in that language may not always be easy. She, therefore, suggests to use the foreign tongue for communicating a more profound reflection—hence cleverly associates language learning with intellectual development—and proposes to use the dominant language for sharing a spontaneous flow of thoughts. When there are no language barriers, ideas become “more vivid, more clear, more complete” (“plus vives, plus nettes, plus entières”, letter 1277, March 3, 1794), as will state Charrière thirty years later in a letter to her German translator Ludwig Ferdinand Huber. Thus, it seems that Charrière wishes to have a spontaneous, more sentimental, yet also intellectual exchange with Boswell, to which language is no constraint.

Boswell, in his rather succinct answer of June 18, 1764, written in French, agrees to exchanging letters with Charrière. He refuses, however, to share with her without reserve all that he thinks, so he declares in *English* on July 9:

> You bid me, write whatever I think. I ask your pardon for not complying with that request. I shall write nothing that I do not think. But you are not the person to whom I would without reserve write all that I think. After this I shall write in French. Your correspondence will improve me much in that language. You write it charmingly. (letter 0099)

Boswell rejects his mother tongue because of its presumed connection to the intuitive sharing of inner thoughts and feelings. In doing so, Boswell cleverly follows Charrière’s idiosyncratic distinction between spontaneous and more philosophical writing to shift focus from sentimental to intellectual—and even educational—purposes.

In the same letter, Boswell not only appoints Charrière as an informal language teacher, but he also appoints himself as a "Mentor" to the young lady (letter 0099). He intends to reform Charrière and turn her into a conventional woman. He advises her to consider her "many real advantages" (ibid.) and not question any matters of religion and morality, or publish without permission (see Boswell's letter to Charrière's father, written on January 16, 1766, in Courtney 1993, 210–1). Although Boswell is determined to act as a mentor and share serious thought only, his correspondence with Isabelle de Charrière takes a more sentimental turn in practice, which is also reflected by Charrière's language use.

The preserved letters of Isabelle de Charrière are all written in French, her dominant language, which she reserved, so she firmly stated, for a free flow of thoughts and feelings. Interestingly, up to two times, Charrière comments in her French letters that she had started writing in English but had to switch to French. Each time she was disturbed, and she no longer had "the peace, ease of mind and time that [she] needed in order to respond *well* to [his] letters" ("[la] tranquillité, le repos d'esprit et le loisir qu'il [lui] fallait pour répondre *bien* à [ses] lettres", letter 0176, January 27, 1765, italics are ours). That does, however, not mean that Charrière never turned to English in her French letters at all. Oftentimes, she briefly quoted Boswell's English before responding to it in French. On February 16, 1768, for instance, she writes: "Regarding your question *how we would do together*, it took root at Zuylen. It has accompanied you on your journey and it presents itself in and out of time" ("Pour la question *how we would do together*, elle a pris naissance à Zuylen. Elle vous a accompagné dans vos voyages et elle se représente en temps et hors du temps", letter 0294, italics are ours). Around the same time, Isabelle de Charrière sends James Boswell a letter that is fully written in English.

Even though Charrière's English letter has not been preserved, we have a slight idea of what she must have written thanks to Boswell's short—yet explicit—reference to her English in a letter to his friend William Temple, written on April 26, 1768:

> I have not yet given up with Zélide. Just after I wrote to you last, I received a letter from her, full of good sense and of tenderness. 'My dear friend,' says she, 'it is prejudice that has kept you so much at a distance from me. If we meet, I am sure that prejudice will be removed.' The letter is in English. (Pottle 1952, 362)

What catches the eye here is that Isabelle de Charrière discusses feelings in what is, to her, a foreign tongue. From the remainder of Boswell's letter to Temple, we learn that in those days, Boswell and Charrière were thinking more seriously about marrying each other. Marriage was indeed a serious business to Charrière, who wished to marry a man who loved her dearly and, above all, did not restrict her freedom of thought or expression (Vissière 1994). Does that explain her turn to English in the correspondence with Boswell? Or was there a more sentimental aspect to her use of English after all?

Four years earlier, James Boswell had already advised Isabelle de Charrière to "[s]ave all those wild things that [she] [said] to anyone who [would] listen, and that [were] not understood, or [were] misinterpreted—[to] save them for [him], [her] friend—[to] say them *in English*" ("Gardez toutes ces folies que vous dites à qui veut les entendre, qu'on ne comprend pas, ou qu'on interprète mal, gardez-les pour moi, pour votre ami, dites-les *en anglais*", letter 0126 from Isabelle de Charrière to Constant d'Hermenches, written on August 17–19, 1764, translated in Whatley et al. 2000, 139, italics are ours). According to Boswell, friendship "desire[d] some privileges" ("vous devriez ménager les jalousies de l'amitié, sentir qu'elle veut des privilèges", ibid.). By stating so, he gave a new dimension to Charrière's use of English, a language she initially preserved for deep reflection: English could also function as the language of friendship and maybe even of love.

The idea of a possible marriage between Boswell and Charrière was eventually rejected over a matter of translation. At the time they were discussing their possible union, Boswell was finishing up his *Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to that Island; and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (1768). Charrière, who was impressed by Boswell's work and spoke of it with enthusiasm in her letters (see Courtney 1993, 246–7), agreed to translating his *Account*. True to her independent mind, she did not shy away from suggesting certain adjustments. When Boswell authoritatively refused her request to alter or adjust, Charrière firmly rejected both the translation and his hand:

> I was far advanced in the task, but I wanted permission to change some things that were bad, and to abridge others which French impatience would have found unmercifully long- winded. The author, although he had at the moment *almost* made up his mind to marry me if I would have him, was not willing to sacrifice a syllable of his book to my taste.

> I wrote to him that I was firmly decided never to marry him, and I have abandoned the translation. (Pottle 1952, 372, italics in original).
>
> J'étais très avancée, mais je voulais qu'on me permît de changer des choses qui étaient mal, d'en abréger d'autres que l'impatience française aurait trouvé d'une longueur assommante. L'auteur, quoiqu'il fût dans ce moment presque décidé à m'épouser si je le voulais, n'a pas voulu sacrifier à mon gout une syllabe de son livre. Je lui ai écrit que j'étais très décidée à ne jamais l'épouser et j'ai abandonné la traduction (letter 0302 from Isabelle de Charrière to Constant d'Hermenches, June 2, 1768).

Isabelle de Charrière would never vow to be Boswell's faithful translator, nor his faithful wife. Her letters to the Scot reveal her quest for identity, in which language plays no minor part. Charrière was searching her voice as a woman, as an intellectual and as an author. Simultaneously, she was in search of her *multilingual* voice, which she would use with more confidence—as an established female intellectual and author—in her later correspondence with Ludwig Ferdinand Huber.

Letters to Huber

As the son of a German father and a French mother, Ludwig Ferdinand Huber was raised and educated bilingually. When his German diplomatic career ended abruptly in 1793, he moved to Neuchâtel, Switzerland, where he met the already established Isabelle de Charrière. To support his family, Huber, who was only twenty-nine at the time, turned his focus to literature and offered his translation services to the fifty-three-year-old woman writer (Roche 1997). In the years that followed, Huber played a pivotal role in the distribution of Charrière's oeuvre in Germany, as a translator but also as a literary critic and editor (Moser-Verrey 2004; Heuser 2008). Hence, their ten-year correspondence is more professional in tone than the correspondence between Boswell and Charrière. It is indeed characterised by "an intensive exchange about details and principles of the art of translation" (Heuser 2008, 40). During a short period of intense collaboration in the beginning of their relationship, Huber and Charrière also address questions about the "genius" ("génie particulier", letter 1278, March 4, 1794) of languages, and more specifically, about the differences between French and German (Heuser 2008; Moser-Verrey 2004). As we will see, these theoretical discussions constitute the

framework for Charrière's frequent alternations between languages, and between French and German in particular.

The discussion starts in February 1794, when Isabelle de Charrière sends Ludwig Ferdinand Huber her *Inconsolable* (1794). According to the writer, the comedy "will amuse [her translator] sufficiently […] and it will lend itself quite well to an elegant translation, should [he] think it worthy of one" ("*L'Inconsolable* […] vous amusera assez, je pense, et […] se prêtera fort bien à une élégante traduction, supposé que vous l'en trouviez digne", letter 1269, February 27, 1794). In the short description of her piece, Charrière hesitates between self-effacement and self-affirmation. While her hesitation could be explained by gender dynamics (see, for instance, Pender 2012 on the self-imposed modesty of early modern women writers), it could also be interpreted as a way of gently guiding Huber to a German translation without too blatantly showing expertise. In the letters that follow, Charrière gradually takes a more self-affirmative stance and she clearly draws attention to her language and translation skills. On March 1, she asks her translator a "question out of simple curiosity", portraying herself thereby as a "great thinker about languages":

> I would be curious to know whether it is allowed in languages other than in French, in German, for example, to group things that are unrelated in the same category. *The classes of society, the union and the legitimacy.* I am quoting from memory, as I do not have the axioms on my bed, and I am only asking the question out of simple curiosity, because I know that—in something that appears in public, such as a newspaper—you will only have said what you were allowed to say. [But] [t]he translation was only for me, and it would have been a waste of time to make much fuss about it, so I don't criticise—I don't even think I warn—only, as a great thinker about languages, I ask.
>
> Je serais curieuse de savoir si dans d'autres langues que le français, en allemand par exemple, il est permis de mettre en même catégorie des choses qui n'ont point d'affinité entr'elles. *Les classes de la société, l'union et la légitimité*. Je cite de tête n'ayant pas les axiomes sur mon lit et je ne fais qu'une question de simple curiosité, car je sais bien que – dans une chose qui paraît en public, comme un journal – vous n'aurez dit que comme il était permis de dire. La traduction n'était que pour moi et c'eût été temps perdu que d'y faire beaucoup de façons, je ne critique donc pas - je ne

> crois pas même que j'avertisse - seulement, en grande réfléchisseuse sur les langues, je demande. (letter 1275, italics in original)

Isabelle de Charrière is sensitive to accurate word use in both French and German, and hence in both original and translation. Even if she questions Huber's translation choices, she does not criticise them yet; she still relies on Huber's translation expertise. Only a few weeks later, on March 17, Charrière comments freely upon Huber's translation and she even makes some corrections to it:

> You called my *Inconsolable* [Untröstliche] the *Disconsolate* [Trostlose] in German; so be it, if you think it better that way. In French, it will continue to be called *The Inconsolable*, and allow me to say that I see no more similarities between the *inconsolable* and the *consoled* than between the midnight of a long winter night and the fine day of today.
>
> Vous avez appelé en allemand mon *Inconsolable* le *Désolé*; à la bonne heure, si vous le trouvez mieux ainsi. En français il continuera à s'appeler *L'inconsolable* et souffrez que je ne trouve pas plus de rapport entre *l'inconsolable* et le *consolé* qu'entre la [sic.] minuit d'une longue nuit d'hiver et le beau jour que je vois luire dans ce moment. (letter 1293, March 17, 1794, italics in original)

Comparing the title of her French original to Huber's translation, Isabelle de Charrière hints at her knowledge of German. She clearly thinks herself fluent in Huber's mother tongue and able to correct—and even reject—his translation. What is more, she portrays herself as a true "defender of the French language" ("défenseur de la langue française", letter 1281, March 6, 1794), presenting the French original as the better option.

The translation of *L'Inconsolable* drives a wedge between its author and its translator (see also Moser-Verrey 2004 and Heuser 2008). Charrière, who is "ruthless when it comes to the purity and precision of language" ("impitoyable en ce qui touche la pureté, la précision du langage", letter 1670, January 5, 1796), questions whether Huber has rendered her ideas well enough in German. She seems to believe that the German language—and literature—lack clarity. According to her, "it is the duty of a German (of [Huber's] intellect), who knows French well, to bring the elegant clarity of the French language into his own" ("il me paraîtrait du devoir d'un Allemand (de votre esprit) qui sait bien le français, de porter dans sa langue l'élégante clarté du français", letter 1277, March 3, 1794). Huber, in his turn, refuses to accept the superiority of French over German,

and points to the individual qualities and capacities of languages. Even if he does not agree with Charrière, he values her opinion and sees their "fight" as an opportunity for learning: "I am not leaving the game just yet, Madam, because whether I win or lose, I *learn* by continuing the fight with such an opponent" ("Je ne quitte pas encore la partie, Madame, parce que vainqueur ou vaincu, je *m'instruis* moi-même en continuant le combat avec un tel adversaire", letter 1278, March 4, 1794, italics are ours). Charrière too finds it "wonderful […] to occupy [Huber] with [her] remarks and [her] many objections, to draw [him] into this kind of battle [even though she] knows that [she] is a champion unworthy of [her opponent]" ("Il est glorieux pour moi de vous occuper de mes remarques et de mes objections assez pour vous attirer dans cette espèce de lutte, où je sens bien que je suis un champion très indigne de vous", letter 1280, March 5, 1794).

Eventually, the "battle" gives way to a fruitful collaboration between the writer and the translator. On March 30, 1794, Charrière, who supported the Huber family financially, informs her translator that she will write him "a German comedy, that is to say, a French comedy, written in French and according to French rules, but meant for translation […] into German only" ("J'ai dans la tête une comédie allemande, c'est-à-dire française, écrite en français et à la française, mais uniquement pour être traduite par vous en allemand", letter 1342). Charrière's French comedies had been translated into German before, but the German translations had never been turned into an original. Now, Charrière, who "did not want to break the laws of the German theatre any more than she wanted to break those of the French theatre" ("voulant aussi peu blesser les lois du théâtre allemand […] que les lois du théâtre français", ibid.), would have to adapt to the German literary standards, and to the particularities of the German language. In order to do so, she appoints Huber as her "co-author" ("co-écrivain", letter 1403, August 15, 1794) rather than her translator:

> [T]his time, Mr Huber will be more than just a translator. If there is something that he does not like about the play that I send him, I will write, I will rewrite until he likes it. It will be fully his, which means that I will have to make it appealing to him, and he will have to do every possible thing to make it appealing to the public.
>
> […] M. Huber sera plus que traducteur dans cette occasion, et si quelque chose lui déplaît dans la pièce telle que je la lui enverrai, je ferai,

> je déferai jusqu'à ce qu'elle lui plaise. Elle sera pleinement sa propriété de sorte qu'il faudra bien la lui rendre agréable, et lui il devra ne rien négliger pour qu'elle le soit au public. (letter 1346, June 1, 1794)

In the letters that follow, it becomes clear to what extent Isabelle de Charrière values Ludwig Ferdinand Huber as a representative of the German literary field: his translation of *Élise ou l'Université* (*Eitelkeit und Liebe*, 1795) gives way to an a posteriori reflection on, and corrective rewriting of, the French manuscript. Even though Charrière has confidence in Huber's abilities to refine her German comedy, she does not hesitate to revise his adaptation. She is an attentive reader and writer after all:

> You will see how careful I have read. You make Wilhelmine say: *when she had done everything to […]*, whereas I have made her say: *when, after having done everything to keep her close, he abandons her*. The *he* specifies the implied subject of the first part of the sentence, which would not be true when one understood *that she would have done everything* etc. Thus, it should read *When* … but why should I violate German? You can perfectly find a way yourself to make Wilhelmine say *that after he had done everything to charm her, he ended up abandoning her*. It is in response to that, that the baron speaks of the *ingrate who first captivated her heart and now makes her mourn and repent alone*.
>
> Vous allez voir avec quelle attention j'ai lu. Vous faites dire à Wilhelmine: *wenn sie alles gethan hätte um ihn*, et je lui faisais dire: *quand après avoir tout fait pour se l'attacher, il l'abandonne*. Cet *il* détermine le nominatif sous-entendu du premier membre de la phrase, qui ne serait pas correct si on entendait *qu'elle eût tout fait* etc. Il faudrait donc *Wenn* … mais pourquoi estropierais-je de l'allemand? Vous trouverez bien sans moi le moyen de faire dire à Wilhelmine *qu'après qu'il a mis tous ses soins à lui plaire, il a fini par l'abandonner*. C'est à cela que répond le baron en parlant de *l'Undankbaren der erst ihr Herz gefesselt hat und sie nun allein trauern und bereuen last*. (letter 1396, August 3, 1794, italics in original)

In her comment on Huber's translation, Isabelle de Charrière hesitates again between self-affirmation and self-effacement. While she does not shy away from pointing out a syntactical error that Huber has made, she refrains from rewriting the sentence in German, leaving the correction to her translator's expertise. It seems as if Charrière feels less confident about *writing* in German than about *discussing* German. One could argue that she takes a modest stance on purpose, to negotiate her image of a female intellectual, expecting Huber to acknowledge her multilingual abilities.

Yet, it could also be argued that she refrains from rewriting in German to acknowledge Huber as her translator and her "co-author", with whom she wishes to write together like "two Dutch or Flemish painters who worked together on the same painting" and who benefited from "each other's talent" ("Nos peintres hollandais ou flamands qui travaillent deux à un même tableau [...]. Et chacun profitait du talent de son camarade", letter 1396, August 3, 1794). In the end, however, it is Isabelle de Charrière who takes again advantage of her "right as an author" ("le droit comme auteur", letter 1341, May 28, 1794) and asks Ludwig Ferdinand Huber to conform to her standards and to those of the French language:

> There is an expression in another scene that I do not like very much. Let us see if I can write it. *Insensitive virtue*. It is the count who reproaches Wilhelmine for this insensitive virtue. I understand that in German there is no such ambiguity as there is in French. It is a *non-sensitive* virtue, not an *impalpable* one, that is being discussed. But *non-sensitive* virtue seems very inappropriate too. People can be *insensitive*, but their virtue is neither *sensitive* nor *insensitive*. It may be called *barbarous*, because its effects are unpleasant to bear, or *rigid*, *severe*, *inflexible*, because that is its nature, but never *insensitive*, because it is not a sentient being. I beg my co-author to change this word, even if it is common in German. It is up to the good writers to change the bad habits.
>
> Il y a une expression dans une autre scène que je n'aime pas beaucoup. Voyons si je pourrai l'écrire. *Unempfindliche Tugend*. C'est le comte qui reproche cette vertu insensible à Wilhelmine. J'entends bien qu'il n'y a pas en allemand la même équivoque qu'en français. C'est une vertu *non sensible* et non pas *impalpable*, dont il est question. Mais la vertu *non sensible* me paraît très impropre aussi. L'homme peut être *insensible*, mais sa vertu n'est ni *sensible* ni *insensible*. Elle peut être appelée *barbare* parce que ses effets sont fâcheux à supporter ou *rigide*, *sévère*, *inflexible*, parce que telle est sa nature, mais jamais *insensible*, parce qu'elle n'est pas un être sentant. Je supplie mon co-écrivain de vouloir bien changer ce mot quand même il serait d'usage en allemande. C'est aux bons écrivains à changer les mauvais usages. (letter 1403, August 15, 1794, italics in original)

Even if Isabelle de Charrière alternates most regularly between different languages during this short period of intense co-creation, to discuss indeed Huber's translation choices, she does not shy away from alternating at other times too, to discuss very different topics in even more different languages. On August 15, 1798, three years after the publication of *Élise ou l'Université*, Charrière writes, for instance:

> England would be a beautiful country for my learned little friend [Mlle de Gélieu]. She would be better off in England than in Switzerland, where almost nothing is known, or than in France, where so many frivolous things suppress wisdom, science and reason [...]. She would also be better off than in Germany, [because] good fortune has made all of the arts flourish there. *Sprightliness* is rare in England, but *cleverness* is common, and the science is elegant *and well behaved*.
>
> L'Angleterre serait un beau pays pour ma savante petite amie. Elle y serait mieux qu'en Suisse où l'on ne sait presque rien, qu'en France où tant de choses frivoles étouffent la sagesse, la science, la raison [...], elle y serait mieux aussi par mille raisons qu'en Allemagne, les richesses y ont fait fleurir tous les arts. Le *sprightliness* y est rare mais le *cleverness* y est commun, et la science y est élégante *and well behaved*. (letter 1943, italics in original)

On multiple occasions in her correspondence with Huber, Charrière turns to English and to German to convey a meaning or feeling that cannot be accurately expressed in French. Often, she draws Huber's attention to the specific tone or connotation of the foreign language, and she explains—sometimes with remarkable detail—why some (foreign) words ought to be preferred to others. Thus, Charrière underscores once again her image of an established, more self-assured female intellectual and author, who is sensitive to the clarity, precision and purity of (foreign) language use in (letter) writing.

Conclusion

In this article, we have expanded upon the different forms and functions of multilingualism in the letters of Isabelle de Charrière, questioning whether multilingualism served indeed a strategic purpose by contributing to the writer's epistolary self-representation, (re)shaping or confirming her portrait of the self as an educated woman or *femme de lettres*. We have proposed a series of research angles (discourse, frame, extent and social context) that have allowed us to approach the instances of multilingualism in Charrière's letters. From our analysis, it has then, for instance, appeared that Charrière reserved specific languages for specific topics, especially in her earlier correspondence to James Boswell (see, for instance, the particular link between foreign language use and a didactic, but sometimes also sentimental, discourse). Furthermore, our analysis has shown that Charrière often takes a self-reflective stance in the framing of the multilingual

practice, corroborating thus her profile of an (aspiring) woman writer. Interestingly, this corroboration does not necessarily materialise through the adoption of a self-affirmative stance (as our opening quote would seem to suggest), rather it crystallises through an oscillation between self-affirmation, on the one hand, and self-effacement, on the other. Our contextualised reading of multilingualism in the letters of Isabelle de Charrière has then allowed for a fruitful comparison between the letters to James Boswell and those to Ludwig Ferdinand Huber, and for an illustration of the dynamic interplay between language, gender and authority, which characterises so many letters of early modern women writers, as future research will further reveal.

More in particular, our reading has highlighted different stages of Charrière's intellectual and authorial self-development. In her letters to Boswell, Charrière was still searching her voice as a woman, as an intellectual and as an author. In her letters to Huber, she had already secured some authority and she clearly took the stance of a more established female intellectual and author. In both the epistolary construction and representation of Charrière's intellectual and authorial self, language, or rather multilingualism, took no minor part. In fact, Charrière's letters to Boswell and Huber have revealed many instances of multilingualism: not only did Charrière alternate between different languages (French, English and German), she also referred to, and even deeply reflected upon, her language and translation choices. Where multilingualism was mainly part of an educational program in the correspondence with Boswell, it served as a means to negotiate female intellectual authority in the correspondence with Huber. The many alternations and reflections upon (foreign) language use in the latter correspondence allowed, moreover, for a renegotiation and strengthening of the bond between writer and translator. As a result, multilingualism clearly served a strategic purpose in the letters of Isabelle de Charrière.

Finally, our contextualised reading of multilingualism in the letters of Charrière has provided a starting point for broader (more comparative) research on the multilingual dimensions of early modern women's letters. Examining the forms and functions of multilingualism in women's letters will not only shed new light upon the way in which those women writers actively (re)shaped and (re)negotiated their intellectual and authorial identity; it will also contribute a fresh perspective to the growing scholarly interest in the transcultural and multilingual dimensions of women's lives and works in the early modern period. Moreover, through its focus on the strategic use of (foreign) languages, it will further nuance the myth of French as a *lingua franca* and give clear insight into the availability,

spread and use of different languages in Europe at a time when languages, cultures and nations became increasingly intertwined.

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PART III

Rewriting Through Translation

CHAPTER 8

Elsewhere. Women Translators and Travellers in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin in the Age of Enlightenment

Luisa Simonutti

Ain't I a Woman? Sojourner Truth.
Women's Convention at Akron, Ohio, 1851

In art and literature … woman has something specific to contribute. George Eliot [Mary Ann Evans]
Essays of George Eliot, London, 1963

Introduction. Travel, Translate, Transfer

During the seventeenth century, accounts of real travel—and often of imagined journeys—were an important source of reflection for women, firstly as readers of travel books but also, with increasing frequency, as

L. Simonutti (✉)
Institute for the History of Philosophy and Science in Modern Age (ISPF), National Research Council (CNR), Milan, Italy
e-mail: luisa.simonutti@ispf.cnr.it

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translators and travellers in their own right. Travel functioned as sentimental education, as cultural transfer, and as the translation of texts, ideas, and emotions. Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this area became a sphere of expression for important women—not only for philosophers and scientists, prophetesses, and religious figures, but also for translators. Among these women were Elizabeth Wolff (1738–1804), who translated Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1764) into Dutch and Benjamin-Sigismond Frossard's work on slavery (*La Cause des esclaves nègres,* 1789) into Dutch (*De zaak der Negerslaaven*, 1790), and who travelled through France at the time of the Revolution, as well as writers, translators, and travellers such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762); poet and travel writer Lady Anna Riggs Miller (1741–1781); and Henrietta Liston (1751–1828), who accompanied her husband (like Lady Montagu before her) to Constantinople while he served as British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte. Women travellers played a myriad of roles as wives, mothers, lovers, adventuresses, slave traders, writers, philosophers, and scientists. Regina Salomea Pilsztynowa (1718–after 1763) was an eighteenth-century Polish medical practitioner skilled in treating cataracts, who travelled in the Ottoman Empire and Eastern Europe. The well-known Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), a philosopher and advocate of women's rights, also wrote the popular travel narrative *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Women were moreover involved in other, significant forms of translation and transposition—some carried out through the eyes, as in the case of artists such as Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), who left us her fascinating travel journals; or as we find in the twenty plates in *A Description of Latium* (London 1805), which reproduced the places visited and described by Ellis Cornelia Knight (1757–1837), who also translated a collection of hymns and poems of a religious character titled *Translations from the German in Prose and Verse* (1812).

The new century—and to an even greater extent the Enlightenment period—brought significant changes both to the actual physical conditions of travelling and to the perception of its importance, the meshing of different spheres of knowledge that this entailed, and the emergence of female figures in the entwined fields of translation, cultural transfer, and travel.

This raises a number of questions. What original features did travelling acquire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that distinguished it

from the mediaeval *iter studiorum* and the Grand Tour of the Renaissance and Baroque periods? How did the translation of different types of text—of classical and philosophical texts, and of travel narratives—affect the sensitivity, knowledge, and experience of travelling and, in general, the narrative art of the women travellers of the time? What is the significance, not only of the translation of texts that these travellers encountered and acquired during their journeys, but more importantly of the perception, knowledge, and interpretation of reciprocal alterity they also encountered and came to know? And, as a leitmotif pervading and linking these questions, what was the distinctive contribution and the preeminent role of the woman travellers and translators in terms of their experience and vision of this otherness?

It is not possible to analyse, in detail, a vast production of an estimated fourteen hundred travelogues from this period written by men, as opposed to around forty by women. A valuable and eloquent bibliography of these printed travel books from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, written in European languages (but mainly French and English), is provided by the collection and catalogue assembled by the twentieth-century traveller and collector Fiammetta Olschki (Olschki 1990). An initial comparison of the male and female travel narratives listed there can only stress the fact that the inequality of literary production resulted from a set of diverse conditions affecting quantity, type, and style (Morris and O'Connor 1994; Birkett 2004; Pickford and Martin 2013; Aldrich 2019; Brilli and Neri 2020; Page-Jones). Carl Thompson has exhaustively argued how "cultural constraints exercised a powerful shaping influence on women's accounts, generating a degree of the facto difference from male-authored narratives" (Thompson 2017). My contribution aims rather at underscoring the particular significance of the conceptual connection between forms of representation and translation of alterity in notebooks, letters, and travel journals—especially in the Levant and the Mediterranean—of women writers, translators, and artists and of "diplomatic wives" over the long eighteenth century. I will focus on the analogy between two worlds that both acted as channels: the world of translation that interprets works in order to offer them to new contexts of reception; and the world of travelling, of journeys lived, narrated, and translated, that make distant and unknown places intelligible. Both spheres involve strategies of mediation and mutual diachronic and geographical connections. For Butor, Powers, and Lisker, travellers "travel in order to write, they travel while writing, because, for them,

travel is writing" (Butor et al. 1974, 14; Cronin 2000), to which we could add: writing is translating, travel is translating. Additionally, and more specifically, being women translators and women travellers are two intersecting experiences between which we can trace analogies, as both imply an element of cultural transmission and of liberation from anonymity and subjective concealment.

My focus thus shifts from questions that have already been amply analysed in the field of translation studies, such as the limitations of women's education; the choice of texts and subjects deemed appropriate for female translation; the lack of recognition or marginalisation of women translators; or even the attribution of their work to an alleged male translator of the time, with women obliged to conceal their gender and adopt male pseudonyms in order to get their translations published, as we find in the case of Theresa Huber (1764–1820), who used her husband's name. Translation was generally considered a non-creative activity, subordinate to the primacy of the author and hence devoid of the risk that the translator might independently promote ideas or foster controversies. In spite of this, there were women translators who consciously used translation and descriptive narrative as a tool for spreading new and sometimes provocative ideas.

A consolidated literature with different approaches and outcomes has addressed women travellers, spanning a chronology from antiquity onwards and exploring the different reasons behind female travelling: the mediaeval pilgrimages of pious women and religious trips undertaken for espionage, as in the case of those made by Aphra Ben through Belgium and the Netherlands, or enforced migration to avoid religious persecution or restrictive social and moral conventions (see, for instance, Thompson 2017, 131–50, which contains an exhaustive bibliography; Delisle 2002; van Deinsen and Vanacker 2019, 60–80). Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women travel writers have also been extensively studied and documented in recent years, from the pioneering anthologies of the 1980s to editorial collections on the topic, illustrating a solid tradition within a literary genre that has long been considered to be male-dominated.[1] Just as translations provide a new text for new contexts, so—across the

[1] Some parts of this paper were presented at the third annual conference "European Sea Spaces and Histories of Knowledge", Helsinki and Tallinn, 22–23 June 2022, in the framework of Cost Action 18140 *People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement across the Mediterranean*.

continent of Europe and the Mediterranean—the women travellers of the Enlightenment transmitted their travelling experiences by translating them for their compatriots and other European readers of the time.

During the Enlightenment, and especially over the long modern age between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, travel increasingly became an opportunity for knowledge and education for women too. Moreover, it also had a specific meaning as an opportunity for acquiring knowledge that also signified a greater social and intellectual independence, freed from the bonds of marriage or family or of social status. There has also been a lengthy debate on the question of whether or not there was a female version of the Grand Tour, and about the existence of women Grand Tourists paralleling the travels of male scientists and humanists since mediaeval times (Birkett 2004; Brilli and Neri 2020; Morris and O'Connor 1994).

A Grand Tour—from early modern times and, especially, from the Baroque period—became a customary and almost essential stage in the education of gentlemen and diplomats. At the end of the seventeenth century, in aristocratic families, it was still the prerogative of the sons to embark on the Grand Tour, an educational journey that—as the very name indicates—took the form of a circular route through Europe, and more specifically France, Italy, and perhaps Greece, returning home enriched by experience and having acquired knowledge crucial for the citizen. It was not the custom for the ladies of the lineage to do likewise, except possibly to accompany the gentleman traveller as daughter or wife in some parts of the trip. Cultured women, often familiar with several languages and translators, not only described but interpreted and re-interpreted the surrounding world through this activity of mediation. One way this happened was when they were actually able to undertake a journey, albeit accompanied by acquaintances and family members. However, the majority of these women writers imagined narrating, describing, and painting territories they would have liked to visit. These were other and better worlds, elsewhere, and this compensatory aspect of travel literature emerged in different dimensions, both for those who were simply readers and for those who actually undertook the journey. Hence while some women were able to travel in the course of the eighteenth century within the context of their family, accompanying gentlemen, diplomats, and upper-class men and women who settled abroad for reasons related to their position or to medical treatment or

health, it was not until the following century that women began to travel in much greater numbers and often deliberately alone.

This chapter will deal, first, with the intersection of travel and translation from early modern times to the eighteenth century, and more specifically in the case of women; second, with the issue of women's (relative) invisibility, taking as an example Anne-Marie Fiquet du Boccage and her *Lettres sur l'Angleterre, la Hollande, et l'Italie*; and finally, with travelling women in the Mediterranean, focusing on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M-y W-y M-e: Written during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters.*

"Outward Bound" Into New Worlds and Cultures

One aspect of particular interest is the meshing and intersection of experience in women who were travellers, writers, and sometimes translators too. Investigation of such figures is complicated by the fact that the journeys (some actually made and others only imagined) were not always recorded in writing (stories, letters, or journals), and that they implicate the dual leap of interpretation and translation. Women who were at once travellers, writers, and translators made for figures who were a complex combination. These early modern *femmes savantes*—despite sometimes being obliged to conceal their gender—overcame the silence and rhetoric of female modesty, and they criticised in their paratexts and commentaries the cliché of an elegant yet unfaithful translation as a comparison rooted in an unfair reference to the world of women. They thus played a crucial role in the coeval debate on the nature, utility, and role of translation, and they contributed to the double process recognising women's cultural contributions and those of translators.

Women translators during the Renaissance (like their male counterparts) mostly translated classical texts: works written in Greek and Latin or by mediaeval poets and historians, as well as texts by Boccaccio and Petrarch. They moreover made an often invisible but particularly significant contribution to the circulation of religious texts, which were equally popular as Greek and Roman literature. Increasingly in-depth research is bringing to light a panorama of women who, from the fourteenth century on, devoted themselves to translating into the vernacular sacred and evangelical texts and psalms, books of the Bible, sermons, and other works by holy writers as well as religious literature in the broader sense. Diligent

and moved by faith, these women became conscious intermediaries for their communities (Tylus 2019). They were ardent spirits who opened up, for the illiterate, the path to prayer and devotion, and they were themselves personally committed to this quest. The Renaissance saw numerous women engaged in translating religious, moral, and literary works—both Catholic (Margaret Roper, Mary Basset, Suzanne Du Vegerre, and Elizabeth Cary) and Calvinist (the Cooke sisters, Anne Locke of Geneva, Katherine Parr, and Elizabeth I)—who performed this subtle labour of subverting traditional rhetoric through the use of linguistic and cognitive devices (Calvani 2012, 90, 98). Young women writers often placed their work under the protection of noblewomen with whom they felt a particular affinity, or who professed the same faith. These translators made their voices heard, sometimes in the text itself but most of all in its paratextual elements: the preface, the dedication, the address to the reader, the translator's note, and the epilogue (Hosington and Fournier 2007, 369).[2] Even though they were often famous, these women had difficulty asserting the role of translator and having their names be placed on the title pages of the works that they had translated.

Here, too, as in the case of setting out on a journey for an eighteenth-century woman, we can discern the persistence of a rhetorical, historical-hermeneutic, evocative, and traditional model of translation as a painstaking task that was suited to the female mindset and that, up to the nineteenth century, consigned the women translators to roles of cultural inferiority and invisibility. Translating is a matter of comparing languages, but also cultural contexts and visions of the world: it is not merely transparent, but a window onto different languages, cultures, societies, and periods. Translating also means copying, transposing, and physically transporting. Women writers and translators were aware that their work went well beyond the mere exercise of language, embodying a journey towards knowledge and playing a social role of cultural mediation. These women often challenged bigoted contemporary moralism, as in the case of the writer and author of numerous translations Elizabeth Helme

[2] For a detailed picture of the education and linguistic competence of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English women as revealed in translations and original writings, see the essay by Salmon (1994).

(1743–1814), who translated into English the just-published account of the travels of the French explorer and ornithologist François le Vaillant[3]:

> I have done this the more willingly, from an assurance that nothing has been expunged that could be either an aid to Science, inform the Naturalist, or even gratify a laudible curiosity. I have likewise softened (if I may be allowed the expression) a few passages that possibly might be accounted mere effusions of fancy and vivacity in a French author, but which would ill accord with the delicacy of a female translator, or indeed with the temper and genius of English readers, with whom Mons. *Vaillant,* notwithstanding, bids fair to become a great favorite, as he unites a daring spirit of enterprize with another truly British Characteristic, namely Humanity.[4]

When Vaillant's work appeared in 1790, it immediately triggered a scandal on account of the illustrations depicting naked the "Hottentot" women described in the text, and the attacks published in the English literary journals of the time did not spare the translator either (Fig. 8.1).

Elizabeth Helme faithfully translated the work, complete with the images of the women, including that of "Narina, A Young Gonaquais".[5] She was also responsible for the English translations of the travel books for children by the famous German educator Joachim Heinrich Campe (1799a, 1799b, 1811).

[3] *Voyage de M. Le Vaillant dans l'Intérieur de l'Afrique par Le Cap de Bonne Espérance* (1790) on its original. The translation was *Travels from the Cape of Good Travels from the Cape of Good: Hope, into the Interior Parts of Africa, including Many Interesting Anecdotes*.

[4] Vaillant (1790), vol. 1, IX–X, *Preface by the Translator.*

[5] "Helme played an essential role in mobilising both Vaillant's *Voyage*, by translating it for a different language group and culture, and her own readership, by sending them 'outward bound' into new worlds and cultures" (Martin 2016, 157–69). See also Simonutti (2024).

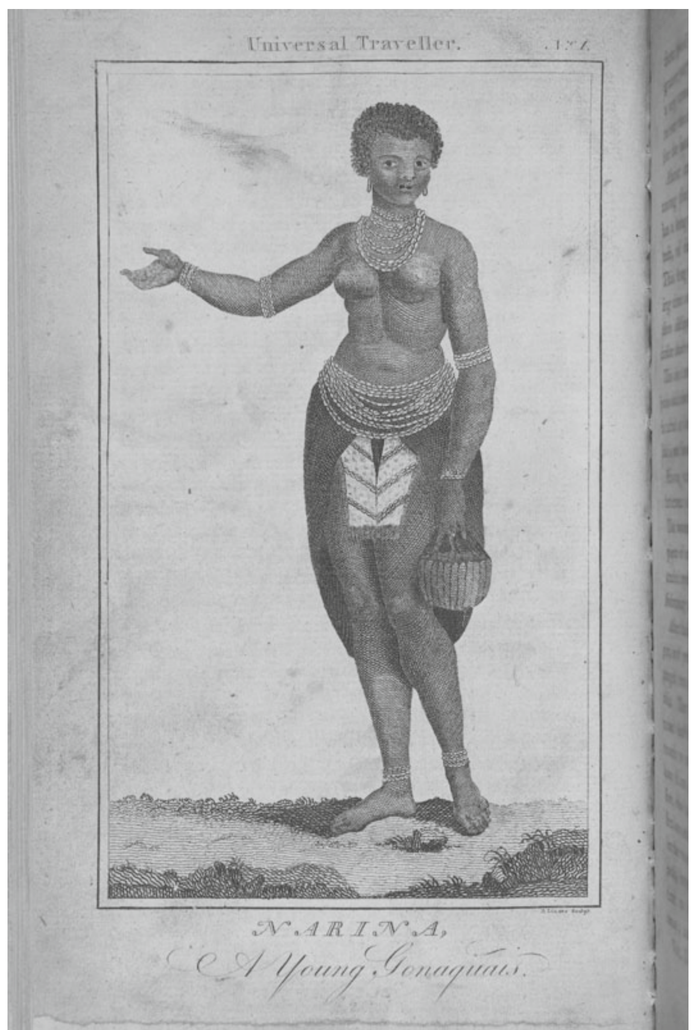

Fig. 8.1 "Narina, A young Gonaquais". Schomburg Center Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1796. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-6f43-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

"En Philosophe, en Poète, en Femme Aimable et en Bel-esprit"[6]

During the eighteenth century, some women did become famous as translators, such as Elizabeth Carter, Marie-Anne Paulze-Lavoisier, Giuseppa Eleanora Barbapiccola (translator into Italian of René Descartes' *Principia Philosophicae*, titled *I principi della filosofia*), Barbara Sanguszko (a poet, translator, and moralist during the Enlightenment in Poland), Catharina Ahlgren (a well-known Swedish translator of both poetry and novels from English, French, and German), and Claudine Picardet (a French chemist and translator into French of extensive scientific literature from Swedish, English, German, and Italian). Other lesser-known figures include Mademoiselle De La Chaux, to whom Diderot attributed the translation of Hume's works (Bongie 1989). Anne-Marie Fiquet du Boccage (1710–1802), a friend of Algarotti, was anything but unknown in her own time; she wrote poems, comedies, and tragedies and was made a member of the academy in her homeland of France (Académie française and the French Academy of Sciences) and in Italy. Admired throughout Europe, she translated Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* into French (1749) and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which she imitated in her own poem *Le Paradis terrestre* (1748) (Tournu 2017); she also composed an epic poem, *La Colombiade* (1756), and the tragedy *Les Amazones* (1749), and she collected for publication the letters sent to her sister during her travels. Madame du Boccage's *Lettres sur l'Angleterre, la Hollande et l'Italie* (1762) is doubly transgressive for the evocative form in which it describes ideas about whether women might abandon a static, domestic condition and enter into the arena of public discourse. These are questions widely debated by scholarship on eighteenth-century women travel writers.[7]

The epistolary form used by Mme du Boccage became one of the favourite narrative genres for communicating experiences that could interest continental readers. This form of communication, which had been very important in the seventeenth-century *République des Lettres*, conserved certain distinctive traits. It was addressed to one person, or a small circle, while at the same time being a vehicle for news and ideas

[6] The quotation is from Anne-Marie du Boccage in Garms-Cornides (1999, 181).

[7] Schlicht (2011, 32) and *passim*. Among the rich critical literature, see the essays by Agorni (2014), O'Loughlin (2018), Monticelli (2002), Caffiero and Venzo (2007), Thompson (2017), and Thompson (2019).

of interest to a larger community. Further, because of their confidential nature, letters were relatively less subject to explicit and implicit constraints, while at the same time they could exploit all the rhetorical devices of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century epistolary literature, often conceived with view to publication. For this reason, letters were open to the transmission of unusual and novel concepts and experience that were frequently at odds with the prejudices and convictions of the time. Anne-Marie du Boccage wrote to her sister (Fig. 8.2):

> Know then, that a terrible apprehension of finding the time hang heavy on our hands at Calais, made us quit it when the weather was doubtful. It soon ceased to be so; the winds and the rain redoubled: Though the storm we underwent well deserves a poetical description, I shall not vainly attempt to give one; what could I do after our great poets? The truth from my pen would not be equal to their fictions. Let me then simply declare, that the infernal noise of the waves, the tackle and the sailors, and the constant oppression at my heart, prevented me from expressing my fears: My griefs were succeeded by the most excruciating ideas. What, said I to myself, shall I no more see my Sister, nor my Friends, whom I forsook? Shall I not even see *England*, to visit which was the intention of my voyage? My friends will blame my indiscreet curiosity and will soon forget me. Du Boccage (1770, I, 1–3)

The journey was an adventure beyond known places and often into foreign lands. Nevertheless, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries travelling women continued to be confined within a milieu that reflected their social status, which was generally middle- or upper-class. The letters to family and friends also helped to offset a sense of disorientation and to cultivate a cultural and emotional bond with the social milieu from which they came, and to which they would very likely return.

Madame du Boccage addressed herself to a readership of both ladies and gentlemen, to all those "who have not seen the objects of which I speak [and who] will be able, in my feeble sketches, to take the desire to look for more striking portraits of them, in the best Travellers, and those who know them for themselves will perhaps not be displeased to recall them with me".[8] She shared this conviction with Anna Riggs Miller, who travelled with her husband in France and Italy and published her own

[8] Du Boccage (1762), *Avis au Lecteur*.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 8.2 Portrait de Madame Du Bocage, engraving. Tardieu (le fils), engraver; Loir (M.lle) model painter. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, Gallica http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb41090027h

Letters from Italy (London 1777). Around the turn of the seventeenth century, a similar opinion was expressed in the pages of the diary kept by Celia Fiennes during her travels on horseback through England and Scotland, accompanied only by two servants. Her diary remained within the confines of her family until it was published in the early nineteenth century, although it circulated widely in the form of printed passages and in manuscript (Plebani 2019, 169). Conceived as a reading book in epistolary form, Celia Fiennes' work includes an adaptation of the original diary kept by Sophie Schwarz in 1784 and 1785 while Schwarz was travelling with Elise von der Recke, in Becker and Karo 1905 (see also Lynch Piozzi 1789). Sophie von La Roche was an important figure of the late German Enlightenment, a famous writer who travelled through Switzerland, France, Holland, and England after being widowed and then published the diaries of these travels in the 1780s (Stuart Costello 1840; Strutt 1842).

In *Lettres sur l'Angleterre*, *la Hollande et l'Italie* du Boccage does not only give detailed descriptions of places, architectural features, and the particular social customs and habits of these countries' inhabitants; she also strengthens her description through poetic narration to underscore affinities and the emotional encounter between the French-speaking world she was familiar with and the foreign worlds she visited.[9] Even more significant and unusual is the fact that she translates and transcribes passages, poems, and rhetorical inscriptions, which served to emotionally and visually foreground historical memories. An example is the inscription in Italian verse, almost a poem, found on the rear of a temple, meant as a remembrance of illustrious men for all travellers from beyond the Alps.[10] She also gives precise accounts of the encounters made on her travels, the readings she shared with Count Algarotti, and the memory of a famous lady traveller who had recently passed away, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu:

> We read the Poem together every evening. He has also shewn me some pretty *Italian* sonnets, and a fine *English* ode upon Death, written by

[9] Du Boccage (1762, 67–68).

[10] Du Boccage (1762, 57–58). See also, for instance, Du Boccage (1762, 92–96), where following several of her poetic passages she translates lines from John Milton or various Latin writers (especially in the letters from Italy) or recalls Voltaire's lines of praise (Du Boccage 1762, 113). The poetic citations from her own work or that of other writers are numerous and interspersed in almost every letter.

> Lady *Worthley Montague*, with whom we had the pleasure of conserving at *Venice*, which is her settled place of residence. You have, doubtless, been informed, that upon her return from her embassy to *Constantinople*, she had the resolution to have her only son inoculated: her example was universally followed by the *English*. *M. de la Condamine* [Charles Marie de La Condamine], famous for his learning, his travels, and his zeal for the public welfare, advises us to avail ourselves of the talents of this celebrated Lady. Du Boccage (1770, vol. I, 162–63).

This was a significant recognition for a writer whose main work came to be appreciated late, thanks to the devoted attention of Mary Astell. Astell had earlier lamented the fate of invisibility she felt weighing upon Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in the preface to Montagu's *Letters* that she intended to publish in 1724: "But, alas! The most ingenious author has condemned it to obscurity during her life".[11] Indeed, despite being well known today, Mary Montagu has to be included among the figures who were doubly invisible during their lifetimes, both as a traveller, and as the author of the famous *Turkish Embassy Letters*—published posthumously only in 1763—and as a translator. In 1710 she translated the *Enchiridion* of the Greek philosopher Epictetus from Latin, which she then sent to the Anglican bishop Gilbert Burnet, accompanied by a letter in which she championed women's right to a cultured education. Among the numerous women authors of travelogues, journals, and tales of travel from the eighteenth century on, Anna Riggs Miller highlights Montagu for the aspect of invisibility and concealment characterising her person and work, either chosen or enforced, and for the analogy between women's translating and travelling that she embodies. In Miller's *Preface* to her *Letters from Italy,* we read of Montagu: "The Author's declining to give her name to so circumstantial a narrative, as renders it singularly improbable it should long remain concealed, seems to call for some apology".[12]

During the eighteenth century, despite the difficulties of travelling independently, the yearning for this form of freedom opened horizons for early modern female travellers, reinforcing their desire for knowledge and refining the sensitivity of their gaze. Their stories are more nuanced compared to those of their male contemporaries, experiences, and representations of travel shaped by multiple, intersectional factors,

[11] Wortley Montagu (1790), *Preface, by Lady, Written in 1724*.

[12] Riggs Miller (1777), I, vii, *Preface*. See also Hirst (2020).

and reflecting cultural ambitions that they would not have been able to cultivate or express in any other way, or that would have been satirised as appearing to overstep the norms of contemporary femininity. They have no qualms about expressing their feelings. Significantly, at the end of her Grand Tour as she was preparing to return to Paris, Madame du Boccage wrote: "There I heard of a wonder of nature, too little known to us, though very near us, and which notwithstanding deserves our attention and should excite our surprise. My mind loses itself in admiring these wonders".[13] Finally, taking her to leave of her readers, she again recalled what she had written in the *Avis au Lecteur*:

> I have sent you the long descriptions which you required of me by the surest conveynance I could find: I see you have received almost all of them; I have consulted men of learning and books; but I should not be accountable for their errors to which, I fear, I have added some of my own. I only point out to you the objects of which you must consult other authors for a fuller account. How greatly must I love you to have found time to write so many letters to you in the midst of the dissipation of pleasures and the fatigue of travelling! Du Boccage (1770, II, 212)

The *Letters* exemplify various particular aspects of the perception, reading, and representation by eighteenth-century women travellers of the surrounding world and its naturalistic, architectural, and historic features. Through the experience of du Boccage, they also illustrate the role played by the translation of inscriptions and of sonnets and poems by local poets or by the author herself, conceived to highlight figurative details of the travel account and the emotions conveyed to the reader. These put the final touch on a work that circulated well beyond du Boccage's family circle in being proposed as a public composition and a brave and curious literary foray into the knowledge of new lands.

En Route to the Levant

From the very start, the travel literature dealing with the Mediterranean and the Levant was characterised by a descriptive intention—at times imaginary—characterised by the fear of an incumbent Islam as a ferocious conqueror of Europe that would destroy the Christian religion.

[13] Du Boccage (1770), II, 210–11. See also Du Boccage (1771).

From the sixteenth to early seventeenth century, travellers, diplomats, and merchants told tales of Turks as the religious and moral enemy of Europe bent on conquest. They recounted the difficulties and dangers of travelling and of crossing countries and frontiers, and they described the political and military systems so as to provide useful information for defeating the Ottoman enemy (*Western Travellers in the Islamic World Online* 2006).

A major contribution to a linguistic, historical, and critical study of the Islamic world began to take shape from the end of the sixteenth century as Arabic and Turkish texts were translated into Latin and the vernacular, and as printing presses were established in Italy and Holland with movable type for Arabic and Middle-Eastern characters. Over the course of the century, attention became focused on a more accurate and realistic description of the Levant. Travel literature became increasingly marked by faithful description, albeit from a European and Western perspective and not yet completely free from the mediaeval religious and bellicose phantoms. This literature was extensive, ranging from *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent* (London, 1617) to the *Viaggio di Levante del Signor di Loir*, translated into Italian by Abbondio Menafoglio (Venice, 1671), and the better-known works of travellers such as Jean de Thévenot, Paul Rycaut, and Charles Thompson.

Reflecting on the phenomenon of travels in the Orient and providing a useful synthesis of their social and cultural complexity, Stéphane Yerasimos has clarified these journeys as a confrontation between the self and the elsewhere. In the ancient world, and still in the classical Arabic period, the world was described as starting from its centre (ourselves) and proceeding towards the periphery. The disintegration of this centre and the aspirations to reconstruct it gave rise, he argues, to travel writing (Yerasimos 1991, 2–3; see also Ballaster 2005). It was left to the female travellers and writers of the Enlightenment to look beyond the diplomatic and mercantile accounts, beyond the religious prejudices, and beyond a description of Islamic women aimed solely at evoking a voluptuous female life within the confines of the harem. This was an epistolary literature spoken aloud, even though it conserved the features of familiarity and intimacy.

In the preface to the *Letters* of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Astell underscores its status as an epistolary work devoid of English prejudices that could offer "a more true and accurate account of customs

and manners of the several nations, with whom this lady conversed".[14] Montagu had described the fear of the plague, and of natural events and fires, on a journey towards the Levant punctuated by constant perils:

> I flatter myself, dear sister, that I shall give you some pleasure in letting you know that I have safely passed the sea, though we had the ill fortune of a storm. … For my part, I have been so lucky, neither to suffer from fear nor seasickness; though, I confess, I was so impatient to see myself once more upon dry land.[15]

In her letters Montagu further recounts her fear of encountering Turkish society. Yet in an evocative crescendo, she also describes the villages and the natural beauty "that seems to me artificial, but, I am assured, is the pure work of nature—within view of the Black Sea, from whence we perpetually enjoy the refreshment of cool breezes, that make us insensible of the heat of the summer", as well as female elegance and lifestyle: "The beauty and dress of the women exactly resemble the ideas of the ancient nymphs, as they are given us by the representations of the poets and painters"[16] (Fig. 8.3).

Lady Montagu's descriptions are full of curiosity, convinced as she was of the task she had set herself to translate and make accessible for English readers the experiences of her own sojourn in the Ottoman lands—her view of the everyday life of ordinary people and nobles, of religious customs, and of life in the markets and the aristocratic residences of Belgrade, Constantinople, and Pera. Her letters convey her particular capacity for a historically critical reading of a different and fascinating social and political reality, despite the limitations of the gender-specific constraints so often mentioned in women's travel literature. They also

[14] Wortley Montagu (1790), *Preface, by Lady, Written in 1724*. Several decades later, Mary Wollstonecraft in her *Letters written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) repeated with similar conviction that "Eleven days of weariness on board a vessel not intended for the accommodation of passengers have so exhausted my spirits, to say nothing of the other causes, with which you are already sufficiently acquainted, that it is with some difficulty I adhere to my determination of giving you my observations, as I travel through new scenes, whilst warmed with the impression they have made on me" (Wollstonecraft 1889), letter I, 11.

[15] Wortley Montagu (1790), letter I, 1.1, To the Countess of ——Rotterdam, Aug. 3. O. S. 1716.

[16] Montagu (1790), letter XXXVI, 1, To Mr Pope—Belgrade Village, June 17. O. S.

Fig. 8.3 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Turkish dress, engraving S. Hollyer after J.B. Wandesforde. Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Digital collections

reveal her awareness of being an element of symbolic representation of her own society and of performing a cultural translation of an "other world" so as to make it comprehensible and interesting to a diversified public of readers that included the British aristocracy, British and European cultural figures such as Alexander Pope and Antonio Conti, and the broader public of curious readers. In a letter of 1718, she wrote to an English noblewoman:

> I am afraid you will doubt the truth of this account, which, I own, is very different from our common notions in England; but it is no less truth for all that. —— Your whole letter is full of mistakes, from one end to

> the other. I see you have taken your ideas of Turkey, from that worthy author Dumont, who has wrote with equal ignorance and confidence.'Tis a particular pleasure to me here, to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far removed from truth, and so full of absurdities, I am very well diverted with them. They never fail giving you an account of the women, whom,'tis certain, they never saw, and talking very wisely of the genius of the men, into whose company they are never admitted; and very often describe mosques, which they dare not even peep into.[17]

Shortly afterwards, she underscored the authenticity of her own account:

> I'll assure you,'tis not for want of learning, that I forbear writing all these bright things. I could also, with very little trouble, turn over Knolles and Sir Paul Rycaut, to give you a list of Turkish emperors; but I will not tell you what you may find in every author that has writ of this country. I am more inclined, out of a true female spirit of contradiction, to tell you the falsehood of a great part of what you find in authors.[18]

Neither famous writers nor the traveller-writers in general were spared her irony for having provided erroneous descriptions of the life of aristocratic Muslim women whom she herself had been able to frequent—a life which was in fact leisured and quite free: "Tis also very pleasant to observe how tenderly he and all his brethren voyage-writers lament the miserable confinement of the Turkish ladies".[19] In May 1718, as she was about to depart from Constantinople, Lady Montagu wrote to Abbot Conti, distancing herself from the descriptive travel literature that was interested only in war and administrative aspects. Such narratives were not aimed at deciphering a different world, she remarks, but at fighting its religion and its military power:

> I have not been yet a full year here, and am on the point of removing. Such is my rambling destiny. This will surprise you, and can surprise no body so much as myself. Perhaps you will accuse me of laziness, or dulness, or both together, that can leave this place, without giving you some account of the Turkish court. I can only tell you, that if you please to read Sir Paul Rycaut,

[17] Montagu (1790), letter XXXVII, 1, To the Lady ——. Belgrade Village, June 17 O. S.

[18] Montagu (1790), letter XLII, 1, To the Countess of ——.

[19] Montagu (1790).

> you will there find a full and true account of the vizier's, the beglerbys, the civil and spiritual government, the officers of the seraglio, &c. things that'tis very easy to procure lists of, and therefore may be depended on; though other stories, God knows —— I say no more —— every body is at liberty to write their own remarks; the manners of people may change; or some of them escape the observation of travellers.[20]

In her correspondence with Conti, who requested her observations, she describes the cultural and religious world of the cities in which she had stayed. She responded in an exemplary manner to the Abbot's questions about the Muslim religion, about which she herself had questioned several religious representatives, while at the same time not holding back with criticism of zealous Catholic persecution:

> He assured me, that if I understood Arabic, I should be very well pleased with reading the alcoran, which is so far from the nonsense we charge it with, that it is the purest morality, delivered in the very best language. I have since heard impartial Christians speak of it in the same manner; and I don't doubt but that all our translations are from copies got from the Greek priests, who would not fail to falsify it with the extremity of malice. No body of men ever were more ignorant, or more corrupt; yet they differ so little from the Romish church, that, I confess, nothing gives me a greater abhorrence of the cruelty of your clergy, than the barbarous persecution of them.[21]

The originality, independence, and narrative and epistolary style of Lady Mary Montagu acted as inspiration, as can be seen from the diaries of Henrietta Liston. Almost in the style of a novel, Liston recounts her travels to the Levant and her sojourn in Constantinople in the company of her ambassador husband in the early decades of the nineteenth century (Hart et al. 2020). This was the time of the Napoleonic wars and the early

[20] Montagu (1790), letter XLIII, 1, To the Abbot of ——. Constantinople, May 19. O. S. 1718.

[21] Montagu (1790), letter XXVII, 3, To the Abbot ——. Adrianople, April 1. O. S. 1717. See also Warnock Fernea (1981, 329–38).

stages of the reign of Mahmud II, so that the diary and the other writings of Henrietta Liston offer a fascinating supplement and continuation of the *Turkish Embassy Letters* written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu a hundred years earlier (Fig. 8.4).

Fig. 8.4 Excerpts from journals of Henrietta Liston, *The Turkish Journal, 1812–1814*, diary and description of Constantinople, "Further writings on Constantinople, 1814–1815". Creative Commons: https://digital.nls.uk/120755366

Conclusion. Many Modes of Translation and Transposition: Women Travellers and Painters

Translation and transposition can also be performed through the eyes, in the case of artists such as Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, a great traveller and portraitist in the years around the turn of the eighteenth century and during the troubled years in Paris, who was a member of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture. Before fleeing from France in 1789, she painted an evocative and almost theatrical portrait of Mahomet Dervisch-Kam, one of the three ambassadors sent to the French court by Tipu Sahab, sovereign of the Kingdom of Mysore (Fig. 8.5).

In flight from the revolutionary turmoil, choosing the gilded exile of the Grand Tour in Italy, she also left us her fascinating travel journals. Arriving in Naples, she wrote:

> We reached Naples at about three or four o'clock. I cannot describe the impression I received upon entering the town. That burning sun, that stretch of sea, those islands seen in the distance, that Vesuvius with a great column of smoke ascending from it, and the very population so animated and so noisy, who differ so much from the Roman that one might suppose they were a thousand miles apart. I had engaged a house at Chiaja on the edge of the sea. Opposite me I had the island of Capri, and this situation delighted me.[22]

As a painter and storyteller, she is also emblematic in having been able to transform her extremely difficult situation as an exile forced to continually move from place to place into a journey across Europe in services of an education and artistic mission that she expressed in numerous portraits and landscapes.

Another artist and writer engaged in translation and transposition was Ellis Cornelia Knight (1757–1837). After the death of her father Admiral Knight, she set off with her mother for Italy, where they stayed in Florence, Rome, and Naples. In 1805 she published a book in London, the *Description of Latium, or La Campagna di Romana,* describing the Roman Campagna and the Agro Romano complete with twenty drawings of the places she had visited and described. There, she writes (Fig. 8.6):

[22] Vigée-Lebrun (1903, Chapter 5, 63)

Fig. 8.5 Mahomet Dervisch-Kam, portrait painting by Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, 1788 oil on canvas, https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q61041226

It is impossible to visit this spot, without reflecting on the magnificence of the ancient port of Claudius, and comparing with it the melancholy and desolate state in which this part of the coast now appears. … All is

> now changed, and from this truly distressing scene the British traveller will naturally turn his thoughts with exultation to his native country.[23]

Travel literature is an amalgam and hybridisation. As the nineteenth century approached, there was a huge increase in the number of women who saw travel and cultural engagement not only as an educational "finishing" for the *honnête femme* but as a commitment to independent and public knowledge in which the customary anonymity of the translator became increasingly transparent. These women were writers, scientists, translators, and polymaths rolled into one (Bret, 2008, 2014), as well as being travellers. As we have seen, their stories call for a new contextualisation of women's artistic, scientific, anthropological, translational, and experiential contributions to the cultural history of the modern

Fig. 8.6 Ellis Cornelia Knight, *A Description of Latium (London 1805)*, Porto of Ostia. https://archive.org/details/descriptionoflat00knigrich/page/n131/mode/2up

[23] Knight (1805, 103–04).

age. Looking at them from the combined approaches and hermeneutics of historical, anthropological, geographical, and philosophical studies, literary criticism, translation, and post-colonial studies allows us not only to foreground the part they played in quantitative terms, but also to fully grasp and understand the contribution that they made to literature and philosophical reflection, as well as to knowledge as a whole (Carlyle 2011; Andréolle and Molinari 2011, xi–xxv; Stevens 2011; Di Giovanni and Zanotti 2018; Hayden 2011).

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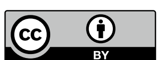

CHAPTER 9

Translating Genre and Gender for Madrid Audiences: The Case of María Rosa de Gálvez

Elizabeth Franklin Lewis

Introduction: Genre and Gender

María Rosa de Gálvez (1768–1806) was the most successful Spanish woman writer of her day. She composed thirteen original dramas and translated at least four plays from French, almost all of them published during her lifetime, with eight pieces performed in the most important Madrid public theatres of the period.[1] María Rosa de Gálvez, who wrote openly about her professional struggles to see her writing published and presented on the public stage, dreamed of achieving renown through

[1] *Un loco hace ciento* premiered in 1801 at the Teatro Príncipe, and *Familia a la moda* appeared at the theatre Caños del Peral in 1805. She also saw two of her translations and a tragedy staged at the third official theatre in Madrid, the Teatro de la Cruz. See Bordiga Grinstein (2003), Apéndice D. See also García Garrosa (2011) for more on Gálvez's translations.

E. F. Lewis (✉)
University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA, USA
e-mail: elewis@umw.edu

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her plays, as she explains in the "Advertencia" to the second volume of her *Obras poéticas* of 1804, stating: "I am certain that posterity will make a place in its memory for this book, and thus the endeavours of its author will be rewarded at least in part" (*Obras poéticas* 1804 vol. 2, 8).[2] Earlier in this same introduction, Gálvez makes a case for her place in literary history by right of *genre*, specifically Neoclassical tragedy, stating: "The tragedies that I offer to the public are the fruit of my love for this genre of poetry" (*Obras poéticas* 1804 vol. 2, 3). But Gálvez also argues here and elsewhere for her place in history because of her *gender*: "the production of a Spanish woman" (*Obras poéticas* 1804 vol. 2, 6). These two elements—genre and gender—are defining characteristics of María Rosa de Gálvez as a dramatist and mark her contributions to eighteenth-century theatre. Critics have extensively studied varied aspects of gender in Gálvez's work, from her strong female characters to themes that explore the concerns of eighteenth-century women's lives. Scholars have also identified the ways in which María Rosa de Gálvez incorporated various dramatic formats including contemporary neoclassical tragedy and comedy as well as the Spanish eighteenth-century one-act comic *sainete*, the seventeenth-century *comedia de figurón*, eighteenth-century sentimental drama, and the *comedia lacrimosa* (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, Díaz Marcos 2009, Establier Pérez 2006, Lewis 2004 and 2022, Whitaker 1992 and 1993). Although in statements like this "Advertencia" Gálvez appeared to emphasize the value of her original plays only, we also find in her translated works the same ambitious incorporation of various dramatic genres circulating through eighteenth-century European theatre and an emphasis on the importance of gender.

While Gálvez's original compositions have gained the most critical attention for their themes decrying women's oppression and their strong intelligent female characters (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, Establier 2006, Lewis 2004, Establier 2006, Whitaker 1993), her translated works were the source of her greatest box-office success. Modern critical preference for her original compositions stems from comments by María Rosa de Gálvez herself, critical of translation and (poor) translators. In the same "Advertencia" mentioned above, she states that "it is very difficult to translate well, but there is as much difference between this and being a poet, as there is between illustrating a print and lifting the plate to

[2] This and all translations from Spanish to English are my own.

reproduce that same print" (*Obras poéticas* 1804, vol. 2, 5).[3] And yet, in the first volume of her carefully curated three-volume *Obras poéticas* in which she purported to present original poetry, comedies, and tragedies, Gálvez had included a translation: the one-act translated "ópera lírica" *Bion*, which was also her longest running theatrical production, appearing 14 times between May and September in 1803 in the Madrid theatre Caños del Peral (Establier, "Cronología", *María Rosa de Gálvez* 2012).

Gálvez is known to have translated four pieces from French: three comedies—*Catalina o la bella labradora* (1801, from Amélie-Julie Candeille's 1792 *Catherine, ou la belle fermière*), *La intriga epistolar* (1802, from Philippe Fabre d'Églantine's 1791 *L'intrigue épistolaire*), and *La dama colérica* (1806, after the 1804 *La jeune femme colère* by Charles-Georges Étienne)—as well as an opera—the aforementioned *Bion* (1804, after an *opéra comique* of the same title of 1800, libretto by François-Benoît Hoffman and music by Étienne Méhul).[4] These translations, as María Jesus García Garrosa points out, span her career, with the first (*Catalina*) in 1801—the same year as the publication of her first two original plays *Ali-Bek* and *Un loco hace ciento*—and the last (*La dama colérica*) appearing just before her death in 1806 (García Garrosa 2011, 41). Gálvez chose to translate recent plays that were proven box-office successes in France. She also chose plays of high quality that embraced the aesthetics and ideology of Enlightenment reformers (García Garrosa 2011, 44–45). Both García Garrosa and Bordiga Grinstein point to the economic motivations for María Rosa de Gálvez's translations. The written record—prologues to her published work, letters requesting permission or assistance to publish or produce her work, and letters defending herself from censorship or criticism—shows that Gálvez sought both artistic and economic success in the publication and production of

[3] The association of the work of the translator with the work of the visual artist appears in comments by other female translators. Josefa Amar y Borbón uses the image of the painter in the introduction to her translation of Francisco Javier Lampillas's *Saggio storico-apologetico della Letteratura Spagnola* to explain that the translator's work is more than a mere copy, but rather should also be creative. For more on Amar's translation and views on translation Lewis 2019 (p. 120) and García Garrosa 2022 (pp. 257–258).

[4] While Julia Bordiga Grinstein only accepts *Catalina o la bella labradora*, *La intriga epistolar*, and *Bion* as Gálvez's proven translations (*La Rosa trágica*, pp. 66–68), García Garrosa points to evidence uncovered by Andioc and Coulon (2008) connecting Gálvez to *La Dama colérica*. See García Garrosa (2011, p. 56).

all her work—original compositions and translations.[5] Still, as with her original compositions, we see more than mere financial interests in her choices of texts to translate. Both in the genres she chose and the topics of gender she emphasized, we find parallels between the translations, her original works, and her life.

María Rosa de Gálvez frequently emphasized her unique position as a woman writer. For example, in an 1803 letter to King Charles IV requesting a delay in her payment to the Royal Press for the publication of her *Obras poéticas*, she argues for the urgency and importance of its release, again by right of genre, gender, and originality:

> (…) to make public a work that cannot be found in any other woman, of any nation, since even the most celebrated French women have limited themselves to translations, or at the most they have produced one dramatic composition; but none have presented a collection of original tragedies as have I.

Although she was a prolific and very successful writer, María Rosa de Gálvez was not the only woman writing and translating in the Spanish Enlightenment period. Other important contemporaries such as Josefa Amar y Borbón (1749–1833), María Gertrudis Hore (1742–1801), Margarita Hickey (1753–1793), María Lorenza de los Ríos (1771–1821), and Inés Joyes y Blake (1731–1808), all wrote and published both original works as well as translations.[6] García Garrosa has recently documented 28 women translators in Spain working between 1755 and 1808 who published at least 31 translations (García Garrosa 2022). While French texts were the most common object of translation into Spanish (for both male and female translators), these women also translated texts from English and Italian. Translation was an important vehicle for the circulation of Enlightenment ideas and aesthetics, and for some translation was "part of a common heritage to be shared unreservedly by a literary republic without frontiers" (García Garrosa 2019, 259). However, the proliferation of translated texts was also viewed with suspicion by

[5] These documents, along with copies of manuscripts and published work as well as recent bibliography, can be found on the site dedicated to María Rosa de Gálvez on Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, edited by Helena Establier Pérez (2012).

[6] See Jaffe and Martín Valdepeñas (2015), Lewis (2019), Bolufer (2003), Garcia Garrosa (2022).

some, who saw it as undermining Spain's proud national cultural and linguistic tradition. Translation was the subject of great debates in the Spanish periodical press, as well as of censorship by Spanish government and ecclesiastic officials, and we see this same ambivalence over the value of translation reflected in the work of María Rosa de Gálvez (García Garrosa 2011, 2019 and 2022).

Just as translation was an object of debate in eighteenth-century Spain, scholars of modern translation studies continue to discuss and explore the relationships of translation and translator to original texts and their authors in the transfer of ideas, aesthetics, and culture. In the twentieth century, Roman Jakobson identified three types of translation: intralingual (or rewording), interlingual (traditional translation), and intersemiotic (or transmutation) (Jakobson 1959; Bassnett 2014, 25). Umberto Eco discusses the relationship of all three forms of translation to interpretation (Eco 2001). Related to these ideas about translation and interpretation is the concept of adaptation. Linda Hutcheon points to the similarities of translation and adaptation, especially in the case of intersemiotic exchanges (or transmutation), for example from text to film (Hutcheon 2012, 16–17). Hutcheon sees adaptation as a "derivation without being derivative" to become "its own palimpsestic thing" (9). In addition to the above ideas on translation, interpretation, and adaptation, new understandings of culture and gender have challenged and extended traditional notions of translation. Lori Chamberlin sees in the traditional metaphorics of a gendered author/translator identification a "struggle for authority and the politics of originality" in which the author/original text is associated with the male and the translator/translated text is associated with a subservient female role (1992, 314–15). Chamberlin proposes a feminist conception of translation that will go beyond the "double-standard" of this metaphor and consider instead what Jacques Derrida has called a "double-bind", a double-edged razor that views "translation as collaboration" (Chamberlin 1992, 326). The above theoretical ideas of translation in its various forms, of translation's relationship to interpretation and adaptation, of translation as part of a process of cultural exchange, and of translation as gendered are all important to keep in mind as we consider Spanish eighteenth-century women translators and their translations, specifically in the case of María Rosa de Gálvez.

In the following pages, we will explore the importance of translation and adaptation in three plays by María Rosa de Gálvez: her first translation, *Catalina o la bella labradora*; an opera published in volume one of

her *Obras poéticas* and the only translation of that series, *Bion*; and the sentimental drama that followed *Bion* in that same volume, *El egoísta*. These plays exemplify the various ways that María Rosa Gálvez borrowed from previous texts, and the choices she made as she endeavoured to make her mark on the Spanish stage. Although the first two plays are acknowledged translations of French texts and the last identified by Gálvez herself as "original", we will see in these texts elements of direct interlingual translation, as well as of intersemiotic translation or transmutation, and finally of adaptation. We will also see the importance of genre and gender in the aesthetic and thematic choices that Gálvez made in her translations, adaptations, and original texts. Ultimately, we will go beyond the dichotomy of previous approaches to Gálvez's work, seeing her translated and original work as separate and unequal endeavours, to see how her choices of genre and emphasis on gender run throughout her career.

María Rosa de Gálvez's Social and Literary Connections, and Rejections

In order to understand better María Rosa de Gálvez's translated and original compositions and the ideas and aesthetics that moved through them, we should consider briefly her interactions with the people, ideas, and texts that were circulating in the last decades of eighteenth-century Spain. Her life, work, and social and familial ties raise important questions, many that remain unanswered. She was part of one of the most well-connected and influential families of her day: her uncle Matías and cousin Bernardo Gálvez served as viceroys of Mexico; and her uncle José Gálvez held important posts with Charles III's court including as Inspector General of New Spain (Mexico) and later in the Council of the Indies in Madrid. María Rosa de Gálvez was the adopted daughter and only child of a lesser-known brother of this wealthy family, Antonio Gálvez and his wife Mariana Ramírez de Velázquez, and many speculate that she was likely the illegitimate child of her adoptive father (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, 20). Although deposited briefly after her birth in 1768 in an orphanage in Ronda, she is thought to have had a privileged upbringing in her family home in Málaga. In 1789 at the age of 21, she married a man younger than she from a much less important family distantly related to her own, José Cabrera. That she did not make a better match was possibly due to the circumstances of her birth, but also possibly because of her own status as an unwed mother, as Elisa Martín-Valdepeñas (2017) has discovered.

Throughout their troubled marriage, José Cabrera caused María Rosa and the Gálvez family embarrassment and a cost them a lot of money, punctuated by Cabrera's expulsion from his post with the Spanish embassy in Philadelphia in 1805 for writing bad checks, among other things (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, 30). The couple had a daughter together who died in infancy, and they separated in 1794, although their troubled relationship continued until her death in 1806 (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, Martín Valdepeñas 2017).

But María Rosa de Gálvez also had good friends in high places including fellow writers Rita Barrenechea and Manuel José Quintana, as well as Charles IV's powerful First Secretary of State Manuel Godoy. She describes the importance of these close relationships in several poems published in volume one of her *Obras poéticas*.[7] Friendship was an important emotional and intellectual support for the aspiring writer, but these friends and their respected positions in Spanish Enlightenment circles must have also included her in the aesthetic and philosophical conversations happening among artists and social reformers. Barrenechea, Countess of Carpio, hosted a *tertulia* (salon) in Madrid with her husband. Perhaps it was attended by the couple's influential friends, which included Jovellanos, the Duchess of Alba, and maybe even María Rosa de Gálvez (Urzainqui 2006, XXVI). Barrenechea, who was a member of the Basque Society of Friends of the Country, and of the first Spanish all-female civic organization, the *Junta de Damas de Honor y Mérito,* was the author of two plays—*Catalín* (1783) and the undated *La aya*. Manuel José Quintana was already a celebrated poet by the early 1800s. He published and staged his two plays during Gálvez's lifetime: *El Duque de Viera* (1801, an adaptation of Matthew Monk Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* of 1797) and

[7] These were "A la noche" dedicated to the deceased Barrenechea; "Descripción filosófica del Real Sitio de San Ildefonso" and "Versos sáficos" dedicated to Quintana. In addition to these, Gálvez dedicated the poem "A la beneficencia" to her cousin María Josefa Gálvez, Countess of Castroterreño and to the women of the Junta de Damas, of which Barrenechea was also a member. Much has been made of her relationship to Manuel Godoy. She dedicated the first poem of the volume to him: "La campana de Portugal." Letters addressed to him also indicate that she sought his financial and political support to see her work published. Both Julia Bordiga Grinstein (2003) and Aurora Luque and José Luis Cabrera (2005) discuss the rumours that Godoy and María Rosa de Gálvez were lovers including statements by nineteenth century historian Guillén Robles, who described Gálvez as "libertina" and her relationship with Godoy as purely sexual. See also Serrano y Sanz (1903, p. 445, note 1).

Pelayo (1805). He would eventually host his own *tertulia* and become one of the most influential thinkers of Spanish liberalism.

Gálvez called upon her connections to the highest levels of the Bourbon government to see her work produced and published. In a letter addressed to King Charles IV requesting funding to publish her three-volume collected works of poetry and drama, the *Obras poéticas*, Gálvez argues that hers is "work which cannot be found in any other woman or nation" (Gálvez 1803). And when she saw her efforts challenged or blocked, Gálvez fiercely defended her work from censors and critics. For example, when the comedy *La familia a la moda* (Fashionable Family) was prohibited by the ecclesiastical censor, she appealed it to the governor of the Council of Castille, calling the censorship unjust, complaining that such action denies her the reward she deserved for her work, and that it unfairly damages her reputation Gálvez (1805a). When another comedy, *Las esclavas amazonas* (Amazon Slavewomen), received a somewhat critical review in the *Memorial literario*, she responded defending herself in a letter to another publication, the *Variedades de ciencias, literatura, y arte* (Gálvez 1805b). In the letter she explains that she considered not responding publicly but decided to defend herself, less others take her silence for acceptance of the critique. In these and other documents, it is evident that María Rosa de Gálvez felt compelled to defend herself against both professional and personal obstacles and injustices.

The circumstances of her life, her family and social connections, her personal tragedies and frustrations, all of them must have contributed to her formation as a person and as an artist, to what she wrote, and to how she was able (or not) to achieve the success she sought. Given that she was part of a well-connected family, both her struggles and her accomplishments must have also been well known among her peers and her audiences. Because of these family and social ties, she was also part of an environment in which people, ideas, and money circulated between regions of the Spanish Empire and between the cultures and countries beyond Spain. Both her life and her texts reflect these circulations, especially as Gálvez experimented with various genres—poetry, comedy, tragedy, and musical theatre—to make her gendered mark as a lonely woman writing in a male-dominated world, albeit not as the lone female voice as she might have had us believe. The translation of texts from French to Spanish was another way that genre and gender circulated in and through María Rosa de Gálvez's work. It brought her much-needed income, recognition, and success. But these translations

were more than reproductions of an original French text into the Spanish language. As translator, Gálvez went beyond "lifting a stamp to reproduce a print" as she once described it. She was also interpreter and artist, as she circulated both contemporary artistic forms and ideas about gender through her work.

An Early Translation from the French: Catalina (1801)

María Rosa de Gálvez's first translation, *Catalina o la bella labradora*, tells the sentimental story of a long-suffering widow whose hidden identity is revealed and eventually whose social standing is restored. It was the translation of a French work by another female dramatist, Amélie-Julie Candeille's *Catherine, ou la belle fermière*, which debuted in 1792. The original work was an opera and in fact is the longest running opera written by a woman (Letzer and Adelson 2004, 11). Candeille herself was part of an "explosion" of French female librettists between 1770 and 1820, and her opera *Catherine*, along with Constance Pipelet de Salm's *Sapho* (1794) were among the most performed operas of the period—by women or men (Letzer and Adelson 2000, 73). Letzer and Adelson believe that the popularity of these female-authored operas was in part because they often embraced qualities of sentimental drama espoused by Jean-Jacques Rousseau that exalted feeling and domesticity. Ironically, the very philosophy that so famously excluded women from the public sphere also exalted their ability to emote (2000, 74). In addition, the close autobiographical association between Candeille (who was both author and actress, playing the lead role of Catherine) and the story of a wronged woman who found love in a second marriage, also touched on another Rousseauian idea: the importance of the unmediated communication of emotion, as expressed in his *Lettre à D'Alembert* (Letzer and Adelson 2004, 11).

Gálvez's translation of Candeille's libretto is faithful in some ways and not in others. She keeps the same characters, storyline, and setting. A contemporary critic complains about Gálvez's translation: "This drama is translated from French, but rather than being rendered into Castillian, it has come out in a hybrid form, which is so much in fashion among the throng of bad translators" ("Crítica en el Memorial Literario de 1802 a la comedia 'Catalina o la bella labradora', traducida por Gálvez"). Among recent studies of Gálvez's *Catalina*, both Bordiga Grinstein and García

Garrosa also find this first attempt at translation lacking. Bordiga Grinstein notes her "attempts at a literal translation that was full of errors", especially in her rendering of French idiomatic phrases (2003, 70). García Garrosa believes that what may seem as lack of skill was more due to lack of time—that Gálvez may have been pressed to complete her translation to take advantage of placing it and her other two original plays (*Ali-Bek* and *Un loco hace ciento*) in volume V of the *Teatro Nuevo Español*, undoubtedly a great opportunity for Gálvez to associate her work with this collection of plays deemed exemplary by the official government *Plan de Reforma de los Teatros* (Theatre Reform Plan) (García Garrosa 2011, 47).

This translation was also a transmutation (to follow Jakobson's categorization) from opera to sentimental comedy. Gálvez not only removed music from the original—sung musical elements were changed to spoken verse, and the concluding section of music and dance was eliminated—but there were other changes as well. In Act II, scene three of the original French version, Catherine is being observed by Lussan, who has fallen in love with her. He sees her take up the harp in the scene, and secretly listens in on her singing, which she prefaces with the following statement:

> Dear talent, the secret charm of my sad existence! Be again the intepreter and consolation of a sorrow that I do not dare seek the cause. (II.iii, 45)

Music is Catherine's secret talent and her consolation when troubled. In Gálvez's version, although the harp is described as present in the stage description at the beginning of the act, instead of picking up that instrument of music, Catalina picks up her pen. Catherine's music is transformed into Catalina's poetry, and her hidden talent that brings her solace becomes writing:

> Catalina sits again, takes paper and pen: [Lussan] rises and observes her while hidden.
> **Lussan**: What do I see? It seems she's going to write… Let's observe.
> **Catalina**: Inspiration of sweet poetry! Captivating charm of my sad existence! Help me interpret my true feelings, and console the pains whose cause I dare not explore. (II.iii, 51).

Bordiga Grinstein believes that by replacing sung lyrics with spoken verse, the main character Catalina became more like Gálvez herself—a writer

and poet, who too was ruined by a rake of a husband (2003, 70). In this way the autobiographical elements of Candeille's opera that closely associated that author with her main character and played on the sentiments of her audience on multiple levels (as identified by Letzer and Adelson 2000, 2004), also worked for Gálvez on various levels with her audience as well. By choosing a play by a woman who achieved renown from her work, about a woman who was wronged in marriage and who rejected love and men, at least initially, Gálvez tied her life and career as a writer to Candeille's, and with it sought some of the success Candeille had achieved. While Gálvez did not attempt to create an opera in this first foray into translation, certainly it planted the seed that would eventually lead her to a translation that she would be much prouder of: the opera *Bion*.

The Box-Office and Artistic Success of Bion (1803)

While Gálvez avoided operatic elements in *Catalina*, just two years later she would translate another opera as opera. *Bion* ran throughout the months of May, June, and September of 1803 at the Caños del Peral Theatre in Madrid (where today's Royal Theatre stands), earning decent revenues at the Box Office.[8] This successful run was less than three years after the piece upon which it was based (libretto by François-Benoît Hoffman and music by Étienne Méhul) premiered at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in December of 1800. Opera, although introduced into Spain during the seventeenth century, gained in popularity throughout the eighteenth century, due in no small part to the Bourbon dynasty, with its French and Italian roots, and it appeared that with this successful translation, María Rosa de Gálvez was riding its wave of popularity (Stein and Leza 2009). María Jesús García Garrosa has pointed out Gálvez's "skill in versification as well as in translation" in this piece (2011, 54).[9] Gálvez was able not only to translate meaning accurately, but she also adapted the language to Spanish lyric that could also appropriately accompany Méhul's score.

[8] Between 2,000 and 7,900 reales a show. See Bordiga Grinstein, Apéndice D, pp. 184–185.

[9] See also Bordiga Grinstein, pp. 71–73.

Méhul and Hoffman's *Bion* is set in Classical Greece and tells the story of a poet, Bion, who is the guardian of beautiful young Nysa. Together they lead an idyllic life on an island away from the rest of Greek society.[10] Two male visitors from the mainland—Agenor (a philosopher trained by Plato) and Crates—upset their peace and when Agenor falls in love with Nysa. Nysa is confused about her feelings of attraction to the young philosopher and of gratitude to her older benefactor Bion, who encourages her to follow her heart. Bion and Nysa set up a fake wedding between them to test Agenor. In the end, Bion makes it known that Nysa should choose her own match, and she chooses Agenor.

A comparison of the two texts—Hoffman's original and Gálvez's translation—reveals very little variance between them. María Rosa de Gálvez's translation keeps the same storyline and characters, and the structure is basically the same, with the exception of the omission of one brief scene towards the end of the play. Gálvez also strives to produce similar versification to the original. For example, in a duo between Bion and Nysa from the second scene, Gálvez imitates the French verse with Spanish metre, as well as the AB consonant rhyme scheme. She prefers to preserve these qualities over direct translation, as in the line "Nuestra unión siempre fue dichosa" (our union was always happy) for "Nous étions toujours seuls ensemble" (we were always alone together). Gálvez explains her choices this way in a note at the end of the published text:

> The freedom of the translation of the sung verses and the irregularity of their meter are born of the need to accommodate the long or short syllables to the points of stress in the music: such that in other translators we hear sung in the theatre *corázon* instead of *corazón*, the lyrics not making sense, the verse ending where it shouldn't, and other defects, which music professors know well although they try to cover up with the orchestral score. (108–109)

Gálvez's choice to translate *Bion* also highlights the circulation of gender and genre. Gálvez was the first and only woman to translate a successful opera in eighteenth-century Spain, and we could speculate that she must have chosen this popular genre in part to boost her own success as a woman writer. But she also states in an "Advertencia" to the play that

[10] This opera was an adaptation of a 1798 book *Voyages d'Anténor en Grèce* by Étienne-François de Lantier.

it was the technical challenge that this endeavour posed, and her success at it, that led her to include a translation in her collection of otherwise original works:

> The following translation is included in this volume because it pertains to the lyrical genre, and is thought preferable to infinite other poems whose merit depends more on the circumstances in which they were written than on their difficulty, invention or context. (57)

Although in the brief introduction to the volume in which *Bion* appears, Gálvez seems to play the role of humble female writer so typical of the time, calling her own poetry "hijas de las circunstancias" (daughters of circumstance), with *Bion*, she wants to show off her poetic skills as proof that she was up to the challenge. With *Bion*, María Rosa de Gálvez attempted to translate not just the storyline from French to Spanish language, but she strove to adapt story and lyric for Spanish audiences.

Adaptation and Transformation in *El egoísta* (1804)

Immediately following Gálvez's translated opera *Bion* in volume one of the *Obras poéticas* is an original work: *El egoísta*. Set in current-day England, this sentimental drama is in the style of the eighteenth-century *comedia lacrimosa* (lachrymose comedy) with its contemporary bourgeois setting, melodramatic confrontations between good and evil, and copious tears. Gálvez's adoption of this eighteenth-century genre with its roots in British and French sentimental literature connects her with other contemporary Spanish dramatists such as Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos.[11] *El egoísta* tells the story of Nancy, the long-suffering and abandoned wife of the rake Sidney, who has come to the outskirts of London (Windsor) from Gloucester in search of her husband. Sidney scandalously flaunts his lover (Jenny Marvod) to his wife, refuses to disavow his licentious lifestyle and his equally corrupt friends, and openly voices his contempt for his wife and their child. He uses all around him for money and position, and shockingly attempts to poison his wife after thinking that he has successfully used her connections to achieve a government appointment in India.

[11] For more on the *comedia lacrimosa* in Spain, and its French and British origins, see Joan Lynn Pataky Kosove (1977), and María Jesús García Garrosa (1990).

Although claimed by the author as original, *El egoísta* has much in common with other texts, beginning with her first translation *Catalina o la bella labradora*. As with *Catalina*, the lead female character is also an innocent woman wronged by a philandering husband. At the end of the first act of the earlier translation, Catalina sings of this plight, describing another young woman who had been married off for her money and abandoned:

> No sooner had they married
> Than the penniless man
> Looked for pleasures
> Away from home.
> And Julia was oppressed
> By a thousand terrible humiliations
> And poverty followed
> Such crude misfortunes. (I.xi, 36)

Nancy of *El egoísta* describes a similar fate shortly after marrying Sidney:

> The ungrateful man,
> quickly carried away by the force of
> the bad example of others,
> forgot me, insulted me and despised me;
> and there was not an excess or disgrace
> into which he did not fall; (I.iv, 125–6)

But while both women are abandoned and financially destroyed, Nancy is also threatened with physical harm and even death. In the first act, Bety, the innkeeper of the guesthouse where Nancy and her son are staying in Windsor, asks Nancy if she is afraid of her husband:

> BETY
> (…) Tell me, do you fear
> Some sort of danger with the unexpected return of my lord?
> Smith, who brought this news,
> perhaps came only
> to make annoying inquiries
> NANCY

Oh, Bety, I am very suspicious
that my lord, due to the violence
of his arrogant character,
has squandered my good reputation. (I.iii, 119)

The violence of Sidney's character becomes evident not only in his attitudes and actions towards Nancy, but also in his other relationships with women, especially with his lover Jenny Marvod. At first the audience sees Jenny Marvod as the immoral "other woman", whose behaviour betrays her supposed aristocratic identity as the Duchess of Cumberland: "Your grace expresses herself in a way improper for her class and position" (I.vii, 134). But later we find that she too is a victim of Sidney's abuse—"For him only I suffered the flames of love; for this ingrate my fierce heart was humiliated" (II.iv, 166)—and that now Sidney has set his sights on Jenny's 12-year-old sister, whom he plans to seduce (167). Sidney is called a *calavera* various times in the play, a character type well known in Spanish drama from his appearance as Don Juan in the *Burlador de Sevilla* (1630), and his adaptation across the international stage including Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). In British drama, he is the rake, who first appears onstage in Restoration comedies of the late seventeenth century, continues his presence in eighteenth-century British sentimental drama, and eventually appears in the sentimental novel from the late eighteenth century on.[12]

Sidney's egotism and disregard for decorum, morals, and the law lead him to plot his wife's demise at the end of the second act. Thinking that he has gotten what he wanted from Nancy—an appointment as governor of India—he reasons he would be better off without her:

There is no doubt that my appointment
will be granted;
and everywhere a bachelor achieves
more distinction
than a married man, and attracts
a thousand young ladies to run around with
Above all, he doesn't have
the continual grind of a
complaining wife, her whining and nagging sermons; (II, xi, 184)

[12] See Hume (1983), Weber (1986), Braverman (1995), Mackie (2009).

Sidney poisons Nancy's hot chocolate, and, anticipating her imminent death, describes the feelings of pity and desire that his last interaction with her aroused:

> Nancy was so pretty
> seated on her bed,
> tearful and grateful,
> that I felt a certain desire
> that she live…But it was too late;
> She had already drunk the poison calmly, and said:
> "Oh Sidney, I owe you so much!"
> Such words! I don't know
> why I keep thinking
> about them constantly; So what
> if I lose Nancy, what do I lose?
> Such a strange woman,
> who doesn't take advantage
> of her attractiveness… Come on,
> I am embarrassed more each time
> I think about how I felt pity for her. (II.xiii, 196)

Jesús Pérez-Magallón has studied the character of Sidney as an "anti-model" of Enlightened masculinity, in contrast to the "hombre de bien" (good man) found in so many Spanish Enlightenment texts, such as in Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos' *El delincuente honrado*. Pérez-Magallón points out that in contrast to the sincere and moral behaviour of characters like Nancy and her protector Lord Nelson, who follow social norms and decorum, Sidney and his friends violate those norms. In the same scene mentioned earlier when Nancy meets her husband's lover Jenny Marvod and is confused by her improper behaviour, she is equally stunned by the brash forwardness of her husband's friend Belford. These open displays of self-centeredness, and of a lack of honour, which in the eighteenth century was tied to one's conduct rather than to one's social position, lead to the dissolution of the bourgeois family, the centre of Spanish Enlightenment society (Pérez-Magallón).

Bordiga Grinstein believes that a French opera *Le délire, ou les suites d'une erreur* (1800) by Jacques-Antoine Révéroni Saint-Cyr and the German play *Menschenhass und Reue* (1790) by August von Kotzebue (both translated by Dionisio Solís) could have been inspirations for *El egoísta* (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, 107). The English setting of this play

along with the English names of the characters also point to possible influence from English sources. Yvonne Fuentes, in her study of Spanish sentimental drama as part of a "triangle" of influence between English, French, and Spanish drama, addresses not only direct translations of works among these three traditions, but also of other points of contact expressed in a general "gusto por lo inglés" ("enthusiasm for things English", 233). Beyond direct influence of source text to translation, Fuentes finds that there "existed a philosophical and aesthetic affinity, admiration, and perhaps even a nose for commercial success in Spain that had been seen in other countries" (234). While a number of English sentimental dramas made their way into Spain, often through a Spanish translation of a French translation, perhaps the most influential English texts were the sentimental novel, especially Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), both of which were translated as novels and also adapted for the stage. *Clarissa* in particular was a model for the popular Spanish sentimental novel *La Leandra* (1797–1807) by Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor. Could *El egoísta* be another example of Richardson's influence? Some of the circumstances, themes, and character types of *El egoísta* are similar to *Clarissa*—the licentious and egotistical rake, the setting in an English inn, the drugging/poisoning of the heroine, as well as her impending death. The strongest of these connections to *Clarissa* is the character Belford, who not only shares the same name as this secondary character in Richardson's novel, but also changes from friend and confident of the rake, to a man sympathetic to the unjust plight of the mistreated heroine.

Daniel Whitaker finds in this play another example of how Gálvez used female voices in her plays to address contemporary issues—in this case that of legal separation and divorce for a married couple, and thus "an alternative to the patriarchal status quo" (1990, 41). Nancy herself, although she shows herself to be a loyal and virtuous wife throughout, brings up the idea of divorce in Act III, when Sidney refuses to let her leave the inn with their son after her poisoning:

> Evil man
> Unmoved by crime
> And by love, man of marble
> Here is my divorce sentence
> (taking out the papers from his suit)
> Here is evidence
> Of your disgrace, and my death. (III.xi, 223)

The papers she takes out are not legal papers, but rather papers proving that he has poisoned her. Still, new divorce laws had been recently passed in France and divorce was an increasingly debated topic among Spanish intellectuals (Whitaker 1990, 39). When Nancy utters these words, and when her marriage is ultimately permanently broken not by death but by her husband's arrest, we cannot ignore the parallels with the author's own biography. Bordiga Grinstein notes in detail many autobiographical parallels in the play—from its setting (the capital settings of London and nearby Windsor standing in for Gálvez's own life in Madrid and Aranjuez), to details of the play such as the instrument with which Sidney stirs the poison into Nancy's chocolate—a pen—to specific actions and situations by the fictional Sidney that are similar to Gálvez's estranged husband José Cabrera including his ruinous gambling debts, his appointment to an overseas post through his wife's influential connections, and his imprisonment (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, 107–112). Gálvez, like her heroine Nancy, also appeared to have suffered at the hands of a cruel husband. Perhaps she found writing *El egoísta* helpful, in the words of her previous heroine *Catalina*, "to interpret her true feelings" and "consolation for the pains" she endured. Additionally, much as occurred with Candeille's *Catherine*, the strong personal identification between the author and the themes and characters in this play allowed Gálvez to present intense emotions, and the moral lessons drawn from them, from the authority of a woman's experience.

Conclusion: Circulating Genre and Gender

In their study of gender and translation in two eighteenth-century plays, Catherine Jaffe and Elisa Martín-Valdepeñas Yagüe examine two plays as translations/adaptations of Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais's *Eugénie* (1767): Elizabeth Griffith's *The School for Rakes* (1769) and María Lorenza de los Ríos y Loyo's *El Eugenio* (1801). These two plays adapted different elements of Beaumarchais's text (itself an adaptation of another French text that was in turn a translation/adaptation of a seventeenth-century Spanish text), and each also produced their plays under very different circumstances. Griffith, an actress, wrote for the London commercial stage. De los Ríos, an aristocrat and intellectual, wrote for an intimate group of friends. Despite these differences, Griffith and de los Ríos as translators and adaptors of Beaumarchais's text were part of the larger circulation of genre (in this case the sentimental

drama) and gender in the eighteenth century, interpreting Beaumarchais's play for their own national contexts while at the same time they "introduce new possibilities for gender roles" (53). These women translators and adaptors were not merely conduits of culture from one language to the next. They, like Gálvez, participated actively in the circulation of ideas and aesthetics, all the while interpreting and adding new possibilities. The choices they made of the texts and stories they translated or adapted; the culturally specific ways they re-presented them; their emphasis on aspects of gender, writing from the authority of their own positions as women; and finally their choices of genre all placed them squarely in the midst of the Enlightenment movement, which they too helped shape.

Linda Hutcheon, in her exploration of a theory of adaptation, defines adaptation "as a product (as extensive particular transcoding) and as a process (as creative reinterpretation and palimpsestic intertextuality)" (22). Throughout María Rosa de Gálvez's plays—translations and originals—we see a similar process of "creative reinterpretation and palimpsestic intertextuality": an aria becomes a poem, a French opera is produced in traditional Spanish metre, the rake is an iconic Spanish *calavera,* or the name of a secondary character and English setting evoke a best-selling novel. Gálvez's connection with her audience—spectator or reader—is important too, and Gálvez seems to invite associations between what they are seeing on stage or reading on the page, what they may know of previous or contemporary works, even works of other genres, and sometimes what they may know of Gálvez herself.

What María Rosa de Gálvez wanted more than anything else was to make her mark, to be remembered as a woman dramatist. She knew that given the secondary role assigned to translation, it would be through her original work that she could best make literary history. Still, in her translations, she worked with genres that would put her squarely in the midst of a dynamic Enlightenment culture, allowing her to creatively reinterpret their stance on gender for Spanish audiences.

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CHAPTER 10

The Role of Women in Translation History: Translating and Collaborating in the Re-shaping of Italy in the Early Romantic Period

Mirella Agorni

Introduction

Translation enables the circulation of knowledge and makes newness and originality travel. It plays a crucial role at times of transition, yet the role of translation in the development of new female modes of expression has only recently started to be analysed. The main reason for this neglect is the supposedly derivative nature of translation, considered a secondary activity to original writing, so traditionally regarded as a copy lacking the element of novelty of ideas that has characterised artistic production since the origins of the Romantic movement in Europe (see Venuti 1995). Hence, feminist critics have generally paid more attention to literary

M. Agorni (✉)
Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Venice, Italy
e-mail: mirella.agorni@unive.it

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genres perceived as more empowering for women, such as the novel. Yet the specificity of women's contribution to translation may prove to be a highly productive source for historical analyses of cultural developments.[1] A focus on gender enables critics to question the definition of translation as a unified category, by effectively bringing a set of peripheral textual practices, such as editing and reviewing, to the fore.

In my volume on eighteenth-century women writers and translators (Agorni 2014), I tried to trace women's appropriation of an imagined Italy and their exploitation of this cultural geography in the framing of discourses that could be productively used for the development of a tradition of British women's writing. My current research is taking my analysis a few decades further in time, to the early nineteenth century (Agorni 2021), in a reversed perspective, taking into account the function of intercultural practices, and translation in particular, in shaping the renewal of Italian culture that laid the basis for the formation of a unified Italian state. The role played by women in the renovation of literature and in the introduction of new approaches to translation in this historical period has been paid hardly any attention, and just a few women writers, seen as exceptions, were praised for their efforts by reviewers at the time.

This article will attempt to bring out the specificity of women's cultural activity in Italy in the early Romantic period, a time characterised by an impressive number of translation activities in a cultural system that aimed to be recognised as "Italian". In this respect, the introduction of the new genre of children's literature via translations produced by women appears particularly significant.

[1] Translating was an important opportunity for many early modern European women writers, who struggled to find an entrance into a literary arena traditionally reserved for men. Research on women translators, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has grown in recent decades. See, for example, Agorni (2014) on the relations between English and Italian literature; van Deinsen and Vanacker (2019) on female translators in Dutch; Jaffe and Yagüe (2015) on translations of theatre texts from French into English and Spanish, and Domitova 2019 for the Russian panorama.

The Target Cultural System: The Italian Literary Scene

In 1816, Germaine de Staël published her well-known essay "On the Spirit of Translation",[2] which triggered a strong literary controversy between two factions, referred to as Classicists and Romantics, respectively.[3] Particular attention was paid to translations from modern languages: for the first time in history, there was an unprecedented emphasis on the use and methodology of translation in an "Italian" geographical area that was trying to define itself in terms of culture, given the impossibility of creating a unitary political project. In this period, in fact, the Italian peninsula was still fragmented into a series of states governed by foreign powers.[4]

Two approaches to translation were set against each other: on the one hand, an adaptive translation strategy advocated by the Classicists, and on the other, a source-oriented and culturally sensitive approach promoted by the Romantics. In Translation Studies, these two approaches represent a fundamental binary opposition and have been defined by Venuti (1995, 1998) as domesticating and foreignizing strategies, respectively. As the terminology suggests, domesticating practices are all those approaches that aim to produce a translation adapted to the literary tastes

[2] The article was first published in Italian under the title: "Sulla maniera e l'utilità delle Traduzioni" (De Staël 1816). See the English translation by C.C. Wharram, https://romantic-circles.org/pedagogies/commons/translation/commons.2014.translation.wharram.html, last accessed March 2022.

[3] The literary dispute between Classicists and Romantics is one of the most studied literary events in Italian literature. The two factions were mainly competing through articles published in periodicals, especially in the Habsburg-dominated Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. On the one hand, *La Biblioteca Italiana* was supported by the Habsburg government, while on the other hand, the liberal periodical *Il Conciliatore* was the work of a group of intellectuals who were carriers of the new European romantic ideas, including Federico Confalonieri (1785–1846), Silvio Pellico (1789–1854), Giovanni Berchet (1783–1851), Piero Borsieri (1788–1852) and Ludovico di Breme (1780–1820). The periodical was censored and finally closed after about a year by the Austrian government. See Avitale (1959), Bellorini (1943), and Calcaterra (1951).

[4] In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Italian territory was divided into a series of distinct states ruled mainly by foreign powers, such as the Habsburgs in northern Italy, who dominated both Lombardy and the former Venetian territories, the Spanish in the Kingdom of Sicily in the south, and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany ruled by the House of Lorraine. The Pope governed over a vast territory in the centre of the peninsula.

and knowledge of the readers of the target culture to whom the translation is addressed. For Venuti, on the other hand, a foreignizing translation strategy means a methodology that respects the otherness of the source text and seeks to reproduce its characteristics. Venuti favours the latter practice, which he believes enables the target readers to gain an insight into the specificity of the source text, although this often requires an effort of interpretation and research on the part of the readers themselves.

In nineteenth-century Italy, the Classicists' domestication strategies were aimed at readers who could read the source text in its original language and appreciate the translators' efforts towards literal, stable reproduction. On the other hand, the Romantics wanted to find new elements to introduce into the Italian cultural system in the form of both new literary genres and new contents. Consequently, they favoured an approach to translation that was both foreignizing—acknowledging the non-equivalence of the source and target texts—and culturally sensitive, so as to retain as much as possible of the original aspects of the source text while at the same time making them comprehensible to the reader.

Most of the Romantic movements in Europe were favouring similar practices of foreignization at the time, but the Italian context was producing instead a new approach that combined a strict adherence to the specificity of the source text with a concern to make the translation accessible to a new and expanding readership.[5] Hence, rather in contrast to the trends in the rest of Europe, the Italian Romantics were characterised by a continuity with the tradition of Enlightenment theories. A specific feature of Italian Romanticism was a view of literature that subordinated artistic and aesthetic creativity to practical utility: a special emphasis was placed on socio-political problems, which were often understood in aesthetic-artistic

[5] For a broad European overview of translation in the Romantic period, Murray Pittock's volume on the translation and reception of one of the most popular Romantic author in Europe, Walter Scott, may be particularly useful. Pittock deals with the reception of Scott in French, Spanish, Catalan, German, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Slovenian, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, with a focus on the cultural-historical characteristics that shaped the form and fortune of the translation of his works in each country. The overall picture that emerges is that it is difficult to speak of a single type of European Romantic ideology, but that many of the values represented by Scott, such as the importance of a nation's history and the emergence of a bourgeois hero, close to the reading public, were entering the culture of many European countries at the same time. This had an enormous impact on translation strategies, which aimed to adhere to the form, content and historical context of the original text, while ensuring greater accessibility for the reading public. See Pittock (2007) and Agorni (2021).

terms. As Garofalo (2005, 248) has put it, "the main forum in the peninsula for the dissemination of Romantic ideals", the well-known periodical *Il Conciliatore*, in fact inherited many of the ideas that had circulated in Italian Enlightenment circles in the mid-eighteenth century thanks to the Lombard journal *Il Caffè* (1764–1766) of the Verri brothers.[6] Above all, the calls for a useful literature, with content that adhered to life, people's real needs, political conflicts and passions, were taken up and integrated as ideals in Italian Romanticism. Furthermore, *Il Conciliatore* (1818–1819) emphasised the pragmatic critique of the old norms, literary conventions and traditions that *Il Caffè* had previously inaugurated. To ensure accessibility to a wide audience, the articles were written in an informal and directly communicative prose. Thus, in the view of the Italian Romantics, literature played an important social role and had to be appreciated by a readership that was no longer limited to a highly educated elite.

The Enlightenment-derived conviction that literature had a high moral and social function was developed by the Italian Romantics in terms of a political nationalism that permeated all cultural ideals. The notion of national identity as a civic body to which all citizens, and especially intellectuals, could actively contribute, often led them to political commitment and concrete action against oppressive Austrian institutions, which is not surprising given their view of the civic role of literature. Indeed, after the failed revolts of 1820–1821, many Romantic literary and cultural representatives were subjected to severe government repression and imprisonment.

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Agorni 2021, 80–83), the innovative impulse of the Italian Romantics led to significant changes in the approach to translation in the first half of the nineteenth century. The demand was not just for greater fidelity to the source text, or to reproduce the effect of the original on a new readership. Rather, it was a matter of producing a mediated version through processes that today we might describe as strategies of linguistic and cultural transfer. Romantic translators wanted to offer their readers a picture of the context of the source text by freely using extra-textual apparatuses to help the audience understand the linguistic and cultural diversity to which the source text

[6] Pietro (1728–1797) and Alessandro (1741–1816) Verri founded the magazine *Il Caffè* in Milan, the manifesto of the Lombard Enlightenment. Their motto was "things and not words": in this sense they intended to abandon all classicist tendencies and promote a pragmatic culture, committed to civil battles.

belonged.[7] These apparatuses had the function of helping the reader to discover the novelty produced by "other", i.e. external, cultural systems.

As a result, translation became a vehicle for those who did not have access to foreign language and culture to understand and benefit from foreign works. One of the main consequences of this process was the new visibility of the translator. The painstaking work of linguistic and cultural mediation increasingly expected of them led them to express themselves in an original way in forewords, prefaces and footnotes. Translation thus became the object of in-depth reflection in the Italian peninsula during this historical period: it produced a debate among a variety of cultural agents, not only translators, but also reviewers, critics and editors, and even publishers.

As is generally known, the novel was the main literary genre to enter Italy through translation,[8] but it was not the only one. Another form of narrative prose, that of children's literature, was also introduced through translation. In these years, the need for a specific literature dedicated to children, a literary genre still almost absent in the Italian peninsula, began to be felt. A certain interest in the education of young people had already manifested itself in previous centuries in the form of instructive writing aimed specifically at educators.[9] On the other hand, there was a

[7] A typical example of this strategy is Gaetano Barbieri's (1770?–1853) translations of Walter Scott's novels into Italian. Barbieri translated thirteen novels and, in his early publications, the sheer number, length and detail of his footnotes provide an informed and in-depth comparison of British and Italian culture for a readership that was rapidly expanding into the middle classes. See Agorni (2021).

[8] Asor Rosa (2002) famously stressed the fact that Italy was not the home of the novel, and yet one of the most canonical texts of Italian literature, published at a key historical moment for the birth of an Italian national identity, was precisely a historical novel, Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* (1827; 1842). On the introduction of the novel into the Italian cultural system see Agorni (2021), Irace and Pedullà (2012), Moretti (1998, 2005).

[9] The birth of children's literature in Italy is usually traced back to the work *Lo Cunto de li Cunti or Pentamerone* (published posthumously between 1634 and 1636) by the Neapolitan writer Giambattista Basile (1566–1632). It was the first collection of folk tales in Europe. The eighteenth century is well represented by Carlo Gozzi's *Fiabe teatrali*, "Children's stories for the theatre" (1720–1806), and the following century saw the birth of folklore research with Giuseppe Pitrè (1841–1916) and Vittorio Imbriani (1840–1886). But the real history of Italian children's literature began in the second half of the nineteenth century and went hand in hand with the building of the nation. In this period the role of children's magazines came forward (starting in 1834 with Pietro Thouar's *Giornale dei fanciulli*, "Children's Journal") and the model of the educational, patriotic

lack of narrative works dedicated to children. This lack was perceived by numerous Italian literary agents, such as literary critics and reviewers, who denounced it in the main periodicals.

Translation was, therefore, undertaken, and in particular the works of one of the most successful writers in the English language, Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849). Edgeworth had already achieved considerable fame in Britain as well as in other European countries.[10] Bianca Milesi Mojon (1790–1849), a translator who was very close to Italian Romantic circles, played a key role in the translation of her works.

Bianca Milesi Mojon: A Woman Translator of Educational Literature

Bianca Milesi was born in Milan in 1790 into a wealthy merchant family and was sent to study in a monastery at an early age. When her father died, her mother took her on long journeys abroad to broaden her education (see Souvestre 1854; Alessi 1906).

Returning to Napoleonic Milan in 1814, she opened her literary salon, which became a favourite haunt of romantic circles and anti-Austrian conspirators. In those same years, the *Società delle Giardiniere* (the so-called Gardener-Girls) was founded in Milan. It was a secret society made up of upper-class women who were linked by hostile feelings towards Austria.

In the early 1820s, the Austrians began a harsh repression, with arrests, torture and imprisonment continuing until 1823. Milesi was arrested and later released. She began to get involved in social work, supporting the *Società di Mutuo Insegnamento* (Societies for Mutual Education) that Federico Confalonieri (1785–1846) had founded, with the secret aim of opening schools for poor girls.

and edifying book was *Giannetto* (1837) by Luigi Parravicini (1799–1880), adopted in the pre-unification period in schools in many Italian regions. See Ascenzi and Sani (2017).

[10] As well as giving her a high profile in Great Britain, Maria Edgeworth's ideas spread throughout Europe. As early as 1800, the French edition of her *Practical Education* was published under the title *L'Education pratique* by its first translator, Charles Pictet de Rochemont (1755–1824). In 1829, Louise Swanton Belloc (1796–1881), a friend of Edgeworth, translated *Early Lessons* into French under the title *L'Education familière*, in the same year as Milesi's first Italian translation appeared, published under the title *Prime Lezioni* (1829). See Leproni (2015). On the dissemination of Edgeworth's ideas and works in the original language, see especially Butler and Myers (1999–2003).

Due to constant Austrian control, Milesi moved abroad, living first in Geneva, where she met the economist Jean Charles Léonard Sismonde de Sismondi (1773–1842), who introduced her to the progressive circles of the Swiss city where Edgeworth's educational ideas circulated. Milesi then moved to Paris, London, Amsterdam and Brussels.

She returned to Italy in 1824, moving to Genoa, where she met the doctor Benedetto Mojon (1784–1849), also a patriot, whom she married and by whom she had three children. A friend of Mazzini, she opened a salon in Genoa that hosted revolutionary circles. In 1833 she decided to leave Italy for good and moved with her family to Paris, where she and her husband died of cholera only a few hours apart in 1849.

Milesi's social activity was also reflected in her literary work in a series of publications on pedagogical topics and, above all, in an intense activity of translation from English of Edgeworth's works. Her translations include: *Prime lezioni di M.* Edgeworth (1829) (*Early Lessons* 1801); *Cenni pel miglioramento della prima educazione de' fanciulli, libera traduzione dalla nona edizione inglese*, 1830 (free adaptation of *Practical Education* 1798); *Prime letture pe' fanciulli di tre in quattro anni*, di M. Edgeworth, 1831 (new, expanded edition of *Early Lessons*; other editions of the same work were published in Italian in Modena in 1832 and in Milan 1835); *Inni in prosa per fanciulli*, by A.L. Barbauld, 1832 (*Hymns in prose for children* 1787); *Benedetto: letture pei fanciulli da otto a undici anni*, di M. Edgeworth, 1839[11] (*Frank*, being a sequel of *Early Lessons*); and *Raccolta di dodici novelle*, di M. Edgeworth, 1847 (another expanded edition of *Early Lessons*).

The translation of *Prime Lezioni*[12] in particular has an interesting publishing history. It was first published in 1829 in Milan, containing the short stories "Benedetto", "Le arance", "Il cagnolo fedele", "Enrico e Lucia". This edition was followed by other editions in which other

[11] Extracts were also published in the periodical *Guida dell'educatore*, edited by R. Lambruschini, in July 1836.

[12] The first edition of *Early Lessons* was originally published in 1801, printed in London by Joseph Johnson. Edgeworth continued to work on it, adding and continuing the stories in a series of different editions that ended with the novella "Harry and Lucy" in 1825. The first edition consisted of ten volumes, small enough to be hand-held and printed in large, child-friendly type. But this format must have been expensive and by 1815 *Early Lessons* was reduced to just two volumes, printed smaller to contain all the stories. See The Hockliffe Project, Maria Edgeworth, *Early Lessons*, http://hockliffe.dmu.ac.uk/items/0098.html, last accessed 30 May 2022.

novellas appeared in 1831 as *Prime letture pe' fanciulli di tre in quattro anni* and were then published again in 1832 and in 1835. In 1833–1834 a second revised edition entitled *Prime Lezioni di Maria Edgeworth* in four volumes was published in Milan, in which the number of short stories had increased considerably.

Although the educator Lambruschini in 1836 (Lambruschini 1836, 39–40) wrote that the first translations of Edgeworth's works by Milesi had not met with much success in Italy, the history of publishing gives us a different version, not only in terms of the editions published, but also and above all if we consider the reviews in the main periodicals of the time.

As early as August 1829, the pro-Austrian journal *La Biblioteca Italiana* opened its review of the first translation of *Prime Lezioni* with praise for the original author. Edgeworth was in fact described as follows:

> Mrs. Edgeworth's name is as famous in England as it is among any learned nation, since she has spent the best part of her years in the profound investigation of human nature, in order to establish the basis of a good system of practical education, such as will bring man to that point of possible happiness to which he is called by his pre-eminence over other beings. (Anonymous reviewer, *Biblioteca Italiana* 1829, 271)[13]

Edgeworth's work was appreciated for the "order, clarity and truth" with which the pedagogical notions were conveyed to children in the form of short stories set in simple and familiar contexts.

The reviewer dedicated ample space to the translation, and the translator was praised for her complicated job of "vulgarizing an English book full of familiar and technical words" (ibid., p. 273). However, a list of terms were judged to be too difficult or refined for a volume addressing children, for example the use of the expression *gremiti di foglie*, "full of leaves" where simpler verbs could have been used, such as *ricoperti, sparsi* "covered, scattered", or the use of a literary term such as *fiammeggiare* "to blaze" instead of the more colloquial *ardere* "to burn" (ibid.).

[13] "Chiarissimo nome si è quello della signora Edgeworth sì in Inghilterra, come presso ogni colta nazione, dacchè Ella ha speso la miglior parte dei suoi anni investigando profondamente l'umana natura onde stabilire le basi di un buon sistema di pratica educazione, tale da condurre l'uomo a quel punto di possibile felicità in considerazione cui è chiamato dalla sua preminenza sugli altri esseri". All translations from English are my own, unless otherwise stated.

In addition, some spelling inaccuracies were criticised that seemed to be the result of dialectal variations, at a time when a coherently unified Italian language was not yet established. For example, Milesi used the term *gioco* (in use today) instead of *giuoco*; *panna* (in use today) instead of *fior di latte* or *crema*.

Another review appeared in 1829 in the periodical *Antologia, Giornale di Scienze, Lettere e Arti* (Anthology, Journal of Sciences, Literature and Arts), edited by Gian Pietro Vieusseux (1779–1863), which was definitely more progressive than the *Biblioteca Italiana*. The anonymous critic praised Edgeworth's works according to very similar criteria as in the *Biblioteca Italiana* review:

> What precisely distinguishes them is their great simplicity, which one would hardly believe could be reconciled with the vagueness of their form and the instruction with which they are filled. It seems to me that the author has solved in them one of the most difficult problems of the art of composing. (Anonymous reviewer, *Antologia* 1829: 139)[14]

In spite of the positive reception of the translation, the reviewer immediately brought a few shortcomings to the attention of the readers:

> If one examines her work in detail, one will perhaps observe that some sentences could have been made even clearer, some phrases could have been changed into more appropriate ones, some definitions in the small glossary, placed between the last lesson, could have been left out or improved. And nevertheless, this work will seem to all to be most felicitous. (ibid., 139)[15]

Once again, as in the previous review, the criticism was mainly based on the criterion of children's ability to understand the translation.

[14] "Ma ciò che le distingue propriamente è la loro grande semplicità, che appena si crederebbe potersi conciliare con la vaghezza della loro forma e coll'istruzione di cui sono piene. A me sembra che l'autrice abbia sciolto in esse uno de' più difficili problemi dell'arte di comporre".

[15] "Esaminando minutamente il suo lavoro, si osserverà forse che qualche periodo poteva rendersi ancor più chiaro, qualche frase cangiarsi in altra più propria, qualche definizione del piccolo glossario, frapposto all'ultima lezione, tralasciarsi o migliorarsi. E nondimeno questo lavoro parrà a tutti felicissimo".

In 1834 another Milanese periodical, *Ricoglitore italiano e straniero* (Italian and Foreign Collector), welcomed Milesi's translations of Edgeworth's works. In addition to *Prime Lezioni*, the journal also referred to Milesi's other translations of educational literature, a genre still underrepresented in the Italian literary scene:

> One cannot help but sincerely praise Mrs. Mojon's generous intention in providing Italy with excellent family books, of which we are so lacking to the detriment of good morals. (Anonymous reviewer 1834, 316)[16]

Milesi's translation method was appreciated, and the reviewer's allusion to the translator's efforts to make the text more effective is rather remarkable. No explicit mention was made of the intended audience of children, but it seems evident that the reference to the "quality" of this literary genre was meant in terms of adequacy[17] with respect to the purpose of the text and its target audience. On this basis, all the translator's interventions were considered adequate:

> The translations of the works listed here are carried out with fidelity, candour of style and propriety of language; nor do they lack that array of corrections, word declarations and changes to the text that the quality of such works requires. (*Ricoglitore*, 316)[18]

In 1834 the *Biblioteca Italiana* published a new review of the second edition of the *Prime Lezioni*.[19] The reviewer referred to the positive reception of the first edition in 1829 and congratulated the translator

[16] "Non si può a meno che lodare sinceramente la generosa intenzione che la signora Mojon si è proposta a sé stessa di venir fornendo l'Italia di ottimi libri di famiglia dei quali tanto difettiamo a scapito della buona morale".

[17] According to Gideon Toury translators normally operate between the two poles represented by the notions of adequacy, or "adherence to source norms" (Toury 1995, 56), and acceptability, or adherence to target language norms.

[18] "Le traduzioni delle opere qui enunciate sono eseguite con fedeltà, candore di stile e proprietà di lingua; né vi manca quel corredo di rettificazioni, dichiarazioni di parola, modificazione del testo che richiedeva la qualità di siffatti lavori".

[19] *Biblioteca Italiana* (1834, 383–384). The translator, "having obtained many corrections from learned persons benevolent to her, has reformed the translation of the part of this work already printed", "ottenute molte correzioni da dotte persone a lei benevole, ha riformata la traduzione della parte di quest'opera già stampata", p. 384.

because she had collaborated with the reviewers by taking most of their suggestions on board.

Thus, the reviews published in the main periodicals of the time, to which we must add some minor ones, such as those that appeared in *L'Eco, giornale di scienze, lettere, arti, moda e teatri* (The Echo, Journal of Sciences, Literature, Fashion and Theatre)[20] and the *Gazzetta Privilegiata di Milano* (The Privileged Gazette of Milan),[21] are evidence of the considerable success of Milesi's translation. The basis for this is certainly a deficiency in the target cultural system, as theorised by translation scholars such as Gideon Toury and especially Even-Zohar (1979, 1990) in his polysystemic approach. They saw translation as the primary method for filling those gaps in the target cultural systems that occur especially in times of transition and crisis, when the traditional forms and models of a given source system are perceived as obsolete. Even-Zohar viewed translation as a primary means of cultural development, not only in the field of literature, but also in a broader socio-cultural sense. The fundamental function of translation phenomena is particularly evident in times of transition and crisis, when the traditional forms and models of a given cultural system (e.g. a given national literature) are perceived as obsolete. In this case, translation activities make it possible to rapidly import new models from outside, i.e. from foreign literary systems. New literary genres, or innovations in terms of content, are introduced, with topics and themes that have never been dealt with in the culture of origin. Once these elements are imported into the receiving system through translation, they become models that eventually influence the native production, often leading to original results. Thus, translations introduce innovations in terms of form, i.e. new literary genres, or content, that is topics and themes never dealt with before by the native culture. However, polysystem theory helps us to understand not only what is translated, i.e. which works are imported from abroad into the target cultural system through translation, but also how they are translated, i.e. which strategies are adopted that are more or less close to the original text. In Venuti's terms, as we have seen, these strategies can be defined as domesticating vs. foreignizing.

[20] Vol. 2, 1829, pp. 582–583.

[21] No. 185, luglio 1833, p. 734.

As has been anticipated, in the first decades of the 1800s in Italy, as in most European countries, a Romantic foreignizing approach to translation had emerged. However, in these very years, the Italian Romantics were producing an innovative approach that combined a strong fidelity to the source text with a concern for making the translation accessible to an expanding Italian readership. The social role of literature was still of the utmost importance in this view, and cultural agents such as authors, translators, literary critics, reviewers and even publishers, were striving to maintain a difficult balance between concerns as diverse as reader accessibility and fidelity to the source text.

Given these considerations, a question arises: How can Bianca Milesi's translation of *Prime Lezioni* be placed on a continuum from strategies of naturalisation to those of foreignization?

Prime Lezioni: Translation or Adaptation?

Fernández Rodríguez (2014) has argued that Milesi's version of *Prime Lezioni*, and particularly of the short story *Benedetto*, has to be considered as an adaptation rather than a translation. She based her argument on the theoretical assumptions of the polysystem theory developed by Even-Zohar, Toury (1995) and Zohar Shavit (1981) for the specific nature of children's literature.

In order to support her hypothesis Fernández Rodríguez cites the review of the second edition of *Prime Lezioni* 1833–1834 which was published in the *Indicatore* in 1835 (440–446). Here, the reviewer warned readers that they would not find a "word for word, sentence for sentence"[22] (ibid., 445) translation, but rather pointed out that the translator had acted to mediate in all those cases in which the two cultural systems, Italian and English, diverged. As the critic put it: "Milesi understood very well how an infinity of things were infinitely proper to the English, and she omitted or changed them, substituting ours"[23] (ibid., 445).

Fernández Rodríguez goes into the details of most of the translator's interventions in the short story "Benedetto" and claims that the

[22] "parola per parola, frase per frase", ibid., 445.

[23] "Ben comprese la Milesi come un'infinità di cose fossero infinitamente proprie degli Inglesi, e le ommise o mutò, sostituendovi delle nostre", ibid., 445.

consequence of this strategy is to deprive the target reader of cultural information which deserves special attention.

The most important mark of Milesi's translation approach was obviously her adaptation strategy to Italian culture. The translator changed all proper names and replaced them with Italian ones. Thus, the protagonist's name "Frank" in Italian becomes "Benedetto", which elicited a positive comment from Edgeworth herself, who, in a letter to her Italian translator, congratulated her on the appropriate choice of the protagonist's name and on the fluidity of the translation.[24] Units of measurement were adapted, "miles" became *miglia* and there were further historical adaptations: for example, Cromwell and the English civil wars were rendered as the Italian independence wars or *guerre di Indipendenza*. Geographical, historical and cultural references to England were replaced by those to the region of Lombardy, where the city of Milan is located, as in the following example, where Edgeworth inserted a long passage in the short story in which English historical events were mentioned:

> The time of Julius Cesar's landing at Deal was inquired into, and, to please Mary, he and the emperor Augustus Caesar were permitted to see Queen Boadicea, though, as Frank observed, this was absolutely impossible in reality, because Queen Boadicea did not live till eighteen years afterwards. They went to their little histories of England, France, and Scotland, and found all the kings and queens, and remarkable people, who live at the same time; and they amused themselves by making parties for these personages, and inventing conversations for them. (Edgeworth, 1822, in Fernández Rodríguez 2014, 53)

Milesi related all events to Roman history and geographical references to the region of Lombardy:

[24] "Frank me paraît un plus agréable personnage en italien qu en anglais. Et (autant qu'en peut juger une étrangère) il parle votre langue avec tant de grâce et de poésie, que je ne puis m'empêcher de croire qu'elle est sa langue maternelle. J'ajouterai que son nom italien Benedetto promet davantage est plus conciliant, plus béni (pardonnez ce mauvais jeu de mot) que celui de Franck, qu'il portait en Angleterre" in Souvestre (1854, 67). "Frank seems to me a more agreeable character in Italian than in English. And (as far as a foreigner can judge) he speaks your language so gracefully and poetically, that I cannot help believing it to be his mother tongue. I may add that his Italian name Benedetto promises more is more conciliatory, more blessed (pardon the pun) than that of Frank, which he bore in England".

> This observation led to a speech, which ended any visit between the queens and the duchess of Italy, and between the kings and the consuls of Rome. The time when the consuls Gneo Cordelio Scipione and Marco Marcello conquered Insubria and took to Milan the Roman domination in 221 AD was inquired into. They mentioned the good progress of the Herculean thermal spas in Milan, now called Saint Lawrence Columns. Then they talked about various stories of the dukedom of Milan, the Republic of Venice, the Republic of Florence, of Pisa; of Genoa; and concluded with the dukes, the duchesses, the doges, the gonfalonieri and the most notable people who lived at that time, and they were pleased to recite the part of each of the characters, inventing their dialogues. (Edgeworth in Milesi 1839, 125, translated by Fernández Rodríguez 2014, 53)

Finally, the translator included additional information, in some cases even providing it with patriotic overtones, as in the following example:

> The conversation next turned upon one of those old towers which are called Cesar's towers, and various facts of history were mentioned. (Edgeworth, 1822, in Fernández Rodríguez 2014, 56)

The conversation turned to the scarcity of Roman monuments in Lombardy although

> Milan has long been the seat of Emperors. Blame for the almost total destruction was placed on the fact that this plain was the first place where the blind fury of the barbaric hordes who progressively flooded Italy was vented. (Edgeworth in Milesi 1839: 145–146, translated by Fernández Rodríguez 2014, 57)[25]

In her conclusion, Fernández Rodríguez points out that the main characteristics of Edgeworth's pedagogical writing are a rather conventional literary style, full of learned references, and that these characteristics were maintained in the translations into French and Spanish (Fernández

[25] "Il discorso versò alla scarsezza dei monumenti romani che si rivengono in Lombardia, quantunque Milano sia pure stata lungo tempo sede degli imperatori. Ne accagionavano della distruzione quasi totale l'essere state queste pianure il primo campo sul quale s'era sfogata la cieca rabbia delle orde barbariche, le quali inondarono successivamente la povera Italia!"

Rodríguez 2014, 57).[26] According to this scholar, the Italian translation instead favoured adaptation strategies reminiscent of a *belles infidèles* approach.[27] This term refers to the tradition of an "unfaithful" and highly adaptive method of translation that was widespread in France from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. This approach, however, was strongly opposed by the circle of Italian Romantics to which Milesi belonged.

What is most striking in Fernández Rodríguez's analysis is her insistence on highlighting a "deficiency" in the translation that would appear to have lost the cultural values of the original text in its adaptation to the target culture. This is an assessment that disregards the translator's interventions in the direction of a complex cultural mediation, which imply considerable expertise in the source culture and an equally strong expertise in the target culture. The voice of the translator herself could possibly help us find a more historically sensitive interpretation.

The Translator's Voice

The translator's voice was made clear on two main occasions in *Prime Lezioni*. Milesi opened the 1833–1834 edition with a short preface, in which she quoted part of the text of the first review of the *Biblioteca Italiana* of 1829, and illustrated the method she had used in her translation, explaining that she did not always stick to the original text, but deviated from it:

> when I thought it appropriate both to conform some scientific explanation to the most recent discoveries… and to substitute nomenclatures or descriptions of places or customs of England, and quotations from English authors and books, with others proper to the geography or customs or literature of Italy, in order to better serve the understanding of Italian children, and to better assist their education. (Edgeworth in Milesi, 1833–1834, xi–xii)[28]

[26] See also Fernández Rodríguez (2008, 2010).

[27] See Lefevere (1992, 35).

[28] "quando ciò ho creduto opportuno sia per conformare qualche scientifica spiegazione alle più recenti scoperte… sia sostituendo a nomenclature o descrizioni di luoghi o di usi dell'Inghilterra, ed a citazioni d'autori e di libri inglesi, altre proprie della geografia o de' costumi o della letteratura d'Italia, per secondar meglio l'intelligenza de' fanciulli italiani, e meglio giovare alla loro istruzione".

Moreover, the translator claimed that she had modified the original text to better grasp its intent, applying it to improve Italian education (ibid., xii), and that she had decided not to mention her interventions in the footnotes so as not to cause "obstacles to the reading comprehension of the child, who would not be able to understand them, and to whom the explanation would be inappropriate" (ibid., xii–xiii).

Milesi was thus aware of the new approach to translation advocated by the Romantics. Yet she decided to proceed differently, intervening and adapting the text to the needs of the specific readership the text was intended for, namely Italian children. Indeed, her translation project can be defined as a linguistic as well as a political project, since it links her process of linguistic mediation to her desire to promote a sense of national identity, in a true Romantic political orientation. Milesi's intention was clear in her own words:

> This Italian translation of *Prime Lezioni* will serve, I hope, to facilitate the understanding of [our?] domestic vocabulary, and thus to increasingly strengthen those ties that bind every province of Italy to a common homeland. (ibid., xv)[29]

Milesi's awareness of the purpose of her translation and its intended readers, far from recalling the *belles infidèles* translation approach, appears extremely innovative. The aim of her work was the education of Italian children, so she had adapted the source text to the specific needs of a well-identified readership. This readership was so well identified that it deserved a paratextual section specifically dedicated to its members. The second edition of *Prime Lezioni* introduced a new section in which the translator spoke directly to her readers, in a simple and colloquial language suitable for the understanding of a young audience:

> My dear children, I don't think you know what a vocabulary is, so I will explain it to you. A vocabulary is the same as a dictionary, and there will be no one among you who has not seen a Latin or Italian dictionary. Here, on the other hand, there are no foreign names, but they are all Italian, which perhaps you do not yet know, or which you have heard mentioned

[29] "Questa traduzione italiana delle *Prime Lezioni* servirà, io spero, ad agevolare la cognizione del vocabolario domestico, e a fortificare così sempre più que' vincoli che legano ogni provincia d'Italia ad una patria comune" (Edgeworth, *Prime Lezioni*, 1833–1834, xv).

> without really understanding their meaning. My vocabulary, then, is very small: it contains only a few explanations of words and things such as dad, mom, would give you if they were always there for you when you read. (ibid., vol 2, 14)[30]

Here, the translator seems to enhance the intention of the original author, i.e. Edgeworth's pedagogical project, by allowing the translated text to be read independently by its recipients, i.e. the children to whom it is addressed. The readers of the translation are specifically identified, and the language has been adapted to their needs and level of understanding.

Conclusion

Milesi's work of linguistic and cultural mediation was innovative and modern in an Italy not yet politically unified, where a new Romantic and foreignizing ideology towards translation had already emerged. This ideology had strong social implications and favoured the introduction of a new literary genre of educational literature for children.

The translation of this new genre was judged according to modern criteria: the priority was to maintain the pedagogical function of the source text, and this meant a painstaking linguistic and cultural adaptation, which was not driven by aesthetic concerns, as in the tradition of *belles infidèles*, but rather by the need to make the text accessible to a specific readership, that is children. The reviews of the period make clear the parameters by which the critics judged Milesi's work, appreciating the translator's ability to maintain the main pedagogical purpose of the original text through a comprehensive process of cultural adaptation.

Thus, being "faithful" to the source text did not imply a strict adherence to content or form, but rather a careful preservation of those features that had made the original English text suitable for the children it addressed. This is the reason why the first reviewer of the *Biblioteca Italiana* in 1829 had suggested the terms that the Italian translator should

[30] "Miei cari ragazzi, io credo che non sappiate che cosa sia un vocabolario; perciò ve lo spiegherò. Un vocabolario è lo stesso che un dizionario, nè vi sarà qualcuno di voi che non abbia visto un dizionario o latino o italiano. Qui per altro non vi sono nomi stranieri, ma sono italiani, che forse voi non conoscete ancora, o che avete intesi dire senza capirne bene il significato. Il mio vocabolario poi è piccolino: non contiene che poche spiegazioni di parole e di cose quali veli darebbe il babbo, mamma, se fossero sempre presenti quando leggete" (Edgeworth, *Prime Lezioni*, 1833–1834, vol. 2, p. 14).

avoid in order not to run the risk of producing a translation too difficult for children to read. The translator had cooperated by accepting those suggestions and had gone even further by addressing her target readers directly in the preface to her vocabulary.

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CHAPTER 11

Trans-Adriatic Enlightenments: Maria Petrettini's Italian Translation of the Turkish Embassy Letters

Elisavet Papalexopoulou

Introduction

There is a lot to say about the Corfiot aristocrat Maria Petrettini (1772–1851). Her life spanned two centuries and five different empires. She could speak and write Venetian, Tuscan, Modern Greek, English, French and Spanish. She translated from Latin, Ancient Greek and English. She refused to follow the norms of her time on female virtue. She divorced twice, to the detriment of her parents and brother. She was a businesswoman who expanded the family fortune in precarious times. She tried to build a female philosophical and literary canon by researching and writing on women scholars of the past. She published three books and two translations and had many more unpublished works in her drawer. She was celebrated among her contemporaries. In the correspondence of the learned people of her circle, there was always a line or two about

E. Papalexopoulou (✉)
European University Institute, Florence, Italy
e-mail: Elisavet.Papalexopoulou@eui.eu

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her and her endeavours. She strove for a public image. She wanted to be someone like Lady Mary Montagu, the English author she translated; like Cassandra Fedele, the Renaissance scholar whose biography she wrote; like her cousin Isabella Teotochi-Albrizzi, whose transnational salon she frequented. She wanted to be a scholar and a public intellectual. She succeeded. People, men and women of her time looked at her and her writings for inspiration.

She also failed. She has not been remembered, and her words have not been deemed important or representative enough to endure the "test of time".[1] In this chapter, I will examine Maria Petrettini's life and writings with a focus on her translation of Lady Mary Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*. But I will also try to trace the anatomy of this success and this failure. They are, I will argue, of course connected with her being a woman, but also because Maria Petrettini was posthumously caught between what was understood as the West and the East, Italy and Greece. When telling her story, we are at a vantage point whence we can view Italy and Venice not as peripheries but as centres of intellectual activity for both men and women. We cannot tell her story without exploring the amalgam of Enlightenment questions and Romantic answers that characterized her intellectual environment. We cannot tell her story if we do not understand the Adriatic as a common space, its unity not yet affected by the fall of the Serenissima. We cannot tell her story if we do not account for her origins in the Ionian Islands, and her experiences in the borderland between three empires.

Maria Anastasia Petrettini was born to Alessandro Petrettini and Cremesina Pieri in 1772. The Petrettini were one of the first entries of the Corfiot *Libro d' Oro*—the list of aristocratic families of the island—and had been part of Corfu's governing council for centuries (Schroder 1831). They moved to Corfu in the fourteenth century, were given a large barony on the island, and then were converted to Orthodox Christianity in the beginning of the sixteenth century (Pantazi 2014). This distinct environment of peripheral Venetian aristocracy is where Maria Petrettini grew up. We do not know much about her childhood, but we can infer she was educated as was common for women of her status.

On the Ionian Islands of the late eighteenth century, children of aristocratic families had priests (either Orthodox or Catholic) assigned as their

[1] In Italian there is only a Phd dissertation about Maria Anastasia Petrettini and in Greek an article (Nardo 2013; Nikokavoura 1967).

teachers. In some cases, girls were also allowed to learn the basic reading and writing skills in both Greek and Italian. Since there were no institutes of higher education on the islands, customarily, young men would travel to Italy, commonly Venice or Padua, in order to attend University. Petrettini, however, would have to remain in Corfu and follow the fate of young women even though she longed for education herself.

The fate of young women was marriage and in 1793 she married Zacharria Rodostamo, also a member of the Corfiot aristocracy and many years her senior, only to be separated two years later.[2] In 1797, her brother and their cousin, Mario Pieri who had been in Venice studying, fled because of the revolution that would signify the fall of the Venetian Republic and moved back to Corfu. From Pieri's diaries, we learn about the time he and Maria Petrettini spent reading Latin, French and Ancient Greek texts they considered to be crucial for their cultivation and their self-fashioning as scholars (Pieri and Masini 2003). They had already both developed the ambition to become important, well-read and well known in the Italian literati circles. Their life and studies were upset when in June of that year the Ionian Islands were occupied by the Napoleonic army. Maria's brother, Spiridione Petrettini, was imprisoned as a traitor, and Maria had to retreat to the countryside and Mario Pieri, who sympathized with the French revolutionary ideas and was of lower social status, remained in the city of Corfu. The events surrounding them were world changing. After hundreds of years enveloped in the stability of the Venetian Republic, the Ionian Islands would be taken from the French Empire, to the Russian and then the British within the space of a few decades.[3]

[2] Documentazione sul matrimonio di Maria Petrettini con Zaccaria Rodostamo, Corfu State Archive, Megali Protopapades (Great Head priests), Volume 76, 426 r.

[3] The turbulent story of Corfu in the first decades of the nineteenth century is as follows: In 1797 the island passed to the Napoleonice army but the French were evicted by a Russo-Ottoman Army. Between 1800 and 1807 the Russians and the Ottomans allowed a semi-autonomous *Septinsular Republic,* but in 1807 with the *Tilsit Treaty* the Ionian Islands became part of the French Empire again. In 1815 with the *Treaty of Paris,* the Islands were named "United States of the Ionian Islands" and remained under British protection until 1862 when they were united with the Greek state. For an overview of this history see Karapidakis (2003).

"A Race of Most Secret Companions"

In this uncertain framework, Petrettini, with the help of Pieri, intensified her efforts to become part of the Italian literary and philosophical circles. Her correspondence at that time, though dotted with worries about the disruption the war was causing in her exchanges, mostly concerned her readings and news about friends on both sides of the Adriatic. When Pieri introduced Petrettini through a letter to Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730–1808), the Paduan professor of Ancient Greek, her connections with the Venetian literary community deepened (Chiancone 2012). She was to become what Cesarotti called a member "of the race of the most secret companions", one of the Greco-Italian intellectuals that frequented Isabella Teotochi-Albrizzi's salon and enjoyed Cesarotti's mentorship.[4]

Cesarotti was a close friend of Giustina Michiel Renier (1755–1832), the first translator of Shakespeare into Italian, and seems to have been urging both her and Petrettini to write and publish.[5] He did the same for Mario Pieri, Ugo Foscolo and other ambitious young scholars, many of them Ionians that were in touch with him. In a similar position to Cesarotti was Isabella Teotochi-Albrizzi (1763–1863) whom Byron had called the "Venetian Madame de Stael" (Dalton 2014, 209). Teotochi-Albrizzi held an esteemed position in the Venetian aristocratic and literary circles and acted as the mentor for many Greco-Italian or Italian scholars.[6] Although she has been studied as the quintessential post-Venetian *saloniera (salonnière)*, there is another dimension to her salon. The people who frequented it, like Ioannis Kapodistrias, later to become the first governor of Greece, Andreas Mustoxidis and other philhellenes from the Ionian Islands, had caused the Austrian secret police enough suspicion to actually follow her (Manin 1851, 189). This does not necessarily mean that the salon was a hub of covert political action, since the Austrian secret police was overly suspicious, but it does point to the fact that some of the people in Teotochi-Albrizzi's salon were prone to discuss revolutionary politics. In this entourage at times, one could find well-known philhellenes like Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron and

[4] Letter from Mario Pieri to Melchiorre Cesarotti, Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Minute di lettere, Mss. 3546, 131, 132, 133.

[5] On Giustina Michiel Renier see Dalton (2009).

[6] On Isabella Teotochi-Albrizzi and her work see Dalton (2006, 2014).

self-exiled Wallachian aristocrats who would play an important role in the Greek Revolution, like Alexandros Mavrokordatos.

All these people formed an atypical intellectual environment in the sense that they had a *sui generis* approach towards the debates of their time. We do not have access to their discussions about politics or revolution, but we know some of their views on literature and philosophy that allow us to understand how ideas were being shaped at their time and place. The way they viewed translation is indicative: they did not engage in the controversy between classicism and Romanticism that was raging in Europe. Instead, they kept the quest for the classicist impeccable form, while keeping at heart Romanticism ideas, and asking Enlightenment questions.

Classicists viewed translation as a tool for people who were already familiar with the original text, as a way to learn and practice a language. Yet, under the influence of Romantic ideals for standardization of national languages and construction of literary canons, others were looking into translations as vehicles for enriching the target language. This many times meant the "foreignization" of the original documents in a way that would make them more relatable and approachable for a bigger audience. In a sense, translating texts was the answer to a question that had been posed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries under the influence of Enlightenment motivations on the education of people. Reading texts that belonged to different cultures was a way to improve the individual and, in consequence, human societies. In the Venetian circles to which Petrettini would eventually belong, the discrepancy between the classicist perfection and the Romantic vulgarized version was very small. The professed goal of translation was to acquaint the public with the works of a scholar, but there was an effort in keeping as close to the original as possible marrying the two approaches that had in the past seemed to be irreconcilable (Agorni 2021, 9–11).

This non-combative view of intellectual debates was representative of that place and time. For example, the Ancients versus Moderns debate was contextualized very differently in a time and place that was being reimagined based on a Roman past. In fact, it is in the south of Europe that we can clearly see the interdependencies between what have been so far considered clearly delineated intellectual trends. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, much later than the usual periodization of what is called "the Enlightenment" we encounter 'Enlightenment projects' that are affected by Romanticism. In the case of Petrettini's

circle, we can see this clearly as a trans-Adriatic trend. It was essentially a brand of ideas that permeated the common world of the Adriatic and comprised Romanticism answers to Enlightenment questions (Zanou 2018, 200–204).

In Corfu, far away from the group in which she was aspiring to become a member, Petrettini was planning her own intellectual project. She was in thrall of Enlightenment ideas that proposed manners to free oneself from the shackles of immaturity and ignorance.[7] At the same time, and although patriotic ideals did not seem to move her, she was influenced by the role the construction of a canon played in the formation of the intentional communities called "nations". She resolved to build such a community for Italian women, and she planned to create a female literary history and canon. The first book she would publish opened up with the phrase "I wholeheartedly wanted a collection of the lives of illustrious women" and this she worked very hard to do (Petrettini 1814, 2).

The decision to build an intellectual project for the dissemination of Enlightenment ideas to Italian women was so fundamental that permeated her entirely scholarly life and guided all of her choices on what to publish and translate. Petrettini never engaged publicly in debates about women's position in society, but she took up a type of covert literary activism by inventing and constructing a tradition of female writers. This was not uncommon for women authors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In their classic text *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar have extended Freud's and Bloom's ideas about the anxiety of authors to propose female writers of the nineteenth century suffered from an anxiety induced by the visible lack of predecessors.[8] In the case of Petrettini, and many others, the effort to uncover and reinstate women scholars can be viewed as a counter to this, but I would propose that there is another layer to this effort. It was not only a single woman's endeavour to find her footings in the past, but also, inspired by the spirit of their age, women like Petrettini saw an opportunity to fashion a female community

[7] Petrettini's admiration of Enlightenment ideas is fully evident in a pamphlet about female education published by her nephew posthumously (Petrettini 1856).

[8] This idea although it has been criticized and extended in many ways since the time it was published can be helpful in at least partially circumscribing how women writers understood their trade. For an overview of the critique, especially concerning race see Gilbert (2009, 127–148).

by gleaning a canon, much like it was done by patriots trying to fashion national communities at the same time.

It took Petrettini a while to put her plan in motion because in 1803 she was pressured by her mother and brother into yet another marriage. This time to Marcantonio Marmora, an old Corfiot aristocrat.[9] The marriage did not hinder her relationship and correspondence with Pieri and his friends in Italy. To the contrary, in the spring of 1803, pretexting health problems, she was finally allowed to travel to Italy, as she had longed, and socialize in person with her group of post-Venetian intellectuals. In 1808 she divorced once more and started living in Venice for longer periods. When in Italy, she introduced herself as a widow and lived with Mario Pieri while she was engaging with research and writing.

Since at the forefront of her ambition as a scholar was the establishment of a literary history for Venetian women, she started investigating the lives of those she thought to be important: the Venetian painter Rosalba Carriera (1673–1757), the philosopher Elena Cornaro Piscopia (1646–1684) and the Renaissance scholar Cassandra Fedele (1465–1558). On these she wrote but unfortunately, only *La Vita di Cassandra Fedele* was published in 1814 (Petrettini 1814). In fact, many of Petrettini's works remained unpublished, even though according to her eulogy she had completed them (Arrigoni 1851). Of the published ones we will turn now our attention to an unusual choice she made of translating the work of an eighteenth century English woman who followed the deist religion.

The Translation of the *Turkish Embassy Letters*

The work she chose was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), an epistolary travel novel that had been published posthumously narrating the travels of Mary Montagu through Europe and her stay in Constantinople. Its witty, lively writing style and the fresh view it afforded on the so-called Orient had made it a success. Montagu's bright commentary on theology and religious practice, her acute political observations and her considerations on gender proved to be as compelling as her own public persona. Montagu was a woman who had ignored social constraints, had educated herself in the classics from a young age and had eloped with a man her father did not approve. She had then followed

[9] Permesso di matrimonio del nob. sig. Marcantonio Marmora con Maria Petretin, Corfu State Archive: Mitropolites, Volume 10, Book I, cc. 162 v.–163 r.

him in a difficult trip to Turkey with two infants, had brought back with her the variolation for smallpox, had publicly defended it against sceptics and had moved to Italy without her husband. For all this she was equally vilified and adored in her time and for centuries after that, earning the title her biographer Isabel Grundy gave her as a “Comet of the Enlightenment” (Grundy 1999).

By the time Petrettini decided to translate the *Turkish Embassy Letters* in Italian (*Lettere di lady Maria Wortley Montague*), almost a century after its original publication, there were more than ten reprints in English and many more in French and German. Essentially, the educated audience she was targeting already had access to the book. In addition, Petrettini had no financial reasons to work as a translator, and already had published original work, which meant she had no need of a translation to ease her entrance to the Veneto-Italian literary world. Since her choice to work on the *Turkish Embassy Letters* cannot be attributed to practical considerations, we can infer she understood the work of an English woman to be useful and representative of her own female Enlightenment project. This was true to such a degree that unlike all her previous choices, Petrettini disregarded her friends’ advice about which book to choose. She had been urged to translate Madame de Staël’s *Corinne ou l’Italie*, but instead she opted for Montagu’s book which she had discovered herself through her readings of Francesco Algarotti’s work. Thus, translating Montagu was a personal statement Petrettini made to her intellectual friends and the Italian public.

If we also consider how the *Turkish Embassy Letters* posed a set of problems for its translator, we can see how Petrettini’s choice was not an easy one. The very first and obvious problem for her was that her English was not good enough. A letter from the poet Ipolito Pindemonte to Pieri in 1816 highlights the fact that, as was common at the time, Petrettini used this translation in order to learn English and was in no way proficient in the language (Montuori 1863, 95). Even harsher than that, Lord Byron who was a great fan of Mary Montagu, referred to this effort in his commonly misogynistic manner. The “Venetian lady, learned and somewhat stricken in years”, wrote Byron to his publisher, John Murray, on December 3, 1817, has “in her intervals of love and devotion taken upon her to translate the letters and write the life of lady M[ar]y W[ortle]y Montagu” despite “firstly ignorance of English -and secondly- a total dearth of information on the subject of her projected biography” (Byron 1976, 275–76). Byron’s vitriolic comments possibly

stem from some kind of rivalry to anyone working on Montagu, because he was at that time very much involved in retrieving and promoting some of her forgotten writings (Hegele 2011), but also highlight how Petrettini was taking a risk on her scholarly reputation by trying her hand on a subject and a language that were not part of her expertise.

This was not the only risk though. There were reasons why a popular book like the *Turkish Embassy Letters* had not been translated into Italian for over a century. One was the general reluctance to translate from other European languages into Italian. For the greatest part of the eighteenth century, the classicist conception of a literary canon did not allow for anything other than Latin and Ancient Greek texts. Translations were considered to be an inferior, diluted type of text and literature should comprise original works (Calvani 2014, 82). It was only in the beginning of the nineteenth century that works from French or English began to be translated into Italian. But in the case of Montagu and her *Turkish Embassy Letters* there was more than just qualms about translating from vernaculars that had stalled its publication in Italian. It was also the writer's unconventional life and religious beliefs that made her a controversial subject of scholarly attention in Italian society.

It is because of the controversy the persona of Mary Montagu would generate that her work was chosen by Petrettini, but still the translator was very careful to tone down the idiosyncrasies of the original text to a degree that would be acceptable for the Italian public. A big part of the finished text, more than one third of it, was the biography of Montagu as it had been written by James Dallaway in the 1803 edition of the Letters, titled *Memoirs of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*.[10] In a similar fashion, most of the introduction written by Petrettini was a presentation of Montagu, an effort to explain her personality and prove her worth as an intellectual. Petrettini dedicated her introduction to vindicating Mary Montagu on more than one account. After explaining how the text is an easy, pleasurable and harmless read for women, she had the more difficult task to address the issue of Montagu's stance against the Catholic religion which did not seem as harmless. It is true, admitted Petrettini, that Montagu's conceptions about religion as superstition sometimes touched the "bitter borders of satire", but this was something the reader could forgive because "who does not know how difficult it is for a sensitive

[10] The biography appeared for the first time in the 1803 English edition, but Petrettini mentions in her introduction that she found it in the 1811 reprint.

and generous soul, when she is about to unmask and repress prejudice, to contain itself" (Montagu 1838, 5). Battling with superstition, says Petrettini, Montagu might have been carried away into exaggerating her anticlericalism, but this was a forgivable sign of a truly enlightened spirit.

That said in the introduction, and although Petrettini tried to keep as close to the original throughout the text itself, she felt compelled to omit whole passages. For example, the following one from Letter IV where Montagu describes to her friend Lady Rich her visit to a Jesuit church in Cologne and its abundance of relics: "I will not imitate the common style of travelers so far, as to give you a list of them, being persuaded that you have no manner of curiosity for the titles given to jaw bones and bits of worm – eaten wood" (Montagu 1838, 15). Similar passages are left out from letters V and XII where Montagu "could not forbear laughing at their shewing me a wooden head of our Saviour, which, they assured me, spoke, during the siege of Vienna" (Montagu 1763, 1:54). These omissions tell us how even though Petrettini defended Montagu's attitude on religion in the introduction and was publishing her translation in Corfu, a place where the dominant religion was Orthodox Christian, she was still aware of the impact and possibly the danger involved in badmouthing the Catholic church. They also speak once again on the need she felt to introduce Montagu to the Italian public.

Mary Montagu's relationship with religion was not the only point of contention. Petrettini also had to deal with the fact that she was considered a woman of disputable moralities. Montagu had been a celebrity recognized but also caricatured and defamed by many. In her lifetime, there had been a lot of talk about her relationship with the poet Alexander Pope and their fight, but also about her decision to leave her husband and pursue a life in rural Italy.[11] The scandal related to her quarrels with Alexander Pope had such powerful impact that it resonated through an entire century and Petrettini felt it was imperative to dispel the bad publicity that had gathered around Montagu because of it. She had a clear opinion: Pope had dishonourably tried to bring down "that idol to which he first had raised altars" and his efforts in no way had diminished Montagu's value as a thinker and scholar (Montagu 1838, 5).

To support her position on this Petrettini quoted two popular Italian men of letters: Francesco Algarotti (1712–1764) and Giuseppe Baretti

[11] For an indication of the hatred Montagu faced see Donato (2006).

(1719–1789), both of whom she presented as connoisseurs of the English language and literature. In an admirable feat of intertextual continuity, she quoted Algarotti, who quoted Pope, who quoted Virgil comparing Montagu to Pentesilia: "And the warioress, a virgin, dares to attack men" (Bellatrix audetque viris concurrere virgo). This uninterrupted line of important male thinkers culminating in presenting Montagu as a fighter cleverly rebranded accusations of virility against the writer as a virtue instead of a vice. The arguments against female writers were circular and paradoxical: women could not be original writers, so if one was a writer, she was not truly a woman.[12] In this case, Petrettini had turned the paradox on its head: being manly was a virtue, a sign that Montagu, and the women like her, were an elevated type of human. It was along these lines that she was trying to fortify the translation with the legitimacy of two recognized Italian writers. On the one hand, she quoted men to show she could be as worthy as them and, on the other, she was reinforcing a possible pool of quotable texts from women.

The effort Petrettini made in proving she had the expertise to translate Montagu's book, the text and its writer were worth it and the decades she spent in writing and editing it makes us understand that it had great significance both for herself personally and her intellectual project. For one, there were some similarities between the two women that probably made Petrettini identify with Mary Wortley Montagu. They had both educated themselves and lived the unconventional lives of a female scholar. They had both abandoned their unhappy marriages and chosen to live in Italy. And, although Petrettini in no way enjoyed the celebrity status Lady Montagu had, she was probably aware of how fragile a reputation a woman like her had.

These similarities between the two women may have partly guided Petrettini in her choice, but it is clear there were other reasons as well. Montagu with the breadth of her self-education, her mental curiosity, her distrust against prejudice and her appetite for adventurous travels embodied female Enlightenment ideas for Petrettini. She was one to imitate, one of those women that she and her Venetian readership could lean upon for inspiration. Petrettini and her cousin, Isabella Teotochi-Albrizzi followed in many ways Montagu's example, even in using her

[12] Women writers and feminists were also sometimes caught in the vicious circle of arguments concerning each gender's natural characteristics. For more on this see Scott (1996).

variolation technique for Teotochi's children or following Montagu's reading lists on English poetry (Nardo 2013, 139). In effect, this is what Petrettini was also proposing to her readership, to follow Mary Wortley Montagu as an example of the *avant la lettre* "new woman".

If Petrettini chose Montagu as an example for a feminine Enlightenment project, there is still more we can glean about her choice of this specific work. There is textual evidence that the translator worked with three different English editions and a French one which means she had in her hands many other letters of hers that could show Montagu's erudition or character, if that was the only goal of her translator. But Petrettini specifically chose the letters that described Montagu's trip to Constantinople and her life there. The *Turkish Embassy Letters,* known for casting the lives of Muslim Ottomans in a new light, were an ideal text for illustrating what "the Orient" could mean in an Enlightenment context. Possibly the most famous of the letters, the one describing the *Hammam*, the communal Turkish bath, as a place of female political and personal freedom, is a vivid example of how Montagu's book has been used as the departure point of analyses on Islamic culture and womanhood. However, the restricted context of the *Hammam* letter does not allow us to fully understand and follow the vibrant narrative of the *Turkish Embassy Letters*. They were not only a record of Islamic life in the Ottoman Empire, but also of the richness in different cultures it encompassed.

Contemporary examination of the *Turkish Embassy Letters* situates them within the discourses of post-colonial studies and it has spurred a lively debate on whether they offer an orientalist gaze or not (Campbell 1994; Aravamudan 1995; Secor 1999; Weitzman 2002; Dadhaboy 2016; Hall et al. 2017). Whichever stance one might take in this debate, Montagu's positionality is clearly that of a British woman who mirrors herself upon the "other" in order to structure her own image. But the "other" is not always the Muslim, in fact very often the "other" is Greek. In the *Turkish Embassy Letters* Montagu follows the steps of early philhellenes in discovering Ancient Greece anew (Koundoura 2004). Using Theocritus and Homer as her guides she looks for the signs of the perseverance of a Greekness she imagines is at the root of everything European. She devotes many letters to looking for and finding Troy, being certain that she recognizes the magnificence of such a historical place (Montagu 1763, 1:154–57). She also feels it is important to judge Modern Greeks in comparison to those she recognizes as their ancestors. As in most cases

of philhellenism, an orientalist discourse runs parallel with that of admiration for the Greeks. Montagu does not doubt the farmers, shepherds and traders she encounters are Greeks following a straight line from their ancestors. But she also reiterates how they are completely oblivious of their great past.

Petrettini, a Greek who had carefully crafted an Italian literary persona, but still signed all her works as “Maria Petrettini, the Corfiot” could not have been unaffected by Montagu’s description of her homeland. In 1838, when the *Letters* were published, the Greek Revolution and the establishment of a Greek state that still did not encompass Petrettini’s island had already taken place. Petrettini seems to have been rather unaffected by the Greek patriotic cause even though there were many people in her circle with overt and covert philhellenic activities. For her, Greece was a “Boeotia”, a backward place with few stimuli. Yet, she understood and felt an affiliation with her own Greekness in a withdrawn literary way. The ideas of Enlightenment that she held dear had their roots in Ancient Greece, and what Montagu had described as a forlorn people who was at the same time in touch and detached from their glorious ancestry were very close to how Petrettini herself regarded them. In this sense, if the *Turkish Embassy Letters* were a way for Petrettini to enforce her project of a female Enlightenment, they were also a way to show the connection this project had with Greece. Petrettini was a person caught in what would become a boundary between Italy and Greece, two countries that were already in the borderland of Europe. This experience guided her choices. Her life and writings were part of a world that was being divided and her ideas were still lingering in this old world while trying to make sense of a new one that ended up being very different than she had imagined. Her female political community was still far away in the future.

Conclusions

How and why was Maria Petrettini forgotten? When and in what way did she slip through the cracks of historiography? These are questions that have been asked in women’s intellectual history almost ad nauseam and although the answer seems to be obvious and related to the material circumstances that guided female lives, I believe there is a lot to gain by examining the nuances of these omissions. In the example of Maria Petrettini, the neglect is so thorough and involves two different national historiographies. In her lifetime she was an integral part of literary and

aristocratic circles both in Corfu and Venice. She was the first person to set up a literary salon in Corfu and one of the first to publish a book in the Corfiot press in 1814. And yet her name does not appear in any of the histories of Greek nineteenth century female scholars, not because she is unknown to Greek historians, but because writing in Italian naturally assigns her to Italian historiography (Denissi 2014). Unfortunately, Petrettini did not find a home in Italian historiography either. Apart from a Phd thesis on her and her brother, Spiridione, she does not figure in any other publications, nor is she present in *Dizionario Biografico Treccani* like other Greco-Italian historical figures of her time.

If we compare her to other nineteenth century women of Greco-Italian origin, we see how Petrettini's writings and activities were not focused on the Greek Revolution and the Italian Risorgimento. She was concerned mostly with her scholarly work and treated war as an inconvenience, not more than a reason for her letters to be delayed and for paper to have steeper prices. Even when the Greek Revolution was waging, even when the battles for the unification of Italy were taking place, even when the world around her was violently changing, Maria Petrettini's correspondence was full of discussions on the importance of this or that writer. Not once did she seem concerned in her personal or public writings with the affairs of any nation state striving to be born. It should then be no surprise that she would be completely omitted from two historiographical traditions whose nineteenth century focus has mostly been about nation state formation.

But if her life and work do not tell us the story of how nations were built, what do they tell us about the time she lived? I believe they tell us the story of the dissolution of empires and the longing of people not for a new world, but for the stability the old one had provided. At the same time, they tell us how people like Maria Petrettini, old aristocrats, who viewed nationalist aspirations as belonging to peasantry could still use the intellectual tools to bring together an intellectual community. Her work on Mary Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* in particular, trespasses the limits national historiographies have set in place and allows her, her audience and us to imagine places and cultures through a different lens. It is the lens of a cosmopolitan, a non-patriot who had been forced to live in a patriotic, revolutionary time.

We can conclude that Petrettini did not fit in narratives of scholarly importance because of her sex, but she also did not fit in narratives of national prowess and bravery because she was uninterested in patriotic

ideas. She chose to live an intellectual life that simply did not engage in this matter. For her the future that had to be built was circumscribed by gender and not nation. This is why her story was left out, but it is also why her story is valuable in understanding the world she lived in. A world that imagined a future of freedom and independence in many different categories of humanity.

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PART IV

Mediating Knowledge, Making Publics

CHAPTER 12

Women's Libraries and "Women's Books", 1729–1830

Alicia C. Montoya

In a powerful fantasy of female intellectual autonomy, her epistolary novel *Het land, in brieven* (The countryside, in letters) (1788), Dutch author Elisabeth Maria Post took as protagonist a single, young woman of independent means, Emilia. Every day, after her prayers and household chores, Emilia retired to her "book cabinet" (*boekvertrekje*), in which she had "placed with forethought all that can lead to gravity and true wisdom".

Surveying her domain, she described her bookcase's contents to her intimate friend and correspondent Eufrozyne:

> My choice of books clearly shows my repugnance for strictness carried too far. Above all I cherish the word of God; as well as those writings that help clarify it, or assist my progress in the practice of faith and the moral duties of a Christian; especially when those subjects are presented with a taste, gracefulness, and noble fire that encourage a similar elevation. But not only these works, History too, and Physics attract me, as they provide thousands

A. C. Montoya (✉)
Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands
e-mail: alicia.montoya@ru.nl

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> of examples of Divine wisdom in organizing all creatures, and especially the fates of humankind, filling me with wonder at God's greatness and the vanity of His creations. The poetic style I admire especially, both in sad and solemn, and in cheerful dress, when preaching as well as onstage. And would I scorn those pictures of human morals that awaken only noble passions, pleasantly moving and improving the soul, merely because the world is so corrupt that such virtue finds no example in it? Would I scorn a *Clarissa*, a *Grandison*, a *Sofia*, a *Burgheim* and other such writings, merely because they are novels? (Post 1987, 21–22)[1]

With its combination of Bibles, devotional works, history and popular scientific works, plays, and novels, Emilia's bookcase offers a suggestive picture of how a library might shape female identities and subjectivities. It also provides a tantalizing—albeit fictional—glimpse into female reading at the end of a decisive period in the history of women's relationship with books. Not only did the eighteenth century witness increased book ownership across all strata of society. Women, particularly, enjoyed greater access to books, as new forms of literary sociability, lending networks, and female bookish engagements expanded, culminating finally in a massive influx of women authors into the literary field at century's end (Hesse 2001; Pearson 1999).

Increased production and demand for books, in turn, underwrote new forms of distribution. These included the sale of books at auction, with the second-hand book trade possibly accounting for up to half of the books circulating in eighteenth-century Europe. As the practice of auctioning books spread, moving from the Dutch Republic to the rest of the continent, a growing number of female-owned libraries were also sold at auction. Auctions were accompanied by printed catalogues that, by foregrounding the figure of the woman collector, helped construct new images of female readership. These printed auction catalogues are thus a unique source not only to explore the historical reality of the fictional female libraries described in novels such as Post's *Het land*. They also provide source material for a comparison of the contents of eighteenth-century women's libraries with men's, in an exploration of how, if at all, they might have functioned as a "room of one's own", to reference Virginia Woolf's resonant image of female intellectual autonomy, which Emilia's "book cabinet" in *Het land* already presaged in the 1780s.

[1] All translations are my own.

The MEDIATE Database

Sophisticated comparisons of female and male-owned eighteenth-century libraries are now rendered feasible by a database developed for the European Research Council-funded MEDIATE project (Measuring Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors, and Texts in Europe, 1665–1830) at Radboud University (The Netherlands).[2] This project sought to model the circulation of books in western Europe during a period overlapping with the Enlightenment movement, by creating a database holding structured data extracted from several hundred printed catalogues of private libraries primarily sold at auction in the Dutch Republic, British Isles and France between 1665 and 1830. Including data harvested from 600 individual collections (the dataset's basic conceptual unit, rather than the catalogue, which sometimes described multiple collections), and representing over half a million books, the MEDIATE dataset was assembled to ensure comparable numbers, temporal distribution and sizes of collections from these three regions. The database additionally includes ten Italian collections: this small number reflects the fact that a robust library auctioning culture failed to develop in eighteenth-century Italy. Further enhancing cross-national comparability of the data, the database focuses on catalogues listing fewer than 1,000 lots—with one lot corresponding mostly, but not always, to a single book title (including multi-year runs of periodicals or multi-volume works counted by cataloguer-booksellers as a single title). These catalogues thus represent, size-wise, the smaller 50% of the corpus of extant private library auction catalogues.[3] Their smaller size increases the likelihood, first, that they describe real collections, rather than including substantial numbers of books surreptitiously added by booksellers from their unwanted stock.[4] Secondly, they might

[2] The database is still under construction, but can be freely accessed at https://test.mediate-database.cls.ru.nl/. For a basic presentation of the project, including project publications, see the project website, https://mediate18.nl/ [accessed November 1, 2022].

[3] About 50% of the extant Dutch private library catalogues fall into this size range. It is more difficult to calculate the percentage of British and French catalogues that do so, given the lack of a comprehensive overview of extant catalogues for those regions.

[4] As Michael Suarez writes, "perhaps the best rule of thumb for the reliability of book-auction catalogues is to consider whether the total number of lots is a reasonable figure, given the wealth and reputation of the presumed owner. […] In general, it may be said for the second half of the eighteenth century that any individually-named sale exceeding

be supposed to document reading preferences not only of the best-known bibliophiles and intellectuals, but also of more obscure, middling collectors, including even in some cases artisans and working-class readers.

In an earlier iteration of the project, I hypothesized that these smaller and mid-size libraries reflected an eighteenth-century literary field that could anachronistically be described as "middlebrow"—a concept that has, significantly, often been gendered female (Holmes 2018; Rubin 1992). Associated with the "middling" classes, and belonging neither to the elite culture of the high Enlightenment, nor the popular literature of chapbooks and *bibliothèque bleue*, "middlebrow" works mirrored the aspirations of a more modest category of readers, who were increasingly gaining entrance to the literary field during the eighteenth century. Smaller collections, according to this hypothesis, were also more likely to belong to female owners, whose engagements with print culture—beyond the public interventions of a few, well-known authors—remains poorly understood. Hence, in creating the MEDIATE corpus, project members sought to source as many catalogues of female-owned collections as possible. The database presently includes 45 sales catalogues, dating from 1674 to 1829, describing 44 collections owned at least in part by a woman.[5] Two of the catalogues—those of celebrated actor David Garrick and his Austrian-born wife, dancer Eva Maria Veigel, sold in London in 1823, and that of Amsterdam-based patrician Johan Schimmelpenninck and his wife Johanna Engelina Gülcher, sold in 1829—described books jointly accumulated by a husband-wife couple. As their book ownership is impossible to separate, I include these two catalogues in the statistical analyses below both in the male and in the female collection counts. The female-owned libraries are, on average, smaller than male-owned ones: 578 books, versus 824 books in men's libraries. The database includes, finally, six anonymous collections whose owner's gender is unknown, and a single collection—that of the Italian Frangipani family, sold in Rome in January 1787—ascribed to a family rather than an individual owner.

2000 lots must be highly suspect, unless the former owner was a renowned collector" (Suarez 1999, 330).

[5] One collection, that of Hester Lynch-Piozzi, was the object of two sales, one in 1816 and a second one in 1823.

Printed Female-owned Library Catalogues: Methodological Issues

The transcriptions and data extracted from the 45 printed sales catalogues of female-owned libraries in the MEDIATE database would, on the face of it, seem to present an ideal dataset to test hypotheses about eighteenth-century women's book ownership. But auction catalogues of female-owned libraries are far from straightforward to use. As has been extensively documented by book historians, cataloguer-booksellers who drew up auction catalogues tended to focus on the most costly books, sometimes omitting altogether the most well-worn—i.e. the most well-read—and therefore hard-to-sell items. Conversely, booksellers sometimes added extraneous material to catalogues, typically unsold titles that had been gathering dust in their own storerooms (Blom et al. 2020). More troublingly for modern-day historians, like other genres of printed ephemera, library sales catalogues survive in limited numbers: only an estimated 10–20% of all auction catalogues of private libraries printed before 1800 have been preserved in at least a single copy (Jagersma 2021). Those proportions appear lower still for female-owned libraries, with a survival rate possibly of only 6%, making preservation bias a real issue in studying this material (Rozendaal forthcoming). Thus, catalogues of female-owned collections that have been preserved are often of the best-known collectors, and may present idiosyncrasies of their own. For example, the two catalogues prepared by auctioneers George Squibb in 1816 and John Broster in 1823 for the sale of the library of bluestocking Hester Lynch-Piozzi (formerly Lynch-Thrale) were ostensibly conceived as documents of special value to literary historians, as the sellers foregrounded Piozzi's association with two famous male writers of her day, James Boswell and Samuel Johnson, specifying which books had been annotated or gifted to Lynch-Piozzi by the two men, and transcribing verbatim their marginal annotations. This, then, is not a transparent list of the books in a "typical" woman reader's library, but rather, a performative document seeking to enhance literary reputations, and to profit from their marketing.

A thornier issue is that of comparability—a crucial issue, given the MEDIATE project's bibliometric, transnational approach. Indeed, the sheer diversity of the corpus of extant printed library catalogues makes across-the-board generalizations hazardous. This holds especially for the more restricted corpus of catalogues of female-owned collections, since smaller numbers impede economies of scale that might flatten out

statistical outliers. Although the MEDIATE team initially sought to transcribe *all* extant catalogues of collections owned at least in part by a female owner, it became evident that differences between them were so significant that studying the corpus as a whole would entail potentially insurmountable methodological challenges. Besides the 45 catalogues of 44 female-owned collections now in the database, the team sourced an additional 25 catalogues of female-owned libraries. These 70 catalogues show a dizzying array of sizes, dates of publication, and geographical provenance. In size alone, they range from 27 to 5,764 book items.[6] Even in analyses restricted to a single national context, such size differences would make it difficult to pinpoint similarities between, for instance, the small collections of mostly devotional books (sometimes fewer than one hundred items) typical of northern French provincial libraries, and the thousands of volumes recorded in the libraries of great French aristocrats such as Jeanne-Baptiste, Comtesse de Verrue (3,452 items), sold in Paris in 1737, or the 5,715-item library of Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, sold in Paris in 1765. Given such differences, any attempt to identify such a thing as a "typical" female library would appear foolhardy. This is why, in the present analysis, I restrict myself to the smaller, more easily comparable corpus of female-owned libraries currently assembled in the MEDIATE database.

Besides issues generic to early modern private library auction catalogues, catalogues of female-owned libraries present further specificities. These include, notably, difficulties of attribution, as female-owned collections were sometimes auctioned anonymously; in these cases, knowledge regarding the owner comes from handwritten annotations or archival evidence, typically the result of serendipitous discoveries. Thus, it is only on the basis of a handwritten annotation on the copy preserved in the University of Amsterdam library that we were able to attribute the catalogue of an anonymous collection sold in Leiden in 1799 to Maria Suzanna Barnaart, the widow of society poet Jan Pauluszoon Markon (Montoya and Jagersma 2018).[7] In other cases, female and male-owned collections were sold together, for example in the case of married

[6] Respectively in the catalogue of Dorothea Six sold in Haarlem in 1740, and in the 1755 catalogue of Dutch aristocrat Maria Elisabeth de Wale.

[7] Tiffelen, Johannes van. 1799. *Naamlyst van eene ongemeen fraaye Nederduitsche Boekverzameling, In meest alle weetenschappen, fraai gebonden, en zuiver bewaard*. Leiden: Johannes van Tiffelen. Amsterdam University Library, call number KVB NV 673.

couples, making it difficult to distinguish books acquired by each individual spouse.[8] Conversely, libraries sold under the name of a male owner often included books acquired both by male and female family members. This last set of practices points to a fundamental feature of eighteenth-century libraries, namely that were rarely "private" in the modern sense of the term, but functioned instead as communal resources, within a family, within owners' professional networks, and within the community at large (Williams 2017). Printed auction catalogues of private libraries were ambivalent documents, both public, performative displays of the owner's social identity and public advertisements of goods for sale, and documents offering a glimpse into the private lives of their owners, with books on one's shelves commonly perceived as revealing owners' innermost being (Wall 1997). Because of this uneasy mix of publicity and intimacy, it could be problematic for women to associate themselves with this type of publication. When dealing with female-owned libraries, in short, there is no such thing as a "clean" catalogue, free of extraneous considerations, describing only books owned by a female collector, and providing a straightforward picture of the collection she built up and all the books she read over a lifetime. Making the catalogues speak, then, presents unique challenges.

Finally, despite the fact that the MEDIATE dataset of 600 smaller and mid-sized collections was drawn up to ensure maximum comparability between national contexts, periods, and classes of library owners, perfect equivalence between all variables is impossible to attain, given national differences in auction practices, preservation biases, and past collectors' and booksellers' personal choices. Thus, there remain important differences between the 551 male-owned collections and the 44 female-owned collections in the database that need to be taken into account in analyses of women's book ownership patterns. The first is the geographic distribution of the collections, summarized in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1 shows that while Dutch collections are over-represented overall, in the corpus of female collections, different proportions obtain. French women collectors are over-represented, with French women

[8] Although some differentiation is possible when one of the spouses died many years before the other. In those cases, it is possible to establish the exact ownership of at least a part of the collection on the basis of the date of publication of the books reported, when this is provided.

responsible for 50%, or half of all female-owned libraries. French predominance reflects proportions in the total corpus of extant catalogues of female-owned libraries, i.e. also including catalogues not currently in the MEDIATE database. French female-owned libraries are followed by Dutch female-owned collections, making up 29.5% of the female total. British female collectors represent 20.5% of the total population of female collections, while Italian women are completely absent—although it bears noting that four of the ten Italian collections are anonymous or described as belonging to a family, rather than an individual owner. The typical "female library", then, at least the one publicly, commercially showcased in eighteenth-century printed auction catalogues, appears to have been largely a French affair.

Discrepancies obtain, further, in the temporal distribution of male and female collections, as female-owned libraries tended overwhelmingly to cluster towards the end of the eighteenth century, contrasting with the more even spread of male libraries sold at auction (Table 12.2).

The earliest catalogue in the database dates from 1674, when the 126-book library of Neeltje Verelst (née Van Tienen), the widow of Alphen bailiff Adriaen Verelst, was put up for sale in Rotterdam. The last catalogue dates from 1829, the date of sale of the collection of Johanna Engelina Gülcher. While only a single female-owned collection was sold before the 1720s, starting in 1729, with the Paris sale of the library of the famous memorialist (and niece of Madame de Maintenon) Marthe-Marguerite de Caylus, numbers begin to rise. The sale of female-owned libraries reached a high point in the 1790s, with nine catalogues, or 20.4% of the total number of female libraries, sold in that decade alone.

Table 12.1 Geographic distribution of libraries in the MEDIATE database

Region	*Number of female collections*	*% of female collections*	*Number of male collections*	*% of male collections*
France	22	50.0	158	28.7
Netherlands	13	29.5	205	37.2
British Isles[9]	9	20.5	181	32.9
Italy	0	–	6	1.1

[9] Two of these are Irish collections, sold in Dublin in 1800 and in 1809.

Table 12.2 Temporal distribution of libraries in the MEDIATE database

Period	*Number of female collections*	*% of female corpus*	*Number of male collections*	*% of male corpus*
1660s	0	–	10	1.8
1670s	1	2.3	14	2.5
1680s	0	–	22	4.0
1690s	0	–	30	5.4
1700s	0	–	17	3.1
1710s	0	–	23	4.2
1720s	1	2.3	31	5.6
1730s	3	6.8	34	6.1
1740s	2	4.5	38	6.9
1750s	5	11.3	38	6.9
1760s	5	11.3	41	7.4
1770s	6	13.6	45	8.2
1780s	3	6.8	52	9.4
1790s	9	20.4	39	7.1
1800s	3	6.8	29	5.2
1810s	3	6.8	36	6.5
1820s	3[10]	6.8	50	9.1

This concentration may be attributed both to the wave of sales that took place as French aristocrats sought to flee the country, and to the influx of French women onto the literary field that also marked the revolutionary decades, presumably making female interventions in the public sphere more common than before (Hesse 2001). By contrast, male catalogues are more evenly distributed across the century. The differences in temporal distribution between male and female catalogues mean that, just as the "typical" female library was a French one, it was also one put up for sale in the final decades of the eighteenth century, and that therefore—given the time lag of auction catalogues, drawn up mostly after the owner's death—represented women's book acquisitions in the 1750s through 1770s. For practical purposes, this uneven temporal distribution means that in order to establish a corpus comparable to the male one, the starting date for the female corpus needs to be set later than the MEDIATE dataset starting-point of 1665. In the analyses below, I

[10] Since Hester Piozzi's library was the object of two auction catalogues, I take the date of the second catalogue, 1823, as the date for the whole collection.

therefore take 1729 as a starting date, as after this date catalogues of female-owned collections appeared regularly, at a rate of at least two per decade.

Female Libraries and the *Bibliothèque choisie*

The question whether there was, indeed, such a thing as a specifically female-gendered library in the eighteenth century, and whether women generally read differently than men—different kinds of books, for different purposes—has been answered variously by modern historians. Sabine Heissler, for example, has posited that early modern women's libraries fell into three distinct categories: first, small collections devoted primarily to devotional works, sometimes supplemented by a handful of practical, domestic books; secondly, the libraries of learned women noted in their day for their erudition or contribution to scholarly debate; and finally, sizeable libraries, put together by aristocratic women, which assembled large numbers of literary works or *belles-lettres*, in particular novels, sometimes authored by women (Heissler 1998). But eighteenth-century commentators, too, interrogated relations between libraries and gender. Accompanying the rise in public sales of female-owned libraries, a new discourse took shape describing an ideal type of library, the so-called *bibliothèque choisie*. Breaking with the older model of the large scholar's library or *bibliothèque universelle*, this new kind of library did not primarily reflect professional needs, but instead foregrounded personal reading taste and *belles-lettres*, i.e. works of poetry, plays, and novels read not in the practice of a profession, but for pleasure. Because it did not aim for comprehensive coverage of all fields, this kind of library was considerably smaller than the great scholars' libraries: a few hundred titles, not thousands, with this difference sometimes denoted in English by the terms "closet" or "cabinet", suggesting just a handful of books, rather than the official "library". Ideas about the *bibliothèque choisie* were popularized in review journals such as Amsterdam-based journalist Jean Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque choisie pour servir de suite à la Bibliothèque universelle* (1703–1708), and underwrote the rise of a new genre of advice literature targeting readers new to the literary field (Montoya 2021a). Taken together, these attributes meant that the *bibliothèque choisie* and the English "closet" were increasingly also conceptualized as specifically female-gendered spaces—not altogether unlike the fictional

library described by Elisabeth Maria Post, with its sprinkling of titles in different genres, but focusing especially on poetry, plays and novels.

In a few cases, the *bibliothèque choisie* could be identified with real, historical women readers. One such woman was Maria Leti, the Italian-born daughter of popular historical author Gregorio Leti, and wife of Jean Le Clerc (Montoya 2009). Maria Leti assisted her husband in his scholarly work, as evidenced by her mention in letters of correspondents including John Locke and Pierre Bayle. With her sister Susanne, she translated her father's works into French. When Maria Leti's small personal library was put up for auction in Amsterdam in 1735 alongside her husband's, differences between them mirrored differences between the scholarly, male-gendered *bibliothèque universelle* (Le Clerc) and the more modern, female-gendered *bibliothèque choisie* (Leti). Le Clerc's library was considerably larger than his wife's, numbering 2,756 lots (excluding manuscripts), versus his wife's 677 lots (703 books). The content of the two libraries, classified according to the eighteenth-century Parisian booksellers' subject classification system, also differed significantly. Le Clerc's catalogue listed relatively more books categorized as "theology", "law" and "arts and sciences", while Maria Leti's library on the contrary foregrounded history and *belles-lettres*, which made up 61.4% of its content, versus 34.2% in Le Clerc's library (Table 12.3).

Table 12.3 Subject categorization of books in Jean Le Clerc and Maria Leti's libraries (1735)

Subject category	*Jean Le Clerc (%)*	*Maria Leti (%)*[11]
Theology	38.0	30
Law	4.5	1.0
History	11.7	30.8
Arts and sciences	16.3	7.9
Belles-lettres	22.5	30.6
Uncategorized	6.8	13.9

[11] These percentages differ slightly from those in my 2009 article because of the different methodology used in the MEDIATE database. While 7% of the books were left uncategorized in my 2009 study, that percentage is 13% in the MEDIATE count.

While Maria Leti and Jean Le Clerc's library catalogues provide an exceptional opportunity to compare a male and female library assembled in the same years and cultural context, the MEDIATE database allows historians to expand this comparison by drawing on a larger dataset—with one caveat. As data-enrichment work is still ongoing, not all collections have undergone subject-categorization of their books, which remains uneven even within individual catalogues. The proportion of uncategorized books is highest in male-owned collections: 68.27%. In female-owned collections, the proportion of uncategorized books is 36.28%. In the seven collections whose owner's gender is unknown or corporate (the Frangipani family library), 47.69% of the books remain uncategorized. Notwithstanding this data health warning, a global analysis reveals proportions that are comparable to those in the Le Clerc-Leti catalogues (Table 12.4).

Similarly to proportions in the Le Clerc-Leti catalogues, men's libraries contain relatively more books categorized as "theology", "law" and "arts and sciences" than do women's. This follows from the male practice of professions from which women were barred, respectively in ecclesiastic functions, as magistrates and government officials, and as medical doctors (medical works accounting for many of the books labelled "arts and sciences"). Female libraries, by contrast, because of their focus on reading for pleasure, report larger proportions of books of history and *belles-lettres*. Additionally, women's catalogues list larger proportions of books subject-categorized as "unknown". This is because female catalogues were often less bibliographically precise than male ones, more frequently listing bundles of unspecified books, described for example as

Table 12.4 Subject categorization in female, male and anonymous collections, 1729–1830

Subject category	*Male collections* (n = *407)*	*Female collections* (n = *43)*	*Anonymous or family collections* (n = *6) (%)*
Theology	22.7	19.2	17.8
Law	8.3	2.1	3.5
History	23.5	26.5	38.6
Arts and sciences	14.4	8.9	13.7
Belles-lettres	29.0	40.1	26.2
Unknown	1.7	2.6	0.0

"trente-un volumes dépareillez de divers Ouvrages in douze" (in the 1729 catalogue of Caylus's books) or "Fifty-two miscellaneous" (in the 1783 catalogue of the library of one "Mrs. Armstrong"). Anonymous or corporately owned libraries, finally, display subject-category proportions closer to the female-owned collections than to the male ones. However, their number is too small—six, four of them Italian—to warrant far-ranging statistical conclusions.

From Subject Categories to Individual Authors

Let us turn now from broad subject categorizations to the twenty individual authors reported in the largest number of female-owned and male-owned libraries (Table 12.5). In keeping with inconsistent author attributions in the catalogues, the term "author" is understood capaciously here, including named and unnamed authors, translators, editors, illustrators, and corporate authors such as the Catholic Church or literary societies. When books by a given author are present in the same number of libraries, their relative ranking is determined by the number of individual books reported in the catalogues: the higher the number of copies of their works, the higher the author ranking.

There is some overlap between the two lists: twelve authors or designations (in the case of the Bible or unspecified books) appear on both. But there are also differences. First, frequencies overall are lower in the female collections, most likely a consequence of the smaller size of women's libraries. Beyond this, differences emerge in the reading matter consumed by the two groups. Eight authors appear on the male list but not on the female one: Homer, Terence, Erasmus, Grotius, Juvenal, Seneca, Plutarch, and Pufendorf. Five of these fall primarily into the category *belles-lettres*, two in the category "law", and one in "history". Most are authors from classical antiquity, who were central to male schooling, and may hence reflect, at least in part, left-over schoolbooks from an earlier phase in their owners' lives. More generally, they embody the continuing relevance of classical learning in eighteenth-century culture (Montoya 2021b). Thus, women's lack of access to formal, Latin-language schooling appreciably impacted their choice of reading matter.

Mutatis mutandis, eight authors appear among the women's top twenty, but not among the men's: Cervantes, Boileau-Despréaux, Molière, the Catholic Church, La Fontaine, Thomas à Kempis, Pierre

Table 12.5 Authors reported in female- and male-owned libraries, 1729–1830

Female-owned libraries (n = *43)*			*Male-owned libraries* (n = *407)*	
Rank	*Author*	*% of libraries*	*Author*	*% of libraries*
1	[Bible]	81.4	[Bible]	92.8
2	[unspecified books]	74.4	Ovid	79.6
3	Voltaire	72.1	Virgil	77.6
4	Fénelon	69.7	Horace	77.1
5	Horace	65.1	Cicero	73.4
6	Flavius Josephus	65.1	Tacitus	69.5
7	Ovid	62.8	Homer	67.5
8	Virgil	58.1	Terence	67.0
9	Cervantes	58.1	[unspecified books]	66.1
10	Boileau-Despréaux	58.1	Fénelon	66.1
11	Cicero	55.8	Erasmus	65.3
12	Molière	55.8	Grotius	63.6
13	Catholic Church	53.5	Voltaire	62.1
14	Thomas à Kempis	53.5	Flavius Josephus	59.4
15	Joseph Addison	53.5	Juvenal	59.2
16	Pierre Corneille	53.5	Seneca	58.9
17	Quintus Curtius	53.5	Plutarch	58.9
18	La Fontaine	51.1	Samuel Pufendorf	57.5
19	Richard Steele	51.1	Quintus Curtius	57.2
20	Tacitus	51.1	Joseph Addison	56.2

Corneille, and Richard Steele. Six fall into the category of *belles-lettres*, while the remaining two can be subsumed under "theology". This latter finding points to an interesting phenomenon: while men's libraries report larger proportions of works of theology than women's, in female-owned collections some individual religious titles significantly outperform their standing in male collections. Thomas à Kempis *Imitatione Christi*, for example, figures in 46.5% of the female-owned collections, but only 34.6% of the male-owned ones. At the other end, among non-religious works, is the higher standing of Voltaire in women's libraries, 74.4% versus 62.1% in men's libraries. Voltaire's top-ranking works are his *Œuvres complètes* (in 34.8% of women's libraries, but only 22.6% of men's), followed by his *Henriade* (25.5% and 20.9%) and *Histoire de Charles XII* (23.2% and 17.4%).

In order to enable a more fine-grained appreciation of the individual books behind blanket designations such as "Voltaire" or "Catholic

Church", the MEDIATE database also provides some basic matching of books to Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) Work records. Given both the labour-intensive and hence slow pace of VIAF Work matching, as well as the inconsistencies and incompleteness of VIAF itself, so far only 14% of the books have been matched to VIAF Works. Nonetheless, some patterns have already begun to emerge (Table 12.6).

The list of top-ranked authors in male-owned collections, once again, is made up overwhelmingly of classical authors, whom most male readers would have first encountered during their school days. Fourteen, or 70% of the top twenty male-owned titles were classical authors. By contrast,

Table 12.6 VIAF Works reported in female- and male-owned libraries, 1729–1830

	Female-owned libraries (n = *43)*		*Male-owned libraries* (n = *407)*	
Rank	*Title*	*% of libraries*	*Title*	*% of libraries*
1	Bible [complete]	69.7	Bible [complete]	85.5
2	New Testament	58.1	New Testament	73.2
3	Psalms	55.8	Psalms	65.8
4	Ovid, *Metamorphoses*	55.8	Terence, *Comediæ*	65.3
5	Fénelon, *Télémaque*	55.8	Ovid, *Metamorphoses*	58.4
6	Cervantes, *Don Quixote*	55.8	Juvenal, *Opera*	57.5
7	Quintus Curtius, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*	53.5	Quintus Curtius, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*	56.7
8	Flavius Josephus, *Opera*	53.5	Homer, *Iliad*	56.5
9	Molière, *Œuvres*	51.1	Livy, *Ab urbe condita*	55.0
10	La Fontaine, *Fables*	48.8	Fénelon, *Télémaque*	53.0
11	Racine, *Œuvres*	48.8	Virgil, *Opera*	52.8
12	Kempis, *Imitatione Christi*	46.5	Caesar, *De bello gallico*	51.8
13	Catholic missal	46.5	Cervantes, *Don Quixote*	50.8
14	Mézeray, *Abrégé de l'histoire de France*	46.5	Lucretius, *De rerum natura*	48.4
15	Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*	44.1	Platus, *Comediæ*	48.4
16	Sévigné, *Lettres*	44.1	Pliny, *Naturalis historia*	46.4
17	Moreri, *Dictionnaire*	44.1	Phaedrus, *Fabulae*	44.4
18	Montaigne, *Essais*	41.8	Cornelius Nepos, *Vitae excellentium imperatorum*	43.9
19	Addison and Steele, *Spectator*	41.8	Plutarch, *Lives*	43.9
20	Catholic Book of hours	39.5	Flavius Josephus, *Opera*	43.2

only two, or 10% of the top authors in female libraries dated back to classical antiquity. Instead, over half of the books in women's libraries—eleven, or 55%—dated from after 1500, versus three in male-owned libraries. Five authors who made the author top (Table 12.5) fail to surface in the top VIAF Works ranking—Voltaire, Cicero, Erasmus, Pierre Corneille, Grotius, and Pufendorf—indicating that these authors' impact was due not to one or two successful titles, but to a prolific output in multiple genres.[12] Conversely, a number of single-title successes emerge in women's collections that were obscured by an author count alone, like Mézeray's *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France* (1667–1668) and Montaigne's *Essais* (1580–1595). Religious service books now figure prominently among the top-ranked female-owned titles: both missals and books of hours make an appearance, but remain absent on the male list. Finally, for the first time a female author breaks through to the top twenty: Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, marquise de Sévigné, whose *Lettres* (1725) rank sixteenth of titles reported in the largest number of female-owned libraries.

"Women's Books": Devotional Works and Novels

Thus far, our analysis of eighteenth-century private libraries tends to confirm narratives about women as readers primarily of religious books and novels. However, the slightly skewed composition of the corpus needs to be considered. Catalogues of female-owned libraries, as noted above, were produced more often in France than elsewhere. Auctions of women's collections were also concentrated in the final decades of the eighteenth century. So might Tables 12.5 and 12.6 simply reflect French reading taste at a particular moment in time? One way to test this hypothesis is to limit the analysis to French libraries from the second half of the century (Table 12.7).

Clearly, differences between female and male book ownership persist even when geographic variables are eliminated, as only 50% of the works

[12] Thus Pierre Corneille owes his high ranking in Table 12.5 both to his works of theatre and to his very successful translation of Thomas à Kempis's *De imitatione Christi*, while Pufendorf was read both as a historian and as a jurist, and so forth. A number of authors whose works do not figure in Table 12.6—Horace, Boileau, Tacitus—are lacking due to the absence of VIAF records for the works most frequently reported in the catalogues.

Table 12.7 VIAF works reported in female- and male-owned French libraries, 1750–1830

	Female-owned libraries (n = 18)		*Male-owned libraries (n = 105)*	
Rank	*Work*	*% of libraries*	*Work*	*% of libraries*
1	Catholic missal	77.7	Bible [complete]	80.9
2	Moreri, *Dictionnaire*	72.2	Virgil, *Opera*	72.3
3	Racine, *Œuvres*	66.6	Terence, *Comediæ*	71.4
4	Quintus Curtius, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*	66.6	Molière, *Théâtre*	68.5
5	Catholic Book of hours	61.1	New Testament	65.7
6	Fénelon, *Télémaque*	61.1	Fénelon, *Télémaque*	65.7
7	Molière, *Théâtre*	61.1	Quintus Curtius, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*	64.7
8	Sévigné, *Lettres*	61.1	Racine, *Œuvres*	64.7
9	New Testament	55.5	Montaigne, *Essais*	64.7
10	Kempis, *Imitatione Christi*	55.5	La Fontaine, *Fables*	61.9

on the female and male lists overlap. Table 12.7 also sheds light on women's religious book ownership. Service and devotional books now account for three of the female top ten titles, but still fail to appear on the male list. At the same time, the Bible's more prominent place in male libraries may seem surprising, given the evidence of women's engagement with religious reading material. Complete editions of the Bible are reported in 80.9% of the male libraries, but do not appear at all in the female top—although editions of the New Testament do figure in 55.5% of women's libraries. While religious books were among women's preferred reading, then, not all religious books did equally well in their libraries. But the apparent absence of Bibles also tells us something about the nature of these female library catalogues. The seven collections that do not report a Bible are—with a single, English exception—all French. This may initially seem to confirm tired old clichés about Catholic readers' infrequent reading of the Bible. But a closer examination reveals that some of the French libraries that did not list a Bible did have a strong devotional content. The small library of Marie-Marguerite-Joseph Imbert (124 items), sold in Lille in 1756, lists no Bible but does list several

Catholic service books, breviaries, and a copy of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitatione Christi*—as well as multiple titles described simply as devotional works. Similarly, the even smaller library of Marie Angélique Desurmont (91 items), also sold in Lille, in 1778, contains no Bible but does report several breviaries, unidentified "paquets", and again, a copy of the *Imitatione Christi*. Might it be possible that if these catalogues did not list a Bible, it could be because the owner had literally read it to pieces?[13]

Besides being associated with religious reading, women were also perceived to be avid consumers of novels, both by eighteenth-century contemporaries and modern critics: according to a long-standing trope, "women were the primary consumers of novels" (Diaconoff 2005, 7). The trope of the female novel reader reappeared regularly in eighteenth-century texts, including novels authored by women writers (Pearson 1999). Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), for example, portrays the protagonist Arabella, the eponymous "female Quixote", as a prototypical female reader of Baroque novels or "Romances" by French authors like Georges and Madeleine de Scudéry, and Gautier de Costes de La Calprenède:

> From her earliest Youth she had discovered a Fondness for Reading, which extremely delighted the Marquis; he permitted her therefore the Use of his Library, in which, unfortunately for her, were great Store of Romances, and, what was still more unfortunate, not in the original *French*, but very bad Translations. [...] the deceased Marchioness had purchased these Books to soften a Solitude which she found very disagreeable; and, after her Death, the Marquis removed them from her Closet into his Library. (Lennox 2008, 7)

Suggesting a qualitative difference between two kinds of library, the female-gendered "Closet" and the male-gendered "Library", the narrator

[13] Another category of Bible-less catalogues belong to the subcorpus of libraries sold during the turbulent French revolutionary period, sometimes in great haste, and often piece-meal. The library of one Madame Descars or D'Escars, for example, whose library was sold in 1793, and who can tentatively be identified as Marie Antoinette Louise Esprit Jeanne Claude de Harville de Traisnel, wife of Louis-François-Marie de Pérusse, comte d'Escars, lists no Bible. However, her husband's library, sold one year earlier, does list a Bible, so it may have been that, as the d'Escars family prepared to flee France, extra Bibles (assuming that the family Bible was one of the books saved) were among the first books to be sold off. I am grateful to Helwi Blom for her investigations into the D'Escars libraries, on which I draw here.

underlines the feminisation both of the "book closet" and the novel. As in the course of the eighteenth century, novels moved from older "Romance" formats to more realistic conventions, literary critics and cultural commentators continued to evoke this special affinity between women readers and novels. In the visual arts, a memorable series of paintings and drawings by Joshua Reynolds portrayed his niece Theophila Palmer engrossed in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747–1748). Women readers—and in their footsteps, women writers—responded with particular feeling to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). So it comes as no surprise that in the late eighteenth-century novel *Het land*, the only four books referenced by title in Emilia's "book cabinet" were also novels: Richardson's *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–1754), Johann Timotheus Hermes' *Sophiens Reise von Memem nach Sachsen* (1769–1773) and Johann Martin Miller's *Geschichte Karls von Burgheim und Emiliens von Rosenau* (1778–1779). Taking all these titles as a starting point, let us then examine the historical basis of this trope of the novel-consuming female reader (Table 12.8).

While Renaissance classics like Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1516) and Miguel de

Table 12.8 Selected novels in female- and male-owned libraries, 1729–1830

Title	*Female collections*	*Male collections*
Fénelon, *Télémaque*	55.8	53.0
Cervantes, *Don Quixote*	55.8	50.8
Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*	44.1	35.1
Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*	30.2	30.2
Richardson, *Clarissa*	32.5	15.2
Rabelais, *Œuvres*	27.9	29.0
Lafayette, *Princesse de Clèves*	25.6	6.3
Alemán, *Guzmán de Alfarache*	23.2	12.7
Rousseau, *Nouvelle Héloïse*	23.2	7.6
Richardson, *Charles Grandison*	20.9	11.0
Barclay, *Argenis*	16.3	18.4
La Calprenède, *Cassandre*	13.9	5.4
Scudéry, *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*	9.3	1.8
Scudéry, *Clélie*	6.9	1.8
Hermes, *Sophiens Reise*	–	1.9
Miller, *Karl von Burgheim*	–	0.49

Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605–1615), are reported in similar frequencies in male and female libraries, the numbers for other novels are higher overall—sometimes significantly so—in female collections. The romances of Scudéry and La Calprenède so avidly consumed by Lennox's Arabella are reported up to three times more frequently in women's collections than in men's. A few modern novels stand out as runaway bestsellers in women's libraries. They include Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves* (1678), reported four times more often in female-owned than in male-owned collections, and Richardson's *Clarissa* and Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*, which figure up to three times as often in women's libraries than men's. Only a very small handful of novels manage to do better in male-owned collections than in female ones, and differences are minimal at best: François Rabelais's *Œuvres*, reported in 29.0% of male libraries, versus 27.9% of female ones; John Barclay's political allegory *Argenis* (18.4% and 16.3%), and a few eighteenth-century titles whose absolute numbers, however, are too low to be statistically significant. In short, the stereotype of the novel-reading woman reader, contrasted to male readers who supposedly consumed more serious material—or were too busy exercising roles in public life to read for pleasure—does appear to have some historical basis, although differentiation needs to be made between specific titles, as some novels did appeal particularly to male readers.

Women's Libraries as a Space of Female Intimacy

If novels and devotional works, then, were the reading-matter of choice of eighteenth-century women, are there other books that appeared exclusively in female-owned libraries? One candidate might be books that explicitly targeted a female audience. Works aimed at female readers can be found in both male- and female-owned collections. However, they do tend to occur more frequently in the latter. Francesco Algarotti's *Il Newtonianismo per le dame* (1737) is reported in five female-owned collections, and in fifteen male-owned collections, or respectively in 12.8% of the female-owned and 3.9% of the male-owned collections whose catalogues were published in 1737 or later. By contrast, a title that sought to popularize Newton's ideas, but without explicitly targeting a female readership, Voltaire's *Eléments de la philosophie de Newton* (1738) is reported in 7.7% of the female and 7.7% of the male catalogues from its date of

publication. But on the other hand, the female-authored but not female-aimed *Institutions de physique* (1740), a work of popular Newtonianism by Gabrielle-Emilie du Châtelet, is reported in 5.1% of the female-owned but only 2.9% of the male-owned collections from its date of publication.

This last example points to another possibility, namely that women library-owners might have shown a marked preference for works by other women. Although studies addressing earlier periods have produced inconclusive outcomes (Coolahan and Empey 2016), eighteenth-century library auction catalogues suggest that by this date, there was a movement, reinforced by critical discourses around the *bibliothèque choisie* and women's "closets", towards new, distinctly female-gendered types of library. The MEDIATE data demonstrates that eighteenth-century women did, indeed, own works by other women more often than did their male counterparts. In female-owned libraries sold in the period 1729–1830, books by female authors represent 5.6% of the total, versus 1.9% in male-owned collections and 2.3% in anonymous or family libraries. In other words, although overall percentages remain low, female-owned collections report over twice as many books by female authors as do male-owned collections. This holds, significantly, for all periods. In the decisive decades 1771–1800, for example, during which works by women authors increasingly became available, percentages rise even more, to 7.2% in female-owned collections, while the proportion in male-owned libraries lags even further behind, at barely 2.2%. And just as novels consistently did better in women's libraries than in men's, so too did women authors consistently achieve greater success in female-owned collections than in men's (Table 12.9).

The lone female author who was more successful among male audiences—although only very slightly, as she is reported in 40.3% of male-owned libraries, versus 39.5% of female-owned ones—is translator Anne Dacier. Rather than any particular engagement with female authorship, this simply appears to reflect, yet again, male collectors' predilection for the authors of classical antiquity, whom Dacier translated. Five women authors appear on the female list but not on the male one: the memorialists Sévigné, Françoise d'Aubigné, marquise de Maintenon, Françoise Bertaut de Motteville, and the novelists Marie-Catherine de Villedieu and Marie-Angélique de Gomez. Conversely, five authors appear in the male top but not the female one; however, in all cases, their frequency in female-owned libraries is actually *higher*—despite their lower relative ranking—than in male-owned libraries. At the same time, the female

Table 12.9 Female authors reported in female- and male-owned libraries, 1729–1830

Rank	*Female collections*	*% of collections*	*Male collections*	*% of collections*
1	Sévigné	44.2	Anne Dacier	40.3
2	Aulnoy	41.9	Sappho	21.8
3	Anne Dacier	39.5	Sévigné	17.2
4	Lafayette	37.2	Lafayette	16.2
5	Mme Deshoulières	34.9	Aulnoy	15.4
6	Villedieu	30.2	Mme Deshoulières	12.5
7	Maintenon	30.2	Genlis	12.0
8	Gomez	25.6	Mary Wortley Montagu	11.5
9	Sappho	25.6	Sarah Fielding	10.8
10	Motteville	25.6	Marguerite de Navarre	10.5

partiality towards works by female memorialists appears noteworthy, as it may suggest broader engagements, on the part of women library owners, with issues of female subjectivity, female self-fashioning, and women's place in history—in short, with the public performance of new, varied female identities.

There emerges, then, a final meaning that could be given to the female-gendered library, as a "room of one's own" and shared female space. Libraries could function as a communal female space by gathering together the works of women writers. But they could also become meeting-places for communities of women readers. As Gerda Lerner has posited, "in the modern world, clusters of learned women […] appear in the form of supportive networks of female friends, which I will call 'affinitive clusters'. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, female readership constitutes such affinitive clusters" (Lerner 1993, 226). Eighteenth-century libraries, as noted, could rarely be considered "private" or solely a reflection of "individual" reading choices, as they were embedded in larger family and professional networks, and hence became loci of various interpretive communities. In Elisabeth Maria Post's *Het land*, the female protagonist Emilia sought to share her library or "book cabinet" with her female correspondent, Eufrozyne, turning the library into a space of collective, female intimacy. By reading together, new forms of female agency and solidarity could be forged.

In a few cases, there is evidence that real, historical affinitive clusters also emerged around the libraries described in eighteenth-century auction catalogues. Through the correspondence of Jean Le Clerc with John Locke, for example, the figure emerges of another female intellectual, the philosopher Damaris Cudworth Masham, daughter of Cambridge Platonist and theologian Ralph Cudworth, who used her bookish exchanges with her male colleagues to establish ties with a female counterpart in Amsterdam, Maria Leti. These networks can be traced through correspondences, but also through the libraries that linked these figures together, and were described in a series of catalogues: the multiple manuscript catalogues that John Locke made of his books up until his death in 1704, the 1691 printed auction catalogue of the library of Ralph Cudworth, and the catalogue of Maria Leti's books printed in 1735.

Whereas emerging female networks in the early eighteenth-century Republic of Letters were still largely virtual, they had acquired more consistency by the end of the century, as evidenced by the auction catalogues of female-owned libraries, such as the 1816 catalogue of Penllyn Library, housed in Penllyn Castle in Glamorgan, Wales. This 709-item library had been assembled by Emilia Gwinnett (1741–1807), the youngest daughter of clergyman Samuel Gwinnett of Gloucestershire, and sister of the more famous Button Gwinnett, who after emigrating to the American colonies, became one of the signatories of the American Declaration of Independence. Probably sometime after 1775, Emilia Gwinnett settled in Wales, where she moved into Penllyn Castle together with its owner, the widow Lady Louisa Barbara Vernon. Upon her death in 1786, Louisa Vernon left the castle and library to Emilia Gwinnett, disinheriting her own daughter to do so. This is a first indication that the relationship between the two women was an especially intimate one. Further evidence is provided by Emilia Gwinnett's request in her will that she "be buried [...] as near the remains of the late Lady Barbara Vernon as may be"[14]—a detail that recalls another, more famous female couple, that likewise settled in Wales in 1780, creating a library around which various literary networks converged, the "ladies of Llangolen" Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby. The traces left by Emilia Gwinnet and Louisa Vernon of the life they shared at Penllyn Castle, with a library at its very centre, are

[14] National Library of Wales, Gwinnett Family of Cottrell papers, cited in Liz Jack Gwinnett, "Gwinnett family history", http://www.gwinnett.me.uk/characters/emilia-1741-1807 [accessed November 1, 2022].

exemplary of the many functions libraries could play as spaces of female intimacy—albeit in this case, one made public after their deaths by the sale of their library. Female libraries thus brought together the works of female authors and shaped new female relationships to books, and new relations between female readers, in a complex interplay between fact and fiction, material culture and critical discourse.

With the library of Emilia Gwinnett, then, we have moved decisively from literary accounts of women's books and female intimacies in Elisabeth Maria Post's fictional "book cabinet", to historical evidence about women's actual book ownership. Bibliographically speaking, eighteenth-century female-owned libraries tended to lean towards ideals embodied by the *bibliothèque choisie*, focusing on *belles-lettres* and reading for pleasure rather than for the professions. But these libraries also shaped new, bookish female identities, meshing public performances of reading with more private subjectivities. Printed sale catalogues provide unique source material to explore these hybrid identities; coupled with modern digital tools such as the MEDIATE database, they allow historians for the first time to draw large-scale comparisons between female and male book culture. But we are only at the very beginning of attempting to tease out some of the insights that this rich, under-explored source may still provide about eighteenth-century women's myriad engagements with the printed word, and how "the woman reader" was historically constructed.

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CHAPTER 13

The Production and Circulation of Literature for Women Between Europe and America: A Perspective from the Hispanic-American World

Laura Guinot-Ferri

Introduction

The eighteenth century was a period of great change in the book trade and in the creation of new readerships on both sides of the Atlantic. On the one hand, there was an increase in the number of printing presses built and books published in territories such as France, Spain, North America and, to a lesser extent, Spanish America. On the other, a moderate growth in literacy levels and the development of a widening public sphere of opinion meant that different sectors of the publishing world could envisage new audiences for their works. These factors enabled the literary world's trading routes to expand, as well as motivating writers, translators and other agents to develop innovative strategies in the search for new

L. Guinot-Ferri (✉)
University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain
e-mail: laura.guinot@uv.es

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readers. As part of this process, and for various reasons, the publication of literature targeted at female readers also experienced growth during the century.

Firstly, literary genres appealing explicitly to women might have done so for didactic purposes—in other words, to improve their moral or religious education. Secondly, there were commercial reasons for attempting to engage with female readers. As part of the process of creating new readerships, women were now perceived as potential recipients of the books being published, allowing various niches of the market to be opened up to new buyers (women themselves, and their parents or educators). And, thirdly, women could be used by the different agents involved in publishing as a way of drawing in other readers as well: some of the literature published during the Enlightenment and categorised as being for women used that classification in metonymic fashion to refer to any non-specialist readership, whether this was children, women or simply anyone without expertise in the subject matter in question. This applies to scientific treatises such as the well-known Italian work *Il Newtonianismo per le dame* (Francesco Algarotti, Naples, 1737), translated into several languages; and to popularised manuals of religious doctrine such as the New Spanish *Ejercicios espirituales de san Ignacio acomodados al estado y profesión religiosa de las señoras vírgenes* (Spiritual exercises of St Ignatius adapted to the state and religious profession of maiden ladies) (Antonio Núñez de Miranda, Mexico City, 1695), to cite just two examples.

In other words, literature "for women" was never a self-evident category encompassing what women actually read, liked, bought or owned. Rather it was a moral and/or commercial product devised or identified by writers, translators, booksellers, moralists and educators.

This paper will aim to analyse the ways in which literature for women developed both in Spain and, primarily, New Spain, as well as looking at how it travelled from one side of the Atlantic to the other. Generally speaking, research into this type of literature has focused on other geographical territories, such as England or France (Pearson 1999). One of the most common approaches, moreover, has been to study the inventories of women's libraries, or family libraries inherited by women, in order to gather clues about female reading habits and consider the extent to which women actually consumed the literature intended for them. With very few exceptions (Arias de Saavedra Alías 2017), the spotlight has not been trained on literature published in Spanish, whether original or in translation, or on the relationship between Europe and Spanish America.

One analysis has been carried out into the models of femininity projected by authors and moralists who travelled between the two continents, an area addressed by studying the conduct books and moralising works that started to arrive in America from the early days of colonisation onwards (Candau 2007). There is also a study based on the literature for women found in Mexican libraries housing eighteenth-century collections (Ruiz Barrionuevo 2007). This chapter will offer something different. I want to evaluate the similarities and differences between New Spain and peninsular Spain as regards the production and circulation of such literature for women (including texts originally written in Spanish and translations from other languages). I also want to examine the extent to which that literature travelled, potentially in both directions (although it is easier to trace works shipped from Europe to America than vice versa). How were the contents and formats of these books adapted via translations or reprints? Was there a marked difference in the religious-secular balance between Spain and New Spain?

With this in mind, I have sought out works aimed specifically at women, counting as such those addressing "women", "maidens", "mothers", "daughters", "nuns" or "midwives" in their titles. To do so, I have used the bibliographic catalogues of José Toribio Medina and Francisco Aguilar Piñal. The former, *La imprenta en México (1539–1821)* (Printing press in Mexico (1539–1821)), published in several volumes between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, lists works printed in New Spain during the viceroyalty and up to Mexican independence in 1821. Despite its usefulness, it has its limitations (Hampe Martínez 2010, 58; Moreno Gamboa 2018, 29; Vogeley 2011, 16). The author failed to include, for example, a whole series of pamphlets and other minor works that were widely read throughout the 1700s. There are similar issues with the second catalogue, the *Bibliografía de autores españoles del siglo XVIII* (Bibliography of eighteenth-century Spanish authors), compiled by Francisco Aguilar Piñal towards the end of the twentieth century. It only lists literature published in Spain during the eighteenth century in Spanish, overlooking not only the other languages of the peninsula but many of the short devotional works and texts designed purely to entertain that were so popular at the time. Both collections have therefore been treated with caution. To explore how literature

circulated between Spain and America, I have also studied the advertisements for books placed in the *Gazeta de México*.[1] This was the first periodical publication in New Spain and went through three phases of existence. Its initial issues appeared in 1722, then it re-emerged between 1728 and 1742, and again between 1784 and 1809—the main focus here will be on this final phase. Like other comparable periodicals, such as the *Gazeta de Madrid* or the *Gazeta de Lisboa*, the *Gazeta de México* featured numerous book advertisements, generally on its back page. It concentrated primarily on publishing the details of official news, regulations and provisions issued by the metropolitan and viceroyal authorities, and although it devoted little space to the debates of the day, did enable various pieces of scientific and literary news to circulate (Torres Puga 2010, 267). Although I am not focusing on the articles or discussions that appeared in its pages, we should not forget the key role played by such texts when it comes to analysing the creation of readerships over the course of the eighteenth century, as has been done by Mariselle Meléndez, with regard to women in Peru (2018), and Gabriel Torres Puga, with regard to the development of a public sphere of opinion in Mexico (2010).

The Circulation of Books and Ideas Between Spain and Mexico

In order to understand how literature for women was produced and circulated between the two sides of the Atlantic, it is first necessary to understand how the book trade, the world of printing and the different agents involved in this process functioned. As soon as Castile's conquest and colonisation of the New World had begun, the Spanish Monarchy had established a monopoly over trade with its territories in America. For this reason, all goods sent from Spanish America to Europe, and vice versa, had to pass through Seville in the 1500s and 1600s, then, from 1717 onwards, through Cádiz. Because of this commercial exclusivity, which lasted throughout the early modern period, the American territories remained largely dependent on the metropolis (Gómez Álvarez 2019,

[1] For this I drew on *Ciudad letrada: la Gazeta de México y la difusión de la cultura impresa durante el siglo XVIII*, a database of all the book advertisements printed in *La Gazeta de México* created by researchers at the Colegio de México. https://gazetademexico.colmex.mx/ Accessed 4 November 2022.

14). Books were among the key goods subject to such regulation and had to pass through various controls before being shipped transatlantically (Maillard Álvarez 2014, Rueda Ramírez 2021). Customs officers of the Crown examined merchandise at the customs house before an individual embarked for America but, as far as books were concerned, inquisitorial vigilance and checks became increasingly tight (Márquez Macías 2010, 156).

Anyone wanting to transport books to America had to submit an inventory beforehand to ensure that they all complied with the necessary licences. These inventories, which have survived for the sixteenth, seventeenth and, above all, eighteenth centuries and are housed in the Archivo General de Indias and the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico, are a crucial source of information for tracing literary circulation between Europe and America (Gómez Álvarez 2011). The system did not however entirely prevent banned books from reaching America, as people found various ways of circumventing it.

Most studies about the circulation of books between the two continents have focused on documenting the export of books from Europe to America, paying less attention to the arrival in Europe of printed matter from America. They have also concentrated on book production in centres such as Mexico City and Lima, where printing presses were established very early, in 1539 and 1589 respectively, rather than on other, later American print shops. Two more centres were created in the following century: Puebla de los Ángeles in 1640 and Guatemala in 1660. Printing then experienced genuine growth between the early 1700s and 1825, a period which saw the creation of as many as sixty new presses, some as important as those of Santa Fe de Bogotá in 1738 or Buenos Aires in 1780. There were still not enough, however, for them to compete with European levels of production (Moreno Gamboa 2017, 2018; Guibovich 2022). We need to only compare the figures of France, Spain and New Spain to understand the situation: in the early 1700s France had 250 printing presses, by the end of the century Spain had more than 200, while New Spain in the same period had no more than half a dozen (Moreno Gamboa 2018, 107).

There are other reasons, too, for the lower levels of production, including bureaucratic obstacles and the high price of paper, which had to be imported. Throughout the eighteenth century, there was some growth in the number of titles printed in territories such as New Spain, but it

was moderate in scale (Moreno Gamboa 2018, 84). Given such limitations, therefore, although print shops did produce books, there was a preference for other smaller and more adaptable formats, cheaper to print and easier to distribute. New Spain saw the emergence of *cajones*, *cajoncillos*, *alacenas* and other stalls specialising in the sale of chapbooks, whose contents might include prayers, sermons, the lives of saints, devotionals, calendars, astrological prognostications or other widely consumed material (Moreno Gamboa 2017, 494). During the eighteenth century, there was a huge growth in the number of works in this format produced by the printing presses of New Spain, as well as by those of France and Spain (Gomis Coloma 2015). If we want to analyse home-grown American production and the circulation of printed matter, we must therefore take these kinds of texts into account as they were widely accessed, both for personal consumption and to be read aloud to those who were illiterate.

In contrast to the abundance of these short texts, other works were printed on a rather more limited scale in New Spain; the same was true when it came to reprinting European publications. The vast majority of those that did appear, moreover, were religious in nature, as was also true of the aforementioned pamphlets. This is hardly surprising, given that the clergy dominated New Spain's intellectual circles until well into the eighteenth century. The importance of the Church in the dissemination of written culture in the viceroyalty is reflected both in its various literacy strategies (Castañeda 2004) and in the publishing market as a whole, as it played a central role in writing, funding and reading printed works (Moreno Gamboa 2018, 122). This issue, among others, has led to reflections on the very nature of the Enlightenment in New Spain. Shaped as it was by the secular and regular clergy, it has traditionally been interpreted as limited by the influence of the Church, and both weaker than and subsidiary to its European counterpart. This has led to the flow of Enlightenment ideas being investigated as an exclusively one-directional movement—from Europe to America—and to the first signs of modernity being discerned in secularisation. As Iván Escamilla argues, however, we have to reevaluate the indigenous processes of change:

> We search for enlightened and very specific interpretations, when perhaps what we should see is an enlightened attitude towards reading and interpretations; we try to unearth enlightened discourses from the testimonies of the age, when perhaps we should first investigate the modification of traditional discourses and practices; we imagine an indigenous modernity, when

> we should also understand this as a response and a challenge to external stimuli; we want to think of enlightened understanding as limited to traditional centres of culture and learning, such as Mexico City and Puebla, when perhaps there were multiple local births of modernity; influenced by a liberal historical teleology, we want to find a secular and secularising Enlightenment, when perhaps we should be considering an ecclesiastical Enlightenment. (Escamilla González 2010, 112)

We have to consider these observations when examining the printed material produced in New Spain, taking into account the ways in which it was influenced by clerics and members of religious orders (male and female). It is with all this in mind that the literature for women printed in New Spain has to be analysed.

The second half of the eighteenth century saw an increase in the amount of European literature travelling to Spanish America. New works, new writers and new ideas, primarily French in origin, permeated the intellectual environment of the enlightened elites in Mexico as in Europe. The distribution of French works, whether in the original language or in translation, expanded hugely in the final decades of the century. Some of these texts were prohibited by the Inquisition in the territories of the Spanish Monarchy, as was true of Françoise de Graffigny's epistolary novel *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, published in French in 1747 and added to the list of banned books in 1794. What did receive authorisation was the Spanish version, *Cartas de una peruana*, translated and adapted to Spanish censorship by María Rosario Romero in 1792 (Calvo Maturana 2019, Bolufer Peruga 2014). The original French novel enjoyed limited circulation in the lands of the Spanish Monarchy, although there are first editions in libraries such as that of the Count of Carlet, who must have been given special dispensation to own a copy.[2] By contrast, the Spanish translation had more freedom of movement and was in fact advertised in the *Gazeta de México* in September 1794.

Attractive as it was of course, French literature "was not acting on a *tabula rasa* nor did it have any kind of supernatural power … To assume that the possession of a forbidden book would be enough to transform an individual's cultural world would be to exaggerate its influence" (Torres Puga 2010, 230). Either way, we can see changes starting

[2] Archivo General y Fotográfico de la Diputación de Valencia: Fondo Duquesa de Almodóvar. e 1.4, Sucesiones, Caja 19.

to occur towards the end of the eighteenth century. Firstly, in the political and scientific debates developing in the Mexican press of the time. Secondly, in the private libraries of the Creole elite between 1750 and 1819, as studied by Cristina Gómez Álvarez (2019). And thirdly, in the characteristics of the most published New Spanish works and writers, as investigated by Olivia Moreno Gamboa (2018). Taken together, these factors seem to point to a gradual secularisation affecting reading practices and the publishing market, which leads us to consider how such changes influenced literature for women as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth.

On Women, Literature and Reading in Spanish America

In order to understand the strategies involved in creating a female readership, we first need to delve deeper into women's relationship with the written word, on both sides of the Atlantic. It is common knowledge that throughout Europe and America the reading public grew and diversified over the course of the eighteenth century, something which went hand in hand with changes in the publishing market, the development of the public sphere of opinion and the promotion of new discourses on teaching and learning aimed at extending education and improving teaching methods. The result was a gradual increase in literacy, if with limits imposed by class, race, gender and the varying provisions of rural and urban environments. By the end of the eighteenth century, the literacy rate in Spain for women was below 11%, while for men it was around 34%. This discrepancy can also be seen in the numbers attending school by then: just under 12% of girls compared to 39% of boys (Rey Castelao 2012, 616 and 617). In spite of these low figures, there was a newly increased perception of the existence of a female audience at whom to target the books being published and the articles appearing in different kinds of newspapers, whether for educational, commercial or strategic reasons (Bolufer Peruga 1995). In Spain, numerous original works and translations (many of French literature) were printed with a female readership explicitly or implicitly in mind. Most of these were texts of a religious, educational and moralising nature, these being the genres that were most obviously targeted at women; but there were also treatises on domestic economy and matters of health, and popularised scientific texts. One such publication was *Lidia de Gersin o Historia de*

una señorita inglesa de ocho años, para la instrucción y diversión de las niñas de la misma edad (Lydia de Gersin, or The Tale of an Eight-Year-Old English Girl, for the instruction and diversion of girls of the same age) (Barcelona, 1804), translated from the French by a woman: Juana Bergnes y las Casas.[3] Another was Pierre Collot's *Conversaciones sobre diferentes asuntos de moral, muy a propósito para imbuir y educar en la piedad a las señoritas jóvenes*,[4] translated by Francisco Fernando de Flores (Conversations on various moral questions, most suitable for educating and instilling piety in young ladies) (Madrid, 1787). Novels, too, were thought of as being primarily read by women (García Garrosa 2016, Lasa-Álvarez 2022), although we know they were consumed by a wide range of readers. All these works for women were part of wider book circuits, which transcended geographical boundaries, as evidenced by the circulation of French, English and Italian literature to Spain, both in the original language and in translation. Literature for women in other European countries enjoyed greater thematic variety, something that can be linked to higher levels of literacy and an intellectual environment—the academies and salons of France, Italy and Britain, for example—in which women played a more prominent role (D'Ezio 2011; Russell 2007).

With regard to Spanish America, and New Spain in particular, literacy and education were a priority from the early days of colonisation onwards, viewed as essential tools in converting the indigenous population to Christianity. For this reason, there was a notably close relationship between reading and the teaching of Christian doctrine in the Spanish American territories. The basics of reading and writing were taught through primers, catechisms and other short texts, published both in Spanish and in indigenous languages (Gonzalbo Aizpuru 2010). Overall illiteracy levels remained high, especially among women, with more formal education limited to the Creole elites (Ruiz Barrionuevo 2007, 540–542). This has made it more difficult to uncover potential evidence of reading among New Spanish women, as investigated by Josefina Muriel (1994) and others, more recently, by looking at libraries, moralising texts and lists of prohibited books (Treviño Salazar and Farré Vidal

[3] The original French version was *Lydie de Gersin, ou Histoire d'une jeune anglaise de huit ans*, written by Arnaud Berquin.

[4] Published in 1738 under the title *Conversations sur plusieurs sujets de morale, propres à former les jeunes demoiselles à la piété*.

2005; Guzmán Pérez and Barbosa Malagón 2013). The most significant progress in this area has been made in the sphere of the Church and education, given that many of the minority of literate women in eighteenth-century Mexico were nuns (Carreño Velázquez 2010; García Aguilar 2017; Loreto López 2000). Ecclesiastical institutions were, moreover, especially concerned with the education of girls. From the mid-1700s onwards, this interest intensified with the arrival in America of new religious orders such as the Company of Mary, founded in France in 1606 and established in New Spain in 1753 by María Ignacia de Azlor y Echeverz (Foz y Foz 1981). It was this same institution that opened the highest number of schools for girls in peninsular Spain in the late eighteenth century: by 1797 it had 11 centres with 290 female teachers and novices looking after 113 boarders and 238 day girls (Rey Castelao 2012, 620). The main innovation here was the fact that these schools were expected to educate pupils from any economic background and so needed to be free of charge. It was also envisaged that their teachers (all of them nuns) would be well-trained and competent, and would pass on useful skills to all young women (Foz y Foz 1981, 207 and 208).

This context of changes in education and teaching also led to the founding of the Colegio de San Ignacio de Loyola in Mexico City in 1767, better known as the Colegio de Vizcaínas (Carreño Velázquez 2010). It was established to offer education to girls, orphaned Creole girls in particular, and complemented the work begun by the Company of Mary very effectively by offering a more secular type of education. Thanks to the Colegio, a greater number of girls learned to read and write; its students also had access to an extensive library, consisting mainly of religious and moral texts, as well as music books—a collection that grew over the years (Ruiz Barrionuevo 2007, 541 and 542).

It is worth highlighting the role of these educational institutions, and their links with the Church, because it helps us understand some of the particularities of women's literature in the viceroyalty. Works of a spiritual nature, whether manuals for nuns, doctrinal primers or devotional texts, had a significant educational and formative component. Many were therefore written as adaptations, simplifications or detailed explanations of doctrinal matters that were more difficult to understand for a non-educated readership, such as women or, more specifically, nuns, compared to male clerics (Carreño Velázquez 2010, 170). But the fact that these types of books were written, or translated, with a non-specialist audience in mind also made them especially useful for children, with some being

used as textbooks to educate the very young. One important example is the *Carta edificante en que el Padre Antonio de Paredes de la Compañía de Jesús da noticia de la exemplar vida, sólidas virtudes y santa muerte de la Hermana Salvadora de los Santos, India Otomí* (Edifying letter in which Father Antonio de Paredes of the Company of Jesus recounts the exemplary life, steadfast virtues and blessed death of Sister Salvadora de los Santos, an Otomí Indian), published in Mexico in 1763. This hagiography explained how Sister Salvadora de los Santos had helped a group of women establish a Carmelite community of lay sisters, and how her exemplary life was a model for both young and old. In 1784, it became the first free textbook published in Mexico, with a print run of 1000 copies. The prologue to the 1784 reprint specifically noted that it was its "commendable object to provide the Schools in which our children are educated with a sort of primer which, at the same time as enabling them to learn to read, will teach them to imitate Christian virtues through the pleasing, powerful and natural attraction of seeing them practised by a person of their own kind" (Tanck de Estrada 2004, 218–219). The *Carta*, therefore, promoted reading and the education of both boys and girls in schools. Moreover, it strategically highlighted its protagonist's indigenous background, depicting her as someone with whom Indian men and women, as well as women leading a religious life, could identify.

Although education was one of the fields that best represented signs of change in the creation of new readerships in the late eighteenth century, there was still far less thematic diversity in New Spain's home-grown print production than in that of Spain—thanks to the limitations of the American print shops, as described above, the abundance of imported texts and the cultural domination of the clergy. That said, it should be noted that some female members of the viceroyalty's Creole elite (both lay and religious individuals) were actively involved in financing publications and, above all, in running printing businesses (García Aguilar 2008; Garone Gravier 2010). This was not something exclusive to New Spain, as it was common in both Spanish America and mainland Spain for women to keep these family businesses going for years (Establés Susán 2018). The prominent position of women in the publishing world, therefore, was not so very different from the situation in European territories.

In New Spain, readerships gradually began to become more diversified and printed texts more secularised in the early nineteenth century, somewhat later than in Europe. Significantly, new, non-religious works published in Mexico introduced debates that were already widespread in

Europe, such as the discussion of female education as an indicator of modernisation. In the viceroyalty, this acquired new dimensions in that it was intertwined with other factors such as race, as in the case of *La Quijotita y su prima* (Little Miss Quixote and her Cousin) (1818–1819), a well-known work by New Spanish writer and journalist José Fernández de Lizardi (Jaffe 2019, 78). Similarly, in the context of the revolutionary process that resulted in Mexican independence, women gained prominence as subjects actively involved in the process of consolidating the new nation, or at least appeared as potential readers, and purported authors, of pamphlets and newspaper articles (Mendoza Castillo and Sánchez Morales 2004). The press, therefore, is particularly helpful in enabling us to appreciate the changes of the day (Torres Puga 2010). In Spain, although to a lesser extent and a little later than in the rest of Europe, the periodical press had already established its role in shaping behaviour, and specialist newspapers directed at female readers were beginning to emerge by the beginning of the nineteenth century (Urzainqui Miqueleiz 2016). In New Spain, by contrast, publications of this kind did not begin to proliferate until well into that century (Carreño Velázquez 2010, 142).

The holdings of Mexican libraries also reflect the changes that occurred during the nineteenth century. The library of the Santa Catalina convent in Puebla, for example, shows that, compared to the clear predominance of religious literature among the publications of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those produced in the nineteenth are much more varied in their subject matter, with books on literature, astronomy, philosophy and chemistry, among others (Carreño Velázquez 2010, 76 and 77). In fact, it was during this century that the number of works published directly in Spanish in Paris or Philadelphia increased (Muriel 1994, 172). That same convent library possesses copies of the *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* (Dictionary of the Castilian language) of 1838, published in Paris; *Nuevo lunario perpetuo, considerablemente refundido y aumentado con unas observaciones sobre diferentes ramos de astronomía e historia natural* (New perpetual lunar calendar, substantially revised and expanded with observations on different branches of astronomy and natural history), it too issued in Paris, in 1842; and *Quaresma devota o Exercicios espirituales para el santo tiempo de quaresma; en que pueden ocuparse las almas, sean religiosas o seculares, hombres o mugeres* (A Lenten Devotional, or Spiritual exercises for the holy season of Lent; to occupy the souls of men or women, religious or secular), published in Philadelphia in 1833. The North American city became an important centre for

the production and distribution of Spanish-language literature between the North and the South of America, playing a particularly active role in the circulation of new political ideas reported in Spanish and intended for a wide Spanish-speaking readership stretching beyond the lands of the Spanish Monarchy (Lazo 2007; Vogeley 2011).

Intercontinental Circulation of Books for Women: Some Examples

Moving on from these general discussions of the transatlantic book trade and women's relationship with the publishing world, this section will examine the circulation of women's literature in greater depth by looking at some specific examples. Among the educational, moralising and religious works published in Spain, many of those that went on to circulate between the continents were translations of French texts, such as Fénelon's *Tratado de la educación de las hijas* (*Traité de l'éducation des filles* 1687), translated by Remigio Asensio (Madrid, 1769), or Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Almacén de señoritas adolescentes o Diálogos de una sabia directora con sus nobles discípulas* (The Young Misses Magazine: containing Dialogues between a Governess and several Young Ladies of Quality, her Scholars), translated from the French *Magasin des adolescents* by Plácido Barco López (Madrid, 1787) (Bolufer Peruga 2002). These educational works, which went through numerous editions and were translated into several other languages until well into the nineteenth century, travelled to America (Gómez Álvarez 2011) and found homes in Mexican libraries (Ruiz Barrionuevo 2007, 543). The *Almacén de señoritas adolescentes*, for example, was the only non-religious eighteenth-century work present in the Dominican convent of Santa Catalina in Puebla.

Las Veladas de la Quinta, o novelas e historias sumamente útiles para que las madres de familia puedan instruir a sus hijos juntando la doctrina con el recreo (The Tales of the Castle: or, stories that will serve mothers well in instructing their children by combining doctrine with delight—published in English as *The Tales of the Castle: Stories of Instruction and Delight*) by Stéphanie Félicité Du Crest, Comtesse de Genlis (translated from its French version *Les Veillées du château* by Fernando de Guilleman, Madrid, 1758), a work widely distributed across Europe in French, English and Spanish editions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was also a great success in New Spain. It was advertised in the *Gazeta* on

up to five occasions between 1790 and 1802. A similar preoccupation with the parent's role as educator is also found in the title of Spanish works such as Manuel Bellosartes' *Academia doméstica o asuntos ascéticos dirigidos a los padres y madres de familia* (A Domestic Academy, or ascetic matters aimed at fathers and mothers) (Barcelona, 1786), advertised in Mexico City in February 1794. Finally, French and English novels too reached New Spain as Spanish-language editions published in Spain. These included Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (translated from the French version by Ignacio García Malo, Madrid, 1799) and *Clarissa* (translated by José Marcos Gutiérrez, Madrid, 1794), both advertised in 1804; and Sophia Lee's *El subterráneo o La Matilde* (*The Recess*; translated by Manuel de Quevedo Bustamante, Madrid, 1795) and Sarah Fielding's *La huerfanita inglesa o historia de Carlota Summers* (*The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl* 1750) (Madrid, 1797), both advertised in March 1802. Some of these novels were also reprinted as new editions in Mexico City, but at a later date, perhaps reflecting a growth in local demand—for instance, Michel-Ange Marin's *Virginia, la doncella christiana. Historia siciliana que se propone por modelo a las señoritas que aspiran a la perfección* (Virginia, the Christian Virgin. A Sicilian tale to serve as a model for young ladies aspiring to perfection), translated from the French *Virginie ou la Vierge Chrétienne* by Cayetana Aguirre y Rosales, was published in Madrid in 1806, and in Mexico City in 1853.

All these books travelled across the Atlantic, and turned the American market into an active player in the circulation of European literature. As we have seen, though, American printers were also producing their own reprints and translations of works from overseas. One non-fiction example is Antonio Medina's *Cartilla útil y necesaria para instruirse las matronas* (A letter useful and necessary for the education of midwives), published in Madrid in 1785 but reprinted in Mexico City in 1806 at the print shop owned by María Fernández de Jáuregui. In fact, it was this New Spanish version that was advertised in the *Gazeta* in 1807. This is not the only text we find addressed to midwives in New Spain. In 1774, *Embriología sagrada, o Tratado de la obligación que tienen los curas, confesores, médicos, comadres y otras personas, de cooperar a la salvación de los niños que aún no han nacido* (Sacred Embryology, or Treatise on the obligation of priests, confessors, physicians, midwives and other persons to cooperate in the salvation of unborn children) (Bolufer Peruga 1998; Moriconi 2019) appeared in Spain as part of a campaign organised by

the Church and the Bourbon government to ensure that even unborn babies were baptised. Written by the Italian Francesco Cangiamila, it had previously been published in Italian (*Embriologia sacra*, 1745) and French (*Abrégé de l'embryologie sacrée*, 1762), but only the Spanish version makes explicit mention of midwives in its title, alongside "priests, confessors, physicians and other persons". Their role gains greater emphasis in the title of an adaptation published in New Spain in 1775: *Avisos saludables a las parteras para el cumplimiento de su obligación. Sacados de la Embriología Sacra* (Healthful counsel for midwives in the fulfilment of their obligations). The usefulness of this manual for female readers was then underlined in a new version published in New Spain that made pregnant women its target audience: *Práctica piadosa e instructiva. En utilidad de las mugeres que se encuentran en cinta y de los niños que aún no han recibido el Santo Bautismo. Sacada de la Embriología Sagrada* (Devout and instructive practice: for the use of women with child and for children who have not yet received holy baptism. Taken from the Sacred Embryology) (1806). The latter is a clear example of the way in which literature intended for women might be adapted to new contexts. The various versions of this work were also part of a process that began to unfold in the early eighteenth century: the monitoring and regulation of the professional activity of midwives. From 1750 onwards, midwives in Spain came under the jurisdiction of the Protomedicato, meaning they had to take an examination in order to practise, thus ensuring that their work was supervised by physicians and surgeons (Martínez Vidal and Pardo Tomás 2001). The arrival of this literature in New Spain can therefore be interpreted as, among other things, a reformist initiative on the part of the Spanish Monarchy to monitor these women more closely and to foster demographic growth by improving childbirth outcomes.

Religious treatises, devotional texts and other spiritual works that rolled off Spanish presses in the eighteenth century, whether in original Spanish-language versions or in translations from other languages, crossed the Atlantic in high numbers. One such publication was *Discursos espirituales y morales, para el útil entretenimiento de las monjas y de las sagradas vírgenes que se retiran del siglo* (Spiritual and moral discourses for the useful instruction of nuns and holy virgins living in retreat from the world); (Málaga, 1786). This Italian work by Cesare Calino (*Discorsi scritturali e morali*) was translated by Sister María Córdoba y Pacheco, and represents the kind of literature intended primarily for young women who wanted to enter religion. It was also advertised in the *Gazeta de*

México in April 1795. Another example is *La Religiosa ilustrada. Con instrucciones prácticas para renovar su espíritu en ocho días de exercicios* (The enlightened nun. With practical instructions to renew the spirit in eight days of exercises) (Zaragoza, 1748), which was a translation of the Italian work *La religiosa illuminata*, by the Jesuit Pietro Ansalone and appeared in up to six editions in Spanish during the eighteenth century. One of the six was issued from the printing press of the widow of José Bernardo de Hogal in 1750 in Mexico City, another was printed in Lima in 1788. This work, together with other very similar texts aimed at the education of nuns during the eighteenth century,[5] both translations and Spanish originals, appears in many of the inventories of New Spanish convent and school libraries. This was the genre of women's literature most commonly printed on the presses of New Spain, sometimes as new editions of works first published in peninsular Spain, sometimes as translations into Spanish directly sponsored by New Spanish clerics or nuns. The *Avisos de Santa María Magdalena de Pazzis a varias religiosas, y reglas de perfección* (Counsel of St Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi to various nuns, and rules of perfection), for instance, was a text translated from the Italian, published in Mexico in 1721 and advertised in the *Gazeta* in 1722. The success, or rather the practical value, of works of this type allows us to understand why they also enjoyed distribution around Spain, as in the case of *La Virgen en el templo honrando el templo. Virtudes heroicas que exercitó María Santísima Señora Nuestra mientras vivió en el templo. Se las propone en meditaciones a las almas, en especial de vírgenes religiosas* (The Virgin in the temple, honouring the temple. Heroic virtues exercised by Our Most Holy Lady Mary when she lived in the temple. These are offered as meditations for souls, especially those of virgin nuns). Written by José Tercero, a priest, and published in Mexico in 1723, it had a second edition printed in Seville in 1735. This makes it one of the few examples so far traced to have travelled from America to Europe, and clearly shows the importance of a cultural production that did not travel in just one direction or depend exclusively on the metropolis. The texts published both in Spain and, most notably, New Spain, also demonstrate the pedagogical aspect acquired by these manuals and treatises for nuns, conceived for non-specialist readers with a limited level of education.

[5] These include *La religiosa instruida* (Antonio Arbiol, Madrid, 1717), *La religiosa enseñada y entretenida* (Jaime Barón y Arín, Madrid, 1740) and *La religiosa mortificada* (Manuel de Espinosa, Madrid, 1799).

Conclusions

Focusing on the circulation of literature for women from the perspective of the relationship between Spain and New Spain has allowed us to reflect both on the habitual circuits of the book trade and on the specific characteristics of home-grown Spanish-American production. As we have seen, printed works aimed at women in eighteenth-century Spain—whether by Spanish authors or, more commonly, translated from French, English or Italian—were more diverse in their subject matter than those produced in New Spain. It was these same works, in Spanish editions, that travelled to America and ended up in all kinds of libraries, whether private or institutional. By contrast, in the viceroyalty, literature for women was predominantly religious in nature, far more so than that printed in Spain, reflecting the greater influence wielded by the Church on New Spanish cultural and intellectual circles. Likewise, works were produced in much smaller quantities in America than they were in Europe, owing to the limitations of New Spain's printing presses, among other factors.

All indications are that there was little diversity in the literature for women produced in New Spain until the turn of the nineteenth century, when significant changes begin to be discernible in the context of Mexican independence. Before then, the female readership targeted by writers seemed to consist primarily of Creole women who were members of religious orders. We should not, however, conclude that the imposing presence of the Church limited the possibilities of the New Spanish Enlightenment by preventing a process of secularisation already underway in Europe. The particularities of the literature for women produced in New Spain, religious in content and issued in smaller quantities than that coming from Europe, are a result of the cultural and intellectual characteristics of the viceroyalty itself, where the processes of change and modernisation took place within a strongly Catholic culture and not exclusively in opposition to it. This ties in with more recent studies that argue for the specificity of the Hispanic Enlightenment, which was not necessarily a secularising movement. If we look at religious literature for women, we can see the emergence of a growing interest in the need for education. On the one hand, this meant that works of this nature were especially useful for non-specialist audiences (women, but also children), on the other, it turned the religious sphere into one of the spaces offering New Spanish women (Creole, but also indigenous) the chance to educate themselves and others, via the translation and commissioning of printed

material. That concern for education was also reflected in the teaching activities of religious orders, particularly attentive to improving the lives of girls from poor and/or indigenous backgrounds.

Finally, in order to better evaluate the Spanish-language literature published in Spain and New Spain, including those works aimed at female readers, we need to take into account the transatlantic book trade and the ways in which it influenced distribution circuits within Europe. The American and European publishing worlds were interrelated and fed into one another on a continuous basis (Rueda Ramírez 2010). Book distribution networks have therefore to be understood as connections controlled by agents on both sides of the Atlantic in which American readers were not simply passive recipients. European products travelled to America because there were printers, clerics and Creoles who motivated their circulation, allowing us to reinterpret European production by seeing American demand as a driving force behind it. In the case at hand, we can assume from the presence of literature for women in the libraries of convents and institutions established to educate girls that some nuns in the viceroyalty were actively involved in the circulation of this kind of material between the two continents. As a final thought, the emergence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries of centres such as Philadelphia, one of whose specialities was the production of literature in Spanish for American readers, enables us to reflect on the global scope of literature written in that language, and on the ways in which it was able to travel through wide-ranging networks that extended beyond the territories of the Spanish Monarchy. Whether or not women were reading the literature intended for them is another question, and one more difficult to answer.

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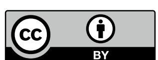

CHAPTER 14

Women and Novels: Educating the Female Public in the Age of Enlightenment

Patrizia Delpiano

Gender and Reading: Women and Fragile Readers

Analysing how the female public was educated and controlled in the Age of Enlightenment, and more specifically the connection between women and novels, entails addressing an important issue at the heart of this volume, namely the relationship between gender, the Enlightenment and Catholicism. This chapter engages the intersection of the history of reading and censorship by addressing the *roman antiphilosophique* (antiphilosophical novel), understood as one of the instruments used by conservative intellectuals—especially but not exclusively clerics—and other leading exponents of Catholic culture in their efforts to regulate women's reading. These novels comprised one of the genres that arose in response to the emergence of Enlightenment culture and the secularisation processes it brought with it. So far the history of antiphilosophical novels has been investigated in individual national contexts (Masseau

P. Delpiano (✉)
Dipartimento di Culture, politica, società, Università di Torino, Torino, Italy
e-mail: patrizia.delpiano@unito.it

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2000; McMahon 2001; Caesar 2005; Delpiano 2018), yet it has a European scale (Delpiano 2021). A small part of this history is reconstructed here, first by investigating how aware censors and moralists were of the emergence of a specific public of female readers. The chapter then analyses a specific case study to draw attention to the moral and social construction of the woman reader, a construction deeply marked by Catholic culture's resistance to the proliferation of reading also (but not only) among the female public.

There are a few aspects worth clarifying in relation to the objectives of this chapter. Its focus is the Italian peninsula, but it also considers the other side of the Alps and particularly neighbouring France with which Italy engaged in intense intellectual exchanges during the eighteenth century.

A first aspect concerns the history of reading, a practice undergoing significant changes at that time: school reforms increased the reading public throughout Catholic Europe, paving the way, with greater or lesser difficulty, for social groups that had long been excluded from literacy (Roggero 1999). Of course, data on literacy should be treated with caution and must be understood in the specific Italian context. There was certainly an increase in the reading public in Italy[1] but, as various scholars have noted, only within the middle class (Infelise 1997; Roggero 2021). Moreover, it is difficult to interpret the significant representation of female reading scenes that emerged in Italian (and European) painting in that period. Are they to be interpreted as a sign of ongoing social changes? Or should they instead be viewed as the projection of a desire surfacing in this period, after women had been confined for centuries to the world of orality (Plebani 2001, 2016)?

A second aspect concerns the fears that elites, especially the clergy, nurtured towards emerging readers, including women. In terms of the social imaginary prevailing in the second half of the eighteenth century, these fears translated into a gradual shift from the idea of contagion to that of a flood. Indeed, the increasing circulation of books and supposed upsurge in male and female readership were presented at the time through a new metaphor. Beginning in the Counter-Reformation period, the

[1] In the last decades of the eighteenth century, in urban areas only 41% of men and 20.6% of women were literate, while in rural areas the percentages fell to 17% and 4.8%. For a comparison, the figures for France are 47% of men and 27% of women and for England 60% and 40% (Marchesini 1985).

image that had long dominated was that of a plague, an image associated with the idea of contagion and evocative of religious heresy; in the 1760s, however, the image that began to prevail was a biblical allusion to the flood. This metaphor circulated at a European level from the mid-eighteenth century onwards and dominated Italian ecclesiastical and secular literature in the last decades of the century, expressing a kind of breakdown in the ability of both ecclesiastical and secular censorial institutions to halt the circulation of books (Delpiano 2017, 2018; Artiaga 2007).

The third aspect has to do with the impact this increased circulation had on the forms of control that religious powers initiated (or continued to exercise) to maintain their intellectual hegemony. Italy had been shaped since the sixteenth century by the Congregation of the Index of Prohibited Books, an offshoot of the Catholic Church. There has been much debate on how effective its control really was. Some scholars have argued it was ineffective, highlighting that the Index itself provided free publicity for forbidden books (Infelise 1999). Others have instead emphasised its deterrent effects among certain classes and groups of readers in particular, including women (Delpiano 2018). The Index operated on two levels, institutional censorship and moral censorship. These two closely intertwined forces coexisted at length throughout the early modern period. However, in the later part of this period, the action shifted to the non-institutional level when repressive institutions underwent a crisis that ended up favouring techniques of persuasion instead of direct suppression (Delpiano 2018).

At the same time, it is useful to focus on the words and fears of censors and moralists to see whether they identified the emergence of the female audience as a specific problem. I should clarify that the answer is not unequivocal. Women certainly did populate the imaginary of the censors called on to evaluate texts associated with French *philosophie*. While women were precisely identified by sex, however, they were also always lumped together with other social groups in the category of fragile readers, variously defined as “incautious”, “weak” and “inexperienced”. A few examples help to clarify this point while also demonstrating that this was the case for multiple kinds of texts. Take Francesco Algarotti’s *Newtonianismo per le dame* (1737), for instance. This work was condemned in the Index (1738) partly out of concern that Newtonian principles might circulate in Italy among an audience of “inexperienced and insolent adolescents and idle women” (Delpiano 2018, 55). Giuseppe

Gorani's *Vero dispotismo* (1770), censured (1773) on the grounds that it defended jurisdictionalism, thus also appeared dangerous because it could end up in the hands "above all of common people and women" (Delpiano 2018, 71). The association between women and uncultured people—an association made throughout the early modern period—appears to be a constant feature of censors' opinions in the second half of the eighteenth century and also characterises their consideration of philosophical novels. The opinion on Voltaire's *Candide* is an illustrative example. This text was seen as capable of "enticing the unwary" and "luring the minds of women" (Delpiano 2013, 107). Women were thus included among risky readers, alongside the "simple-minded", the "naïve" or the "unwary faithful", to borrow the definitions used by contemporary observers outside of censorship institutions as well. These latter readers were explicitly cited by both Clement XIII in his encyclical *Christianae reipublicae: De novis noxiis libris* (1766) and Pius VI in his encyclical *Inscrutabile Divinae Sapientiae* (1775), expressing their concern about the circulation of dangerous books among, respectively, the "uneducated" and "the weakest – who make up the majority". These encyclicals do not actually mention the female audience; women are instead cited in other literary genres where they are sometimes associated with the young and "uncouth" (*Biblioteca per li parrochi* 1767, I, 111). At other times, they appear to be endowed with such a specific excess of imagination as to condition their self-control with respect to reading. Hence, in a move that likewise has a long history, women were included in the category of the "inept", i.e. people who, similarly to the elderly, infirm and young, were exempted from papal excommunication for reading heretical books as specified in the sixteenth-century bull *In coena Domini*. This was, for example, the thinking of Bishop Alfonso de' Liguori (de' Liguori 1761, vol. III, 26; Delpiano 2018, 130–31, 29).

In the eighteenth century, therefore, the emergence of a female audience surfaced as a specific problem in the minds of a number of men of letters. However, it did not seem to have significantly populated the mentality of the time: in reading, women seemed to run the same risks as other 'fragile' or vulnerable categories. It was precisely the condition of fragility that united women with those who, lacking a regular school education, were barely able to read in the sense of having little familiarity with the alphabet and therefore limited ability to understand texts.

While the persistence of this traditional association between women and *rudes* (uneducated people) appears to indicate continuity with the

past, there was also marked discontinuity on other levels. Suspicious texts had always seemed even more dangerous when they were accessible to a wide audience (Caravale 2022). During the eighteenth century, however, the reading public was perceived to be growing exponentially. Observers of the time viewed reading as the authentic feature of the century. It is no coincidence that a lively debate developed in that period, in Italy and Europe more generally, around the harms of reading. Many thinkers on the Italian peninsula shared the view expressed by Clement XIII: in the aforementioned encyclical *Christianae reipublicae*, the pope explicitly warned that books "remain forever, and are always with us, they travel with us, and penetrate rooms whose entrance would not be accessible to a wicked and deceiving author" (Delpiano 2018, 131). It did not matter that the literacy figures pointed to a different social reality, one in which the majority of the population was mired in illiteracy. Fears mattered, and the stakes were much higher than they had been in the past: the dangers associated with reading, and thus also with female reading, had changed. Whereas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the danger was the spread of Protestant heresy, in the Age of Enlightenment it was the loss of faith *tout court*. All the more so given that philosophical principles were disseminated through widely circulating literary genres such as the novel.

Although censorship verdicts remained largely the same, this should not conceal from our view important changes in the way the novel was understood over time. The novel was long interpreted as being concerned with love, hazardous in itself and placed in the category of impure books. It is thus not surprising that the censor placed the 1744 French version of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (London 1741–1742) in the category of obscene books because it dealt with *artes amatorias*, according to the seventh rule of the Index condemning works about lewd topics (Delpiano 2018, 77). As this genre in its version of *conte philosophique* became one of the instruments par excellence for disseminating Enlightenment principles, censors began to view it differently. From a means of fomenting concupiscence, they began to see it as an instrument aimed at subverting the religious and political foundations of Old Regime society. As Enlightenment culture became increasingly consolidated at the level of publishing, therefore, novels began to be viewed with new suspicion. The turning point can be traced back to the beginning of the 1760s. As is well known, Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, published anonymously in Amsterdam in 1721, was not censored until May 1762, forty years later. Since the novel had not been reported, it underwent *ex officio* censorship

involving, unsurprisingly, a two-fold condemnation. This affected both Montesquieu's work and the Italian translation of Voltaire's *Candide* also published in 1759, the year of the French original (Macé 2005, 57–59). Obviously, philosophical novels were censored because of the content they conveyed, the same ideas that were invoked in efforts to censor *philosophique* production: one of the main accusations levelled at Voltaire is that of fostering religious tolerance. His famous *contes philosophiques* were censored, from *La défense de mon oncle* (1767) to *L'homme aux quarante écus* (1768) and *Lettres d'Amabed traduites par Tramponet* (1770). Many censors interpreted tolerance as a gateway to unbelief. Novels were considered all the more dangerous, however, because they conveyed their content using a literary genre characterised by specific features. Not only did it succeed in reaching a wide and varied audience, it also had the power to transform the individual: by probing the thoughts and actions of the characters, novels prompted readers to identify with the protagonists and thereby potentially influenced their behaviour (Delpiano 2018, 76–78). The reasons for the prohibitions changed not only because of changes in the themes addressed by this hybrid literary genre (Crivelli 2002, 17) enjoying a revival at the time, but also and especially because the censors approached the genre of novel by projecting new fears and, therefore, with renewed prejudices. Unsurprisingly, this new genre was also used by writers critical of the spread of the Enlightenment. Indeed, no one doubted the novel's formative impact: its supporters, such as the literary scholar and traveller Giuseppe Maria Galanti (Galanti 1780), and its opponents, such as the Jesuit Giambattista Roberti (Roberti 1769), all agreed that the novel performed this function whether they viewed it positively or negatively (Caesar 2005, 30–31). The critics of this genre, however, overturned *conte philosophique* principles focused mainly on critiquing contemporary society (Séité 1997) to turn the novel into a genre defending the political, social and religious values of the Old Regime. The history of the *conte antiphilosophique* thus represents an important chapter in that pedagogy of books and reading that had its roots in the age of the Counter-Reformation and yet continued to shape Italian and European intellectual production in the second half of the eighteenth century. These moral warnings found expression in multiple literary genres, from papal encyclicals to sermons, from catechisms to behaviour manuals (Delpiano 2013). In the following section, I seek to outline the purposes, international scope and target audience of this current of pedagogy.

Of the Fate of Women Who Read *livres philosophiques*: The Case of Emirena

It is well known that women were the main characters in many of the novels published in the second half of the eighteenth century in Italy and the rest of Europe (Le Vot 1999; Ferrand 2002; Brouard-Arends 2003; Crivelli 2002, 192–229; Crivelli 2014). Their stories were either recounted in autobiographical form or through an external narrator; in any case, they were often cast in non-traditional roles. Even from the point of view of reading and the history of its representation (Nies 1995), authors often opted for choices that were transgressive or, at least, ran counter to prevailing social reality. Suffice it to say that in one of the novels by Pietro Chiari, a famous Venetian writer and author of the 1753 *La filosofessa italiana*, the protagonist states in the very first lines that "my predominant passion since [youth] has been reading and studying", declaring that she had devoured "an innumerable number of tales, poems, novels, and travels" (Chiari 1753, 7). This contradiction between representation and reality is clearly expressed in the observation that "women readers are paradoxically both the most visible in literature and the most invisible in the historical record" (Pearson 1999, 12). On one hand, female literacy struggled to take hold and the debate on women's capacity to read and study divided the minds of contemporaries. Even in Italy, many were wholly opposed to spreading literacy among women (Guerci 1987). On the other hand, female readers were the main characters in literature and particularly novels. In short, women had conquered the alphabet in literary fiction but not in reality (Ferrand 2002, 446). In real life, and especially in Italy, they had difficulty even obtaining books (Roggero 2001). This contradiction has been interpreted as evidence of a dual discrediting, as Nathalie Ferrand has pointed out, discounting both the novel (read only by women) and women (who read only novels) (Ferrand 2002, 449).

Women's presence on the fictional scene, however, may be viewed historiographically through a long-term lens, viewing novels as not only the representation of an image (of women, reading and the novel) but also as an instrument of education. Scholars have identified three distinct phases in the developing relationship between women and fiction from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries (1656–1856). In the first phase, from the 1650s to the 1720s, the emergence of a female audience was paralleled by satire of women readers, the so-called *précieuses*

ridicules. In the second phase, spanning up to the end of the eighteenth century, the fascination with reading triumphed while in the final phase, in the following century, the majority of young women were worried about reading and female readers became tragic figures (Aragon 2003a, 2003b, 456; Bernier 2003; Lanni 2003). However, it is useful to delve deeper into the connection between women, the novel and the Enlightenment specifically. Changes taking place in that period in the way novels represented the relationship between women and reading are worth examining. To better understand this issue, it must also be contextualised in relation to the increasing secularisation of eighteenth-century society. Before engaging with this question, however, I would like to point out that in the Italian peninsula, the *roman antiphilosophique*—like the novel in general (Marchesi 1991; Delpiano 2004; Asor Rosa 2002; Braida 2019; Roggero 2021)—was an imported genre that reached Italy through translation. Translations of French works were published in the country from the 1760s onwards, beginning with Father Michel-Ange Marin's *Il Baron Van-Esden ovvero la repubblica degl'increduli*, published in French (*Le baron Van-Hesden*) in 1762 and printed in Italian in Lucca in 1765 (Marin 1765). Developed by imitating European models, the Italian *roman antiphilosophique* became fully autonomous in the following decades yet always remained firmly intertwined with the European world.

In exploring this point, it is interesting to look at a specific case study: the novel *Emirena*, published anonymously in 1778 by the Piedmont count Benvenuto Robbio di San Raffaele (1735–1794). It has been chosen here as an example for several reasons (Cerrano 1990–1991; Delpiano 2015, 170–77; Delpiano 2018, 182, 193). Firstly, because it narrates a story that was recurring in European fiction of the time. Secondly, because this work underwent a long publishing process and was reprinted, re-edited and adapted between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And lastly, because it was written by an author who, while holding public positions, sided with the conservative sectors of Catholic culture and participated in a cultural-political project to promote the dissemination of good books. Launched in Jesuit and former Jesuit circles, this project involved both ecclesiastics and laity. It laid the foundations for the alliance between throne and altar that went on to mark the political and cultural spirit of the Restoration and was long held up by individuals and groups as a moral referent (Delpiano 2018, 223–36).

Let us begin with a few words about Robbio di san Raffaele, author of important texts reacting to the culture of the Enlightenment aimed

mostly at young people in school, but also at families and fundamental mediating figures such as educators. Born near Turin, Piedmont, in 1735 (he died in Turin in 1794), Robbio attended the Jesuit College in Lyon and then frequented the Barnabite Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil's teachings in Moral Philosophy at the University of Turin. Gerdil was one of the Italian refuters of the *culture philosophique* and wrote famous texts such as the *Réflexions sur la théorie, et la pratique de l'éducation* (1763) against Rousseau, a position that helped elevate him to the post of cardinal and prefect of the Congregation of the Index in 1777. Robbio di san Raffaele followed in Gerdil's footsteps, writing eloquently titled texts from *Della falsa filosofia* (1777) to *Della condotta de' letterati* (1780), a guide for budding scholars, to *Apparecchio degli educatori* (Robbio di san Raffaele 1777, 1780, 1787) in which he cast a critical eye on the "domestic" education of the nobility and argued that they were exposed to uncontrollable passions. The author was thus part of the political-cultural circle that, in the years following the suppression of the Society of Jesus, played an important role in Piedmont and Italy more generally in resisting the circulation of Enlightenment ideas and coordinating the spread of the Catholic "good press" (Prandi 1966, 1975; Rosa 2008; Delpiano 2017, 2018; Guasti 2006, 2017). After having held important positions in the field of State Education beginning in 1778, in 1780 Robbio was appointed Royal Reviser of Books (Merlotti 2016). His texts are also important because they allow us to grasp, in the midst of an age of jurisdictional reform, the alliance between former Jesuits who took a stand in defence of the censorious powers of the Church (think for instance of Francesco Antonio Zaccaria and his *Storia polemica*; Zaccaria 1777) and officials such as Robbio who supported the authority of the state. This alliance is an important aspect that allows us to identify a broader model for controlling reading that originated in reactions to Enlightenment culture and went on to operate throughout the nineteenth century.

Emirena is based on a recurring pattern of this *antiphilosophique* narrative: a young woman, wife and mother, falls victim to a man who suggests bad readings to her; due to these texts, she quickly loses the virtues associated with her dual wife-and-mother role and her connection with the domestic sphere, leaves her husband and children, and begins to lead an immoral life. Through the providential intervention of a curate, she then finally repents, destroys her books and returns to religion and family. The first edition of *Emirena* appeared in 1778 as part of the anonymously published collection *Operette relative alla religione e sopra gli*

errori correnti without any further publishing information (Robbio di san Raffaele 1778). One clue, however, allows us to reconstruct the text's background: the publishing place and date are reported in the *Avviso* (warning) as Freiburg, 26 August 1778. So is the name of Jos[eph] Reebman, professor of theology O.P., who signed the preventive assessment of the work on behalf of the local bishop. The warning suggests that the *Operette* is to be considered as belonging to the sphere of Amicizia Cristiana, an organisation founded in 1776 by a group of ecclesiastics and former Jesuits including, in addition to Robbio di San Raffaele, Gian Domenico Giulio, Luigi Virginio and Pio Brunone Lanteri, and above all the former Jesuit Nikolaus Joseph Albert von Diessbach (1732–1798). A Calvinist born in Berne, Von Diessbach later converted to Catholicism and was active in Turin beginning in 1769 (Stella 1991). The aim of this association was to promote the circulation of "good books" in reaction to the spread of Enlightenment ideas through the publishing centre *Pia associazione per la stampa* (Pious press association) operating in Turin and Freiburg. This publishing house collaborated with numerous printers in Italy and Switzerland and involved ecclesiastics and lay people, including women, with an international scope of dissemination. It sought to circulate religious books (of theology and apologetics), but also literature and history, in the original or translated versions. Their key focus was texts aimed at cultivating religion (Bona 1962; De Mattei 1981, 2005; Delpiano 2018, 190). The pamphlets included in this collection of *Operette* are indeed highly varied but all apologetic in nature. The *Avviso* at the beginning of the volume lends coherence to the collection, not least because it identifies a precise enemy, albeit without mentioning his name (Voltaire, as can be inferred from the mention of the *philosophe*'s death in May 1778). In short, Robbio's objective was to point out Voltaire's errors by refuting his books (*Avviso*, no pp.).

The opening text of the collection is a short section entitled *Dello Zelo*, outlining the harm that this kind of books may cause, when aimed at a wide audience ("whatever is your sex, age, condition or ability, zeal is your definite duty", *Dello Zelo*, 3–4). Unbelief and apostasy: these are the evils that must be fought through the study of religion. The second section delves into *De' libri empj* and provides some "cautions" to be adopted with respect to these books, consisting of eight specific rules, to which I will return shortly (16–23). The collection continues with the *Avvisi a chi scrive in favor della religione cristiana* aimed at suggesting ways to best attack "the blasphemous philosophers" (24–55).

It is the following text, however, that is crucial for grasping the genesis of *Emirena*: the *Osservazioni sopra il libro intitolato Confidenza filosofica* (56–68). This is a fictional dialogue by the Geneva-based pastor Jacob Vernes, published in 1771, that Robbio ponders in search of models for his novel (Vernes 1771). Although Vernes' work is one of the sources of his inspiration, Robbio does not fail to point out its flaws. Vernes does seek to strike a blow against deism, Robbio notes, but he fails to contain its spread by not properly refuting the thoughts of the ungodly protagonist. Moreover, he does not represent the death of the "unrepentant and desperate" seduced woman, Madame Herbert, in a dire enough way to serve as a warning for readers. Robbio also focuses on two other works by European authors. The first is what Robbio refers to as the "Valmont novel", namely Philippe-Louis Gérard's *Le Comte de Valmont* (1774) in which the death of the ungodly Lausanne is portrayed as appropriately terrible (Gérard 1774). The second work, referred to as "Young's letters", consists of *Letters from Altamont in the capital, to his friends in the country*, published in London in 1767 by the Anglican Charles Jenner. This book is praised by Robbio for the exemplary death of the evil protagonist (Altamont) and, as I will show, he later took it as a source of inspiration. Robbio's antiphilosophical novel is thus not the result of literary creativity alone. It is a text carefully designed with precise educational intentions, the outcome of elements thoughtfully chosen from among the various possible options present at the European level and aimed at providing exemplary moral models for how readers should relate to books. At this point, the reader finds *Emirena* (69–187). In this collection, the story does not appear to be an autonomous text; it should instead be read as a section, albeit the longest in the collection, of a broader body of thought about books, followed by other texts such as the pamphlet *I Cinque Dubbi* touching on various themes from the relationship between ancients and moderns to freedom of thought.

The story of *Emirena* rests on a thin plot; however, it is worth examining it to understand Robbio's narrative choices. The novel—a hundred or so pages, divided into thirteen short chapters—is preceded by a warning from the publishers cautioning against "modern anti-Christian philosophy, the destroyer of every holy duty of religion, nature and society". The author presents *Emirena* as a "sufficient refutation": he aims to show his audience "only the simple but true portrait" of this philosophy, while dealing with "specious sophisms" elsewhere. In the "operetta", as it is called in the warning, Emirena quickly enters the scene: at the age

of fourteen, her considerable dowry makes her the object of marriage proposals from various "gentlemen". She ends up choosing the Marquis Dorfiso, a poor gentleman with whom Emirena soon has a child. The action unfolds very quickly. Emirena begins to surround herself with "acquaintances" who push her to change her values, importance to physical beauty and pursue it through artificial means ("under the hairpins and comb" of a young man). Educated in a monastery, she moves away from religious teachings and begins to read novels "passionately". As a result, she takes "giant steps forward in the glorious pursuit of arousing her own and others' passions, kindly succeeding in cursing, being lascivious with grace, impious by genius, in becoming wholly glacial towards her husband and son, and giving all fire to other acquaintances" (78). The account continues with a description of her three closest male friends: Antagora, "stunned and garrulous", Ecchidno, "frowning and pensive" and, above all, Atiasto, "fed on the best milk of the new-ancient admirable philosophy". Atiasto has read the worst enemies of religion without "wasting time" reading its defenders. His reading is thus characterised by superficiality and rapidity. In particular, he read Locke and was convinced by him "that matter is capable of thought". He studied Helvétius and Spinoza, learning from the former that human beings are equivalent to beasts and from the latter "that everything is God". He read Collins and Mandeville, learning that "vices are the basis of civilised happiness", and Barbeyrac, who taught him the alleged "absurdities" of the Church Fathers in matters of morality. In these texts, Atiasto learned to question the Pentateuch and Books of the Prophets and to make bold remarks about the Old Testament and ponder the evils of religion. During her conversations with these friends, Emirena begins to have doubts about religion. However, the turning point for her is when she starts to read novels and later encounters the "new books" brought by Atiasto. A specific chapter is devoted precisely to these books, with Robbio ridiculing their content in order to deprive them of power. The idea that "men are no more than beasts" thus offers Robbio the chance to harken back to times gone by, when "people did not believe that man, being intelligent and free, should have as masters the irrational chicken that runs through his yard, and the servant ox that ploughs his farm" (87). The author is aware that the censorious apparatuses of the Church and states are unable to put a stop to the circulation of such books. On the contrary, censorship has the opposite effect in that it causes people "seek them out more avidly", and Emirena prefers just those books against which "Rome,

the Sorbonne, and the bishops had cast the most thunderbolts". What follows is a detailed examination of the forbidden readings and studies of Emirena. The protagonist reads not only novels but also and especially the classical texts of *philosophie*. Emirena's learning method is also important: she does not learn slowly or by examining what she reads in depth, but quickly, without order or rules. Indeed,

> She jumped from one topic to another: she delved into every matter with the same [degree of] interest: she flew without wings. Peruvian letters touched her heart; Persian letters illuminated her mind; sometimes even the coarse antics of Monsieur d'Argens gave her dear amusement. If Diderot's howling comedies made her fall asleep, a novelette by the same author […], caused her eyes to reopen […]. She learned from Helvetius that the spirit is not spirit; from Berkley, that the body is not body; from Colins, that freedom is not freedom; from la Metrie, that man is not man; from the alleged Mirabaud [i.e. d'Holbach], that the world is not created by the power of God, but God is created by the weakness of men (92–93).

In other cases, Emirena's readings are not direct but rather mediated through orality. Atiasto reads aloud to her pages from Bayle and the *Encyclopédie*, and speaks to her concisely about Voltaire's works. Robbio di San Raffaele's ironic gaze targets both Atiasto and the *philosophes* and aims to represent Emirena—called "the Marchioness" by her tutor—and her "gullibility" as crude and unsophisticated. In short, the woman is characterised by the superficiality with which she "greedily" devours the "philosophical bats". Emirena's life continues under the banner of degeneration, beginning with dinners with her merry company uttering words of slander against the Church and the Gospel. Tired of this "philosophical feasting", her husband Dorfiso invites her to accompany him and their son to a mansion outside the city. Emirena thus has to choose between two alternative models proposed to her by Atiasto: to continue nurturing "enlightened reason" and oppose the "blind impetus of maternal affections", or to re-establish family life. Reason and family feelings appear to undermine one another: someone cultivating *philosophie* can be neither a good mother nor a good wife, the story suggests. The fact is that Emirena quickly comes to terms with being separated from her son and continues reading some thirty dictionaries of science and the arts. She does so sporadically and superficially, in those "brief moments" when she is not occupied with conversation, play and dance.

She then becomes a patroness, the target of private scams and public satire. After three years, Emirena falls ill with rheumatic fever and the doctor suggests she take the sacraments. She weeps and cries in despair until her elderly nanny turns to a curate who takes her case to heart. By conversing with him, Emirena comes to her senses in that the man urges her to ponder her mistakes and even manages to free her from evil through a sort of exorcism. Convinced at last that "there is no peace for the wicked", Emirena bursts into a liberatory fit of weeping and repents. Atiasto, however, dies of colic in an infernal scene: "With unrestrained fury he tore his hair, bit his flesh, threw his head against the wall; and if he saw someone coming towards him, he rushed at him with teeth and nails to tear him to pieces", while his mouth spewed out curses and imprecations. Atiasto's death is the death of the ungodly that Robbio had pondered, and it triggers a complete and sincere change in Emirena. Assisted by the curate, she proceeds to destroy the books in her possession in a purifying fire. At this point, she is reunited with her dear family. In the conclusion, which contains the moral of the novel, her room becomes "the room of prayer" and Emirena is once again ready to obey the requests of her husband, the curate and the doctor. She is once again what she was at the beginning of the narrative: "humble, quiet, composed, [and] full of sincere self-loathing" (173). The protagonist is now presented as the antidote to Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*: "Far from the marchioness the bawdy illusions, whence the maddened Heloise is filled with them! Emirena was aware of her need for guidance and Enlightenment: she did not pretend to know what she did not know: she did not blush when questioning the Ecclesiastic" (175). Her repentance does not heal her, however, and Emirena ends up dying after being reconciled with God, "disenchanted and converted", without ever "detaching her eyes and mouth from her crucified Lord".

Reading the "new" books, i.e. the *livres philosophiques*, therefore only leads to a loss of faith and behaviour that disrupts the family order. Given its evident and even crude moralistic aims, this novel is an important source not only for studying the way the dangers of books and reading were represented in the Age of Enlightenment, but also for understanding the strategies used to provide women with models to follow when reading. Novels, for Emirena, are the gateway to *philosophie*, of which she falls victim. In some respects, she is a ridiculous character and the reader smiles at her misadventures, yet her story is also tragic in that her stupidity leads to her death. In this sense her story, chosen here to

illustrate the genre of antiphilosophical novels in the Age of Enlightenment, seems to constitute a sort of *trait d'union* between the events of the *précieuses ridicules* and the tragedies of the following century.

It is no coincidence that *Emirena*, created in response to eighteenth-century *philosophie* culture, was also re-edited and adapted in the following century. A second edition, bearing the author's name on the title page and a mention of "new additions", was published in Milan, at Cesare Orena, Stamperia Malatesta, in 1784 (Robbio di san Raffaele 1784). This edition is grouped with texts by other authors, but each one is presented as autonomous. The author relinquishes his anonymity in this edition and includes the previous text of *Emirena* with the addition of an appendix entitled *Avvisi dell'autore sui libri empj* (89–94), an appendix on unholy books that echoes the short section *De' libri empj* presented as a standalone text in the 1778 collection (16–23). The slight change of title reflects the author's desire to appropriate the warnings so that the suggested "cautions" appear to come directly from Robbio. These "cautions" consist of eight rules intended to regulate the reader's relationship with books and reading, with few variations and addressed—I would like to emphasise—to the entire reading audience with no particular focus on women. While the 1778 version invites readers to avoid reading these books "without proper reasons or opportune cautions", the 1784 version reads "*without due permission* (italics added), proper reasons or opportune cautions", underlining the ecclesiastical requirement that readers obtain special reading licences. It is nevertheless worth reading these suggestions as an illustration of the fears of the time. The first suggestion is to avoid reading unholy books "without being equipped with previous studies" that provide the reader with the antidotes to unravel "those sophisms that appear on every page to lure you in". The second consideration invites readers to pay more attention to the meaning than the style, as the latter may entice them "with amenity and elegance". The third suggestion is to always read with scepticism, and the fourth is to avoid prolonged contact with books: to hold them "as seldom as possible" and put them down "as soon as possible". The fifth reminds readers that there exists a convincing response to every theme dealt with in these books, and that they must seek out these responses. The sixth calls for the reading of ungodly books to be accompanied by good books, especially those that provide a response to modern unbelievers and therefore act as an antidote. The seventh points out that ungodly books, even read by wise people, are dangerous because they cast doubt on faith. The eighth advises readers

not to be swayed by famous names, given that celebrity is often associated with lies. These considerations are thus meant to encourage readers to self-regulate their reading and internalise the prohibitions.

A new edition, which is actually a reprint, was later published in Venice in 1791 by Francesco Andreola, once again bearing the author's name (Robbio di san Raffaele 1791). In addition to a statement of approval from the Riformatori dello Studio di Padova (Reformers of the University of Padua) which obviously appears only in this version, this edition also contains a couple of added warnings. One of these (chap. IV, 12) points out that Atiasto's character references St. Bernard and in particular the "sad features" he attributed to a "hard heart". Regarding Atiasto's death, it specifies that the event is not "an invention of fiction" but a real fact because the death of the impious man "matches an event that happened a few years ago" (47).

Emirena's publishing history continued into the nineteenth century, however, and the text gradually lost its already not-so-strong link with its author. An anonymous author drew on the work, reuniting Robbio di San Raffale's text with *Disinganni, o sia il solitario cristiano cattolico* by the aforementioned priest Diessbach, published without editorial indications in 1778. This too was the tale of another life undermined by bad books and regenerated through good reading (Diessbach 1778). The resulting book is *Riflessioni tratte dal libro intitolato Il solitario cristiano cattolico e dall'altro intitolato Emirena del conte di S. Raffaele*, published in Imola by Galeati typography in 1827. The text was part of the printing activity of the *Società de' Calobibliofili*, an association with links to the papacy (Montecchi 2001, 89–91; Piazza 2009) that paid for the book to be published. Heir to the aforementioned organisation *Amicizia cristiana*, *Società de' Calobibliofili* became *Associazione Cattolica* in 1833. In both of its incarnations, it sought to promote the circulation of good books. In this case, *Emirena* lost its identity as a novel to merge with the other work and become a *vademecum* for readers to defend themselves against philosophical books, providing "remedies to oppose the progress of irreligion" with a repetition of the eight "cautions" (Reflections 1827). In 1857, *Emirena* was again published under a different title—*Emirena ossia la giovane sposa sedotta dai liberi pensatori*—by Simone Birindelli's printing house in Florence (Robbio San Raffaele 1857). Once again anonymous, the work was presented in this case as a "historical tale", although the text remained identical in content and in its structure of thirteen chapters (only the titles of the individual chapters were eliminated). This edition

does not include the *Avviso degli editori* warning and the names of the main characters are changed in an attempt to modernise them and make them more realistic: Dorfiso becomes Girolamo, Antagora becomes Carlo and Echidno is renamed Pietro while Atiasto is changed to Dario. Finally, in 1865, *Emirena* was turned into an opera (Emirena 1865).

As well as a fascinating example of textual instability, *Emirena*'s content and publishing history make it an exemplary case in the historical education and control of the female audience. The character Emirena has several companions. One of the first is Donna Urania, whose name provides the title for another *conte antiphilosophique* by Robbio di San Raffaele dealing with women's scientific studies (Robbio di San Raffaele 1793). In terms of publication, it should be noted that this genre developed at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Les Helviennes, ou lettres provinciales philosophiques* (1781–1784) by the former Jesuit Augustin Barruel, for instance, narrates the misadventures of a woman (a baroness) who falls victim to philosophical readings. Part of this novel translated into Italian was published in Naples (Barruel 1786), then its entirety was released in Venice (Barruel 1801). This genre was produced not only by authors from Jesuit or former Jesuit circles, but also by other members of the clergy and lay people. An example is Abbot Gérard, who wrote the aforementioned *Comte de Valmont ou les égarements de la raison*. Narrating the story of a conversion from *philosophie* to Catholicism, this book was published in Paris in 1774 and re-released in no less than thirteen French editions from 1771 to 1823 (Masseau 2000, 308–09 and 334–36). It also enjoyed great success in Italy: the first translation was published in Modena by Società tipografica in 1805, and the work was reprinted in Milan by Giuseppe Maspero in 1816 and then in Imola, again by Galeati typography, in 1851 and 1852 (Gérard 1774, 1793, 1805, 1816–1818, 1851–1852).

These works were also translated into other languages. To cite only southern Europe, a Spanish translation of *Les Helviennes* appeared in 1787 (Barruel 1787) and of *Le Comte de Valmont* in 1793 (Gérard 1793), while links with other European countries and the American continent have yet to be explored. In short, antiphilosophical novels had international reach and a publishing and political-cultural history that began in the Age of Enlightenment—albeit in opposition to the Enlightenment movement—and continued into the nineteenth century. This is an important part of a larger story concerning the relationship between gender and reading that had specific national characteristics but also a

European scope. Regarding specifically the ideal audience targeted by *Emirena* and the other novels mentioned here, indeed, the question is whether they were aimed exclusively at female readers in all the countries where they were disseminated. Certainly it would have been easy for female readers to identify with the main character, but it is doubtful that this fiction was intended exclusively for women and addressed to them directly. The teachings provided through antiphilosophical novels regarding books and reading served to educate not only women but also the figures (mostly men) responsible for women's education, namely parents and educators (private tutors and teachers in public schooling). If the ideal audience already appears broad in the original version of *Helviennes*, for example, in the preface of the Italian translation of this book, the anonymous translator explicitly specified that it was meant for "everyone"[2]: a warning, therefore, for the whole of society.

Conclusion

Drawing attention to Italian antiphilosophical novels is not, of course, tantamount to trying to grant literary dignity to a body of work that is scarcely as significant as literature. However, the extensive editorial circulation it enjoyed and the social repercussions it had on women's education in reading cannot be ignored. This essay only begins to explore these aspects in the case of Italian-French relations, while the genre's multiple international entanglements remain to be investigated. Catholic fiction that is also attentive to the female audience, a body of work generally dating to the nineteenth century, has its roots in the broader reaction to Enlightenment culture that arose in the second half of the eighteenth century, led by clergymen and laymen. It therefore constitutes an important chapter of history that may also help to better illuminate the relationship between religion (Catholic, in this case) and "feminism", if indeed this word can be used in speaking of the early modern age without falling into anachronism. Together with questioning the modernity of secularisation (Mack 2005; Lehner 2016), scholars are currently seeking to reassess the role religion has played in the process of carving out spaces of freedom for women. For a complete view, such reassessment would do well to take into account the rather extensive strand

[2] Barruel, *Le chavalier philosophe au lecteur* (Barruel 1784, I, V–XI) and *Prefazione del traduttore* (Barruel 1786, I, III–XIV).

of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors who, identifying with the values of the Catholic Church and certainly those of Catholic culture, assiduously wrote and published texts designed to instil in women a suspicious attitude towards books and reading. Given that their target audience also included families, preceptors and society as a whole, the female public was not the only intended object of this suspicious stance (Delpiano 2019). Feminism, in any case, is a whole different story.

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