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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation views the eighteenth-century Bluestockings community through the Habermasian theory of the public sphere. According to Habermas, the public sphere is the arena in which public opinion is formed through discussion and debate of matters of public concern, primarily through print. Because the Bluestockings were a group of educated women marginalized by gender, I propose it is more accurate to view them as what Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner term a counterpublic: a "parallel arena" of discourse that resists the prevailing discourse and shapes the interests, needs, and identities of the group. Further, because the Bluestockings navigated their marginalized status by maintaining conservative beliefs in their public writings, I define them as a conservative female counterpublic. This definition is unique in contemporary studies of this group of writers.

To make this argument, I examine writings by Elizabeth Montagu, Sarah Scott, Hannah More, and other Bluestockings from 1750 to 1799. Even though some of these women enjoyed powerful social status as educated, wealthy women, their literary interactions in private writings and in salons reveal their consciousness of their subordinate status to men and their efforts to navigate and resist that gendered marginalization. The Bluestockings valued women's education and sought to empower women and grant them a voice, yet confined that empowerment to the

domestic sphere. This dissertation also shows that the Bluestockings understood their subordinate status, a fact made evident by the disparity between their public and private writings. While their published writings abide by conservative conventions, the Bluestockings' private writings, such as diaries and correspondence, reject that marginalization. A close reading of Sarah Scott's novel, *The Test of Filial Duty*, illuminates another form of literary resistance to the dominant, masculine discourse: the elevation of private concerns to the public level. The Bluestockings' contested relation to the patriarchal order became less intense amid the threats of the French Revolution. I illustrate this shift in Hannah More's writing to explore the limitations imposed on the Bluestockings as a female conservative counterpublic in the masculine world of letters as they ceased seeking to empower women or questioning the existing social order.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The rise of print during the Enlightenment era enriched social networks between men and women in the world of letters. Transmission and exchange of ideas in physical conversational arenas like literary salons and coffeehouses, or through public and private writings, all contributed to the enhancement of interactions and formation of literary communities. Eighteenth-century literary communities such as the Bluestockings were a by- product of this intellectual sociability. The Bluestockings emerged as a literary community in the 1750s, comprised of educated men and women discussing literary materials and social topics. This coterie gradually evolved into an exclusively female community by the mid-1770s. As "children of the Enlightenment," members of this community sought to participate in public debates in the world of letters and aspired to define women's social role within British society.

My dissertation offers a new way of looking at the eighteenth-century Bluestockings' community as not only a community of intellectual women who gained access to the male-dominated world of English letters, but as a counterpublic: a group addressing an audience with messages that challenge—however gently—the gendered and social status quo. To make the argument that the Bluestockings were a counterpublic, I will address the factors that allowed this community to emerge in the 1750s along with the precise dimensions of the conservative ideology with which they sought to associate themselves. While their writings reveal their belief that the gendered reality in which they lived was divine and natural, a close, historically contextualized reading of their works illustrates the Bluestockings' status as a unique, conservative version of an eighteenth century female counterpublic. I argue that these were

atypically learned women who sought to shape public identity for themselves as respectable women writers. Much of the dissertation will attempt to trace a chronological development when appropriate. At times, thematic engagement with different texts will be necessary to fully explore and appreciate the connections between people and events.

In Chapter Two, I offer a theoretical framework for understanding the Bluestockings as a conservative counterpublic. I describe Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere and illustrate how economic and social circumstances contributed to the formation of the bourgeois public sphere—the ideal version presented by Habermas. Habermas, echoing Kant's positive perception of Enlightenment, argues that the public sphere "sought agreement and enlightenment through the rational-critical public debate of private persons with one another" (43). This was also the case in the Bluestockings' community, who sought to reach a new understanding of themselves as intellectual women participating in the literary field. Following Habermas' model with a critique by Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner allows me to widen the scope to recognize subaltern publics that have been omitted from the Habermasian model. To understand the transnational nature of dominant publics and counterpublics, I also offer a brief overview of contemporary counterpublics that are marginalized by either religion or race. To understand how the Bluestockings' coterie operated in the world of letters, we need to view them through the Habermasian lens of the public sphere along with the theory of counterpublic. This chapter also shows that the Bluestockings were a form of community that resembled Habermas' model of the public sphere, except that they were marginalized by gender. This marginalization renders them a counterpublic rather than a part of the masculine dominant public.

In Chapter Three, I build on the theoretical background of the public sphere and counterpublics to offer a historical overview of the Bluestockings' community and literary

activities, including the Bluestockings' emergence, their ideology, and the descent of their community by the early decades of the nineteenth century. I introduce individuals of significance to the Bluestocking experience—Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, Hester Chapone, Hannah More, and others— as actors in a world that begins with stability before entering the disturbing terrain of the French Revolution. Such context allows me to more thoroughly engage with both the public and private writings of the Bluestockings in later chapters.

I also include in this chapter an overview of the research that has been done on the Bluestockings from 1990-2015. This section shows how contemporary scholarships on the Bluestockings viewed them as an active part of the literary public sphere. This literature review offers the views of Bluestockings scholars attempting to capture and explain the Bluestockings' activities in the world of letters. With Chapter Three's contextual information, the Bluestocking's position as a counterpublic will receive more weight by simply considering the larger historical world they inhabited and the current tensions in the scholarship. From here, the Bluestockings' public and private writings can be used to understand their ideology and sense of self.

In Chapter Four, I move from secondary sources to primary sources and focus on the Bluestockings' writings, both private and published. These writings come from a variety of authors, as opposed to the case studies of Chapters Five and Six. My purpose in this chapter is to examine how the Bluestockings operated in the world of letters conscious of their position as a marginalized group. While the Bluestockings were careful not to fiercely challenge the dominant public that embraced their activities (e.g., by explicitly criticizing marriage), they implied their resistance in their public writings (e.g., by suggesting companionate marriage). In their private correspondence the Bluestockings' resistance to social conventions is more visible; in particular,

their private correspondence will show that the Bluestockings resisted traditional marriage either entirely or under specific conditions. Here, we can see that the Bluestockings rejected the norms that confined them to the domestic sphere.

The analysis of public and private writings reveals the limited extent to which a conservative counterpublic can agitate for change. The published writings and social interactions of the Bluestockings with male scholars show a conflicted relation with the dominant public despite their visible acceptance of the gender hierarchy. Discrepancies between their mild public language that aimed to empower women and their private, and fierce, criticism of their situation as a group marginalized by gender reveals the conflictual relation between men and women of letters that took place in both literary salons and private writings.

The Bluestockings' resistance to the dominant public was moderate in their public writing, aiming to empower women within a conservative context that accepted gender difference as innate and divinely ordained. While acknowledging gender disparity, they aimed to improve women's education and grant women a voice even if its use was still confined to the home. I will show that the Bluestockings' navigation of their marginalization was more obvious in their private writings and in their personal life choices to resist traditional marriage than it was in their published works.

These writers refused to dissolve within what Nancy Fraser calls the powerful "we," a concept that suggests that a public can and will be dominated by those with more social clout. As such, they maintained their distance and supported each other as rising female writers. Through their private activities, the Bluestockings formed a "parallel arena" of counterdiscourse amongst equals where they questioned their marginalization and discussed their own "identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser 67). With this refusal to bend completely to the masculine public,

Bluestocking authors could define womanhood according to their own criteria and, from there, present other writings which could offer new ways to interpret gendered relationships.

In Chapter Five, I move from a wider discursive world to a specific case study of precisely how the Bluestocking Sarah Scott had the audacity to present the Bluestockings' private concerns in published writing, in the form of a novel. Even though Scott ventured to elevate women's private concerns to public level, she did so with caution by embedding her progressive ideas within conservative doctrines. This chapter will offer a close reading of *The Test of Filial Duty*, in which Scott presents new options for women to conceive themselves as companionate rather than subservient wives. However, the novel emphasizes the importance of adherence to filial piety as a requisite component of gendered relations. I argue that the novel was able to elevate the private concerns of the Bluestockings to the literary public. Whereas in the previous chapter the Bluestockings' resistance to the system that marginalizes them took place in their private correspondence, this chapter shows how the novel was able to shed light on those private concerns of middle- and upper-class women.

Finally, in Chapter Six I present a second case study with more aggressive Bluestocking writing in a time of social and political upheaval. This chapter situates Hannah More's literary activities within the turmoil of the French Revolution and the threat it posed to British national stability. The shockwaves caused by the French Revolution led the Bluestockings, in light of their conservative stance and their connections with the social elites and the Church of England, to shift from their previous nominal resistance to embrace a definition of England and Englishness rooted in a conservative view of gender and class roles. As did her Bluestocking fellows, More had a respectable stance in society as a woman writer who aimed to reinforce patriarchal teachings that marginalized women and, notably amongst her fellows, the poor. As a

woman writer, More embodied a counterpublic while supporting the dominant public. In other words, she was a woman who subverted the patriarchal system by existing and participating in the public political life, and yet More used what little power she had to rationalize gender and class hierarchy.

Through a close reading of More's works such as *Strictures on Female Education* (1799) and Cheap Repository Tracts (1795-8), I will illustrate the Bluestockings' notions of gender and class as natural and divinely ordained, and therefore not subject to question, criticism, or change. I will also explore the Bluestockings' exercise of "tutelage" to maintain these traditional systems of social oppression. This chapter reveals a shift in celebrating the works of More, who believed that social stratification is just and protects the less powerful, both women and the poor. In this chapter I also present More's participation in abolition movements. More devoted her efforts to end slavery through writing a poem that condemned the practice. By juxtaposing More's attitude towards gender and class and her more progressive attitude towards slavery, I will show how More accepted gender and class hierarchy as divinely ordained, while considering enslavement as a social construct.

My project aims to generate a new and provocative viewpoint on the Bluestockings by examining some deficiencies in the Bluestockings scholarship of the last thirty years. My study includes the ways in which the Bluestockings maneuvered their secondary status to gain access to the public sphere through publishing, and the intensely political nature of their writings by the end of the century. My investigation will show that the Bluestockings, rather than limiting their writing and debates to the domestic, challenged the social structure that kept them subordinated. My chapters will offer a more nuanced understanding of the position the Bluestockings occupied in the world of letters: they existed in the literary sphere by yielding to the male-dominated

establishment while simultaneously making forays into empowering women. This more nuanced understanding, along with a consideration of the historical context, results in richer, more complex readings of their literary productions, assists in re-evaluating the Bluestockings' legacy, and makes visible the impact of broader political trends on the development of women's literature. This dissertation will offer a new dimension that shows the limits of a conservative female counterpublic's discourse against power.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework of the Habermasian Public Sphere: Theories of the Public Sphere and Counterpublics

> 'tis thy commerce, Conversation,
> Must give it use by circulation;
> That noblest commerce of mankind,
> Whose precious merchandise is MIND!
>
> --Hannah More, "Bas Bleu"

In her poem "Bas Bleu; or, Conversation*"* (1786), the Bluestocking Hannah More, celebrates the Bluestockings circle as a female intellectual community focused on disseminating learning and forming opinion through conversations. The excerpted lines above offer an accurate description of the Bluestockings' social practices in the eighteenth century that reflect Habermas' notion of the public sphere. By comparing feminine conversation to public commerce, More emphasizes that intellectual exchange is more precious than other types of commerce. In their literary meetings, the Bluestockings gathered to converse about literary and social matters and exchange opinions. The circulation of conversation produces intellectual exchange, the "noblest commerce of mankind," that is fundamental in Habermas's theory of the public sphere, incarnated in social discourse.

To Habermas, the eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere came into existence as a domain of private individuals who questioned the rules established by public authorities and directed their criticism towards those public authorities. He writes,

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of

> commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason. (27)

This social practice of reasoning endowed the public with a force against governing powers, and allowed for a democratic arena that problematized the unquestioned. The public sphere's approach in encountering the state was individuals' "public use of their reason" through social discourse, which led to the enactment of their rational critical thinking. This social world and engagement produced "public opinion." The public aimed to involve authorities to legitimize their laws and to engage in debate regarding the private sphere of commodity market and employment. While these debates occurred in a public space, participation in this public use of reason was restricted to propertied and intellectual men, leaving out individuals marginalized by race, class, and gender. These will be understood as subaltern groups that might assemble to form counterpublics.

I apply Habermas's theory of the public sphere to the second half of the eighteenth century, which witnessed a formation of female intellectual communities. This was crucial to contemporary literary heritage because it paved the way for organized feminism (Heller and Heller). In extant literature, the Bluestockings have been viewed as part of the Habermasian public sphere. However, they have not been examined as eighteenth-century counterpublic, a marginalized group circulating writing critical of mainstream discourse. Recent studies on the Bluestockings have focused on them as part of the idealized Habermasian public sphere and neglected their marginalized status as women writers navigating a hierarchical, gendered world (Eger; Guest; Heller). By employing theories of the public sphere and counterpublics, I will articulate a new way of looking at the eighteenth-century Bluestockings community as a conservative counterpublic. In a way, the Bluestockings community resembles the bourgeois

public sphere in which women writers come together, question women's social role within society, and attempt to redefine that social role. Like the Habermasian public sphere, the Bluestockings employed the media of print in their social discursive arenas to exercise a form of social authority in the literary public sphere. Habermas's account of the public sphere captures the activities of the Bluestockings as a form of the eighteenth-century publics that both included and excluded members based on given criteria; it included conservative women, while excluding Jacobin women writers. They had defined boundaries and limited accessibility to their public as conservative writers and middle- and upper-class intellectuals. However, because they were marginalized by gender, it will be more accurate to view the Bluestockings as a form of conservative female counterpublic rather than as part of the dominant public.

In this chapter, I will present the Habermasian theory of the public sphere followed by Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas' work. I will also include Michael Warner's expansion of Fraser's concept of counterpublic to emphasize its relevance to my study of the Bluestockings as an eighteenth-century female counterpublic. At the end of this chapter, I will show how these notions of public sphere and counterpublic are crucial in various fields, and that they are still used in the present day. The last section in this chapter will provide an overview of various eighteenth-century literary communities.

The Habermasian Public Sphere

Habermas defines the public sphere as "a discursive place where private people come together as a public" (25). This sphere is separated from government authority on the one hand and civic and economic organizations on the other; it is also separated from the intimate sphere of familial and daily life. In Habermas's idealized sense, in the public sphere – where private

individuals gather to form a community in which they address matters of common concern – all people should ideally be able to participate, regardless of gender, class, ethnicity and/or social status. However, Habermas clearly makes an exclusion by omission since his conception of "all people" refers mainly to white, upper-class men. Scholars such as Nancy Fraser have argued against this definition, claiming that Habermas' study suffers from a limited scope that omits other culturally significant public spheres from his consideration.[1] Because Habermas focuses solely on European, propertied men in illuminating the development of what he refers to as "rational critical debate," he fails to capture the social practices of subaltern communities. This failure to capture subaltern groups led Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner to point out the exclusion of those subaltern communities and label them as "counterpublics."

Habermas' work discusses the social and economic conditions of his time, in which private individuals were first able to form public opinion and transform power relations of political public authority in their societies. Habermas scrutinizes the social and economic factors that shaped late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. With the emergence of civil society, the family's economy, previously thought to be private, began to have a public relevance. Habermas notes, "The economic activity that had become private had to be oriented toward a commodity market that had expanded under public direction and supervision; the economic conditions under which this activity now took place lay outside the confines of the single household" (19). Thus, for the first time these economic activities become of "general

[1] Seyla Benhabib's "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jurgen Habermas" and Dena Goodman's "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime" challenge Habermas's opposition of public and private spheres. Other works like Michael McKeon's "The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge" offer a wider scope than that of Habermas for the history of public vs. private.

interest." The expansion of foreign and colonial trade "began to serve the development of a commercial economy at home" (18). The import of products such as tea, coffee, and chocolate allowed new social institutions – namely, coffeehouses – to arise in Europe, and facilitated the rise of social discourse as a new form of social activity. In coffeehouses, customers gathered to consume drinks and discuss matters of "common concern," and "sociable discussions developed quickly into public criticism" (Habermas 30). Thus, economic activity and the status of the private household were not only relevant to the public sphere, they were the way for the head of the conjugal family to be admitted into the public sphere.

In the eighteenth century, the spread of print technology enlarged the reading public by making multiple copies of a text available at a lower price. This technology gave these texts more endurance, as stories reproduced orally cannot extend, at least in the same way, beyond the time and location of their producer. In the words of Habermas, "[The] press, in turn developed a unique explosive power" (20). Printed materials circulated and significantly contributed to the formation of the public sphere. Sandro Jung's *British Literature and Print Culture*, Leah Orr's *Novel Ventures: Fiction and Print Culture in England, 1690-1730*, and Natasha Glaisyer's *The Culture of Commerce in England* reveal that printed materials including newspapers, journals, and novels were becoming commodities: printing them and selling them allowed them to be a part of the public.

In addition to social and economic conditions, the act of reading was also a critical part of the development of the public sphere, as it allowed members of the reading public to develop an understanding of their own subjectivity. Habermas examines novel-reading as a trigger of public debate regarding private, economic, and social matters. According to Habermas, the public use of reason was born in the intimate sphere (at home) through the individual's sentimental

experience. By reading novels about individual characters, the reading public began to understand themselves as humans with subjectivity: “before the public explicitly assumed political functions in the tension-charged field of state-society relations, the subjectivity originating in the intimate sphere of the conjugal family created, so to speak, its own public” (29). Thus, reading sentimental novels allowed the public to be self-conscious of their humanity, both as unique individuals and as members of the middle class. The rational critical reasoning of the public stemmed from the intimate sphere that the public recognized "by communicating with itself, attained clarity about itself” (51). This claim complicates Habermas’ argument about the rationality of the public sphere, by identifying one source of that rationality in the sentimental novel.

With the rise of print culture and trade capitalism, people’s private property and independence began to grow. As consumers, people’s daily lives were affected by economic regulations such as taxes, duties, and official interventions into the private realm. Households “finally came to constitute the target of a developing critical sphere” (Habermas 24). To Habermas, the public sphere that had once been seen as under the influence of public authority was a subaltern reality embodied when “private people come together as a public” to discuss matters of common concerns, exchange opinions, and debate as peers in an environment free from coercion and authority (27). With time, this practice began to be directed against the state as sole authority, and to question existing governmental laws. The aims were to engage public authorities in political debates and to consider the state a counterpart rather than an unquestioned ruler. The power relations between the state and its citizens shifted as criticism was directed against the state. According to Habermas, the term publicness “served as a vehicle for the representation of the monarch,” which means that it was used to signify the power of the

monarch and aristocracy, who declared their authority *before* the people they ruled. But by the eighteenth century, the word "public" began to represent "private people" who assumed an active role in questioning the authority of the one person, or the few people, in power.

The social and economic transformation of Western societies contributed to the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, incarnate in educated, propertied men. Habermas generally offers an optimistic view of the bourgeois public sphere through his depiction of the institutionalized public sphere where opinions are formed through discussion, reflection, and debate. The quality of the argument, not hierarchy of social status, identity, or tradition, is the decisive element in those social discursive arenas. According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere was predicated on social equality because its members "disregarded status altogether," creating "the parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of social hierarchy" (36). In other words, people who assemble in this public realm leave aside their occupational and educational differences and join the public as ordinary private citizens. This public then discusses issues of "common concern" in debates open to all members of the public. The result of this public debate is what Habermas defines as "public opinion."

Habermas saw the Enlightenment values of reason and free participation in practices of social discourse. Through rational critical debate, individuals aimed to formulate opinions and produce a general consensus for society's overall good. Debate and exchange of thought rendered the bourgeois public sphere a domain that strove to become free from state intervention and social hierarchy. Habermas explains that enlightenment was achieved through the public's understanding of itself and its subjectivity: "It was only through critical absorption of philosophy, literature, and art that the public attained enlightenment and realized itself as the latter's living process" (42). The public sphere "sought agreement and enlightenment through the

rational critical public debate of private persons with one another" (43). This optimistic view echoes Kant's notion of Enlightenment as a process of self-emancipation from the dictators of thought, and the enactment of one's own reason to formulate opinions and make decisions. Articulated in "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784), the Kantian argument emphasizes that Enlightenment values, based on ideas of unrestricted access to information and equal participation in social discursive arenas, will free individuals from "tutelage" and eventually lead to the democratizing of societies.

To Habermas, this ideal view of the bourgeois public sphere did not last. Habermas contends that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the ideal form of the bourgeois public sphere began to decay due to its rapid inclusion of multiple classes, and was further muddled by the mass press manipulating public opinion. This rapid expansion caused the public sphere to lose its political function, which was to represent the true concerns of private people. He explains, "The mass press was based on the commercialization of the participation in the public sphere on the part of broad strata designed predominantly to give the masses in general access to the public sphere" (169). Due to this expansion, the public sphere "lost its political character to the extent that the means of 'psychological facilitation' could become an end in itself for a commercially fostered consumer attitude" (Habermas 169). The ideal, unified coherent public lost its function and became only an artificial public in social and political realms. The public sphere lost its political function and took on a commercial one, ceased to form public opinions, and in turn lost its accountability at the cost of manufactured opinions. The boundaries between state and public began to blur, allowing the public sphere to become subject to manipulation by state propaganda and controlled media. In other words, this reduced public sphere was a representation of organizations rather than individuals.

Responses to Habermas: Expanding the Public Sphere

Although Habermas' theory of the public sphere is concerned with equality, democracy, and public opinion, his book neglected marginalized communities because his attention was on white, propertied men. In response to those exclusions, Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" engages directly with Habermas' work. Although Fraser acknowledges the crucial role Habermasian theory has played as a historical and sociological framework, her essay focuses primarily on exploring the insufficiencies of his analysis. She juxtaposes Habermas' idealized model of the public sphere with other accounts and alternative narratives by several scholars who argue that the Habermasian model is based on exclusions.

As critics of Habermas are quick to point out, the public sphere he defines is accessible only for those members of the public who are "propertied and educated." Fraser addresses Habermas' omissions of social, gender, and ethnic minorities, arguing that social status can never be "disregarded," thereby building on Habermas' legacy. Fraser points out four assumptions in Habermas' official bourgeois public sphere and responds to them. Habermas' masculinist bourgeois public sphere claims to be "accessible" to all citizens and creates the conditions in which participants can put their differences aside and argue as social equals. Fraser indicates that not only were plebeians excluded from participating in the ideal public sphere, but women from all ethnicities and classes were also eliminated. The Habermasian public sphere was also racially segregated, preventing the participation of all non-Western people, regardless of class or gender. Thus, gender, class, and race were categories that affected access to the public sphere.

Fraser criticizes not just Habermas' initial omissions, but also his tone regarding the "equality" of the public sphere. While Habermas claims that participants put aside their

differences and inequalities and spoke to each other as equivalents and peers, Fraser counters that the inequalities "were not eliminated but only bracketed," and not very effectively at that (63). Fraser, depending on revisionist historiography, claims that the bourgeois public sphere was subject to "protocols" that informally marginalized subordinate groups. Since bracketing did not fulfil its purpose of accomplishing social equality, it merely worked to the advantage of the dominant groups. Thus, social equality does not necessarily entail equal parity in participation.

Fraser finds fault with Habermas' assertion that a single public sphere is the way to achieve democracy, and that multiple public spheres lead to fragmentation and decline of the public sphere. Fraser succinctly and effectively explains Habermas' viewpoint, writing, "the institutional confinement of public life to a single, overarching public sphere is a positive and desirable state of affairs, whereas the proliferation of a multiplicity of publics represents a departure from, rather than an advance toward, democracy" (66). To Fraser, however, multiple spheres, especially in stratified societies, better enhance democracy than a single, overarching sphere. Her refutation of this assumption builds on her first critique, wherein participatory parity can never be accomplished among groups in a single comprehensive sphere.

Fraser suggests that social inequality would persist among the dominant and subordinate groups to the advantage of the dominant; the needs and voices of the subalterns will be absorbed by the needs and voices of the more powerful. She asserts that it would be more effective to construct alternative publics that embody marginalized voices. She defines those marginalized voices, or subaltern counterpublics, as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinate social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (67). Thus, according to

Fraser, to have multiple public spheres and counterpublics broadens discursive contestations between the subordinate and the dominant publics.

Moreover, Fraser scrutinizes Habermas' assumptions that the bourgeois public sphere was guided by "common concern." While Habermas claims that the public sphere's purpose is to discuss issues of "common concern," Fraser points out that this "common concern" excludes familial private issues because "only participants themselves can decide what is and what is not of common concern to them" (71). Since women and men of other social classes and ethnicities are excluded from the public sphere, their voices are silenced and, therefore, their issues and concerns remain disregarded and unheard. This exclusion, in turn, keeps the private issues of subaltern groups out of the political public sphere by marking them irrelevant or inappropriate to be discussed in a masculine political discourse. Fraser points out that eliminating private issues such as domestic violence from political deliberation works solely for the benefit of the dominant groups, and that in turn perpetuates hierarchical domination.

Lastly, Fraser questions Habermas's assumption that an effective bourgeois public sphere requires a definite separation between society and state. Fraser contends that the insistence on sharp separation from the state, which includes both the practices of opinion-formation and decision-making, renders this counterpart social force a weak public. A public is weak when the participants, as opinion-formers, are merely private people who have little sway with government officials, the real decision makers. In contrast to weak publics, Fraser offers an example of strong publics that do not require a clear-cut division from the state (such as sovereign parliaments, Congress, or residential communities) which count as functioning publics, as their public discourses include both "opinion-formation and decision-making." In such strong publics, the force of opinion is backed up by the body that it represents.

Michael Warner's "Publics and Counterpublics" shifts from Habermas' and Fraser's conceptions of publics, even though he later directly builds on Fraser's notion of subaltern counterpublics. Warner's object is to define and outline the workings of a "public"; his writing addresses the dynamics that constitute the formation of a public and unite its members, as well as how counterpublics emerge and what distinguishes them from other types of publics. To understand the notion of counterpublics, whether in their physical/spatial or virtual/textual or visual sense, we should first understand how publics are constructed.

Warner's understanding of publics differs in some ways from that of Habermas and Fraser, because, for Warner, publics are virtual and not externally institutionalized. Warner contends that publics are self-organized and the core of this organization is nothing but discourse itself. By being self-organized, members of the public are powerful, belonging, and active. By contrast, if publics were externally organized by the state, law, or religious institutions, they would be rendered powerless and passive due to the possibility of "political depressiveness, a blockage in activity and optimism, a disintegration of politics toward isolation, frustration, anomie, forgetfulness" (70). The power of any given public lies in the power that the public grants it, rather than an external force.

For Warner, attention is an entry condition required to constitute a public. Only when people lend their attention to a certain discourse does the public come into existence, "Because a public exists only by virtue of address, it must predicate some degree of attention ... of its members" (87). Essentially, the lifetime of a public is based on attention. As long as a specific discourse of a public is generating attention, the public exits as a public. In contrast to externally formed publics such as religious, educational, and social institutions, publics "lacking any

institutional being, commence with the moment of attention, must continually predicate renewed attention, and cease to exit when attention is no longer predicated" (88).

This attention should remain active as publics are characterized by the way multiple texts circulate. Publics are only publics when there is an interaction of texts within a certain context. This is what distinguishes a public from other forms of gatherings such as crowds and audiences. Members of crowds, audiences, and groups are passive/receptive rather than active/productive members of discourse. Yet, in publics circulation of discourse through "speaking, writings and thinking" actively involves public members. Discourses in public should be in dialogue with each other as "no single text can create a public" (90). Discourses are not produced in a consecutive manner but responsively interact with previous discourse. Thus, discursiveness among different texts and different individuals contributes to constituting a public. As long as the texts are circulating, a public can survive. This social space is created through reflexive circulation of discourse.

Despite defining publics in different terms than do Habermas and Fraser, Warner builds on Fraser's theory of subaltern counterpublics. If dominant publics draw their power from "[framing] their address as the universal discussion of the people" (117), counterpublics create and circulate a discourse that challenges or counters the dominant public. Counterpublics are "constituted through a conflictual relation to the dominant public" because they attempt to change their world through proposing amendment plans (Warner 118). Fraser rightly identifies subaltern groups such as women, the working class, and ethnic minorities who attempt to "formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (67). Warner elaborates on Fraser's definition, writing that those groups of people maintain some degree of recognition, whether consciously or not, of their subordinate position. Counterpublics

deliberately set themselves apart from and against the dominant public and work to change that dominant public. As a result, for counterpublics "hierarchy or stigma is the assumed background of practice. One enters at one's own risk" (Warner 121). Warner also adds that unlike dominant publics that can obtain the authority to effect change, counterpublics often lack power to enact their agency. Despite those distinctions, Warner clarifies that in all other respects, counterpublics operate in the same way as dominant publics: they are self-organized, they are based on attention to certain discourses that are addressed to strangers, and so forth.

The notion of publics and counterpublics has been influential and significant. Its impact can be seen not only in the eighteenth century, but also in our present time. In stratified societies in particular, the theory of counterpublics helps subaltern groups to identify themselves as resisting forces against dominant publics and to understand the limitations placed upon them as socially marginalized groups. The article "Muslim bloggers in Germany: An Emerging Counterpublic" (2013) shows how the notion of counterpublic remains relevant in the present day. The authors, Stine Eckert and Kalyani Chadha, examine the practices of the Islamic minority in Germany as an "emerging counterpublic" that has not only been excluded from, but also misrepresented by, mainstream public discourse in Germany. The article argues that the Muslim bloggers' counterpublic "seeks to contest mainstream representations, offers oppositional counter-discourses, and engages with the public sphere, represents an emerging counterpublic that hopes to challenge the hegemonic structures represented by German mainstream media and society" (927). The article traces the history of Muslim migration to Germany in the 1950s to "rebuild [the] post-war economy." Accordingly, the expansion of Muslim communities in Germany by the 1990s caused tension between political parties who argued for a "multicultural German society" and opponents that asked for foreigners to return to

their native countries. This dispute was sharpened by 9/11, which intensified xenophobic attitudes towards Muslims, both in media that associated Muslims with negative terms and in real life, especially when "navigating the bureaucracy and finding employment" (Eckert and Chadha 927).

The study gives an overview of the anti-Muslim discourse that emerged in Germany due to growth in the country's Muslim population. For instance, books such as *Germany Abolishes Itself* or statements by politicians in the German government cast Muslims' presence in Germany as a threat to German culture. Those individual efforts go along with the institutionalized media (newspapers and television, whether governmental or private) that associate Muslims with terrorism and religious radicalism. Due to this misrepresentation, many Muslims in Germany see themselves as significantly underprivileged entities.

In reaction to this stigmatization and marginalization, Muslims turned to social media platforms to form resistance against such misrepresentation. Muslim bloggers attempted to highlight unreported achievements of Muslims in a society which viewed Muslim communities as a burden. Other bloggers sought to fight the stereotypes about Muslim women who wear headscarves as either radical or oppressed. These efforts to counter the mainstream discourse illustrated Muslims' awareness of the ways they are judged according to one mold by the German public. When Muslims turned to social media to challenge those views and illustrate the diversity of nationalities and beliefs of Muslims in Germany, they acted as a counterpublic. They engaged in critical rational debate and created an alternative oppositional discourse that challenged the mainstream media, while still maintaining its distance from the dominant public.

In addition to the plight of a religious minority in Europe, the notion of counterpublic also shows its contemporary relevance in the context of racially segregated groups such as

African Americans in the United States. Roderick Graham and Shawn Smith's "The Content of Our #Characters: Black Twitter as Counterpublic" (2016) uses the theory of the public sphere to contextualize the discourse of black people, specifically in #BlackTwitter, as "members of subordinated social groups" (435). The authors analyzed the activity on those hashtags following shootings of black people by white police officers and found that topics discussed in #BlackTwitter were specific to the needs and concerns of this racialized group in contrast to the broader topics discussed in such dominant public hashtags as #uniteblue. The discourse produced in this hashtag was "counterhegemonic" to the discourse in other publics, leading the authors to conclude that #BlackTwitter is a virtual counterpublic. The study emphasizes that #BlackTwitter showed resistance and embodied an oppositional stance against the dominant public, more than other forms of publics examined. The studies of Muslim German bloggers and #BlackTwitter users describe ethnic and racialized communities within their stratified societies as actively opposing the dominant public, through inventing and circulating their "interests and needs" via social media platforms in digital environments. Hence, the notion of counterpublic holds transnational value in understanding a world that operates within different types of domination: patriarchal, racial, religious, social class, and other forms of hegemony.

Eighteenth-Century Literary Clubs

Much like these contemporary examples, eighteenth-century intellectual groups also formed both publics and counterpublics in the literary clubs that proliferated during this time period. These clubs did not always feature communal boundaries based on political beliefs, gender, or social hierarchies; indeed, Moyra Haslett notes that some literary clubs "had no formal name and no particular self-consciousness of themselves as a group" (12). However, there were a

number of self-identified literary groups and learned coteries of men and women that gathered to discuss literary materials and social topics. For instance, the Scriblerian Club in London included Tory authors such as Alexander Pope and John Gay. This club limited its membership to white, middle-class men who espoused "Tory principle and political conservatism," meaning that it not only excluded women, working-class people, and people from ethnic minorities, but also white, educated, and propertied men who were liberal (Baird 12).

There were also some clubs that formed based on political principles alongside literary production. For instance, the Kit-Cat Club included writers from the Whig party such as William Congreve, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele; the October Club (1711-1714) is another explicitly political group that included Jonathan Swift and other authors. A further example is "the Club," or "Dr Johnson's Literary Club," which included Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, James Boswell, Oliver Goldsmith, and others.[2] These clubs are practical examples of what Habermas described in his theory of the eighteenth-century public sphere, emphasizing the limitations of his initial perception of the public sphere, as these were mainly formed by white middle- and upper-class educated men.

Besides societies explicitly dedicated to the political discourses of the day and clubs exclusively for men, there were literary coteries formed by women or both men and women such as the Bluestockings' club, Hester Thrale's Streatham salon, and the Berry sisters' salon. Generally, these salons were places where heterosocial conversations, literary debates, and work-

[2] For book length readings on 18th century clubs, publics, and salons see *The Club: Johnson, Boswell, and the Friends Who Shaped an Age* by Leo Damrosch; *Pope to Burney, 1714-1779: Scriblerians to Bluestockings* by Moira Haslett; and *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* by Abigail Williams.

in-progress discussions took place. Explicitly political discourse was exclusive to the masculine world, and therefore was omitted from salons that included women.

In my dissertation, I will use the theory of the public sphere and counterpublics as a lens to examine the Bluestockings as an eighteenth-century conservative female community. The Bluestockings' marginalization was based on a gender hierarchy that viewed women as less rational than and socially inferior to men. Through studying their public writings and private correspondence, I will argue that the Bluestockings were a conservative female counterpublic that benefited from its good relations with the dominant public, and sought to reinforce traditional norms in English society through their cultural authority as public women writers. However, the Bluestockings also aimed to moderately criticize women's situations in their society and propose alternatives to their subordinate status.

Due to their conservatism, the Bluestockings community was one of the most influential and celebrated literary communities in the history of Britain. They tried to emerge as a public group of English women writers who mainly wrote for and about women, and their literary publications contributed to advancing British national progress. They prided themselves on being a group characterized by polite sociability and respectable authorship that remained committed to expected gender norms. The Bluestockings saw themselves as a group of conservative women writers that sought to protect the British identity of domestic womanhood. Their literary writings and social activities did not seek to level women's position with that of men. Instead, they sought to preserve established gender roles as natural and divine. Yet despite their devotion to the status quo, they still were a counterpublic. The Bluestockings, then, are celebrated as a conservative public dedicated to women's subordinated role in England. At the same time, they embodied the very marginalization that motivates the politics of a counterpublic.

Print culture has been essential to the formation of the Habermasian public sphere, and this applies to the Bluestockings society as well. Because of the proliferation of print that enabled circulation of discourse, the Bluestockings were able debate in writing with their opponents from the dominant public and were able present themselves and their ideas as a new force of change to the reading public. Through such practices and "public use of reason," the Bluestockings attempted to reposition themselves as emerging women writers and moralists in British culture.

However, considering them a part of the dominant public limits our understanding of the complicated reality that these women faced. The Bluestockings understood themselves as marginalized individuals within society, and sought, to some degree, to question the existing social order. Their approach was what Habermas described as "rational critical debate," presenting women as rational rather than irrational, and able to converse and debate with men as counterparts (43). While Habermas' model of the public sphere would have suggested that such rational debate in its initial stages took place in social institutions such as coffeehouses, the Bluestockings' social practices instead took place in more private spaces: the homes of the hostesses.

This emphasizes that while on superficial evaluation it appears as though the Bluestockings are a public, closer analysis reveals their subaltern status. The recognition of their subordinate position in the social hierarchy and subsequent efforts to negotiate it characterize the Bluestockings as a counterpublic according to Warner's definition. This allowed for a conflictual relation to take place in the literary salons hosted by the Bluestockings and in the written correspondence and public debates between the Bluestockings and male scholars. Further, Warner's definition of a counterpublic includes that they attempt to change the prevailing

discourse. The Bluestockings meet this criterion in their public writings, which aimed to empower women, however tepidly. The Bluestockings' writings reveal authors conscious of their social subordination to male hegemony; accordingly, they proposed alternative viewpoints to adjust and reform the women's place within society and to allow them to exist in the world of letters. What unifies the Bluestockings as a counterpublic is their devoted attention to elevating women's status through writing on moral advisory.

The Bluestockings' community evolved to become exclusively female by the 1770s. This helped the Bluestockings maintain their distance from the dominant public, and to not dissolve within the powerful "we" of the male-controlled literary public sphere. As Fraser noted, a single overarching sphere dissolves the voices of the less powerful group as social inequalities "bracketed" rather than fully erased. Placed as a heterosocial assembly in its first two decades, the Bluestockings women conversed with other men, yet conversations did not flow freely, as power relations dominated their sphere. However, their evolution from heterosocial literary salons into a self-aware female community helped them to rise as a recognizable entity of accepted female authors. Within their community, the Bluestockings conversed as peers and were able to dissolve the brackets more effectively than they could have in a heterosocial arena. By enacting their reasoning powers, the Bluestockings began to question the power relations that dismissed women's voices.

Chapter Three: Historical Overview and Scholarship on the Bluestockings

Historical Overview of the Bluestockings

This section presents an overview of the emergence, development, and decline of the Bluestockings community. It traces their history, members, ideology, influential works, and reception in eighteenth-century society. It will also offer a survey of their legacy in early nineteenth-century British society. Situating this movement historically will help us understand the seemingly contradictory stances that the Bluestockings took in their private and published writings as a conservative counterpublic.

In the eighteenth century, it was uncommon for a woman to have the same access to the public sphere or as solid an education as her male counterparts. However, there were certain circumstances that allowed some young women to have better opportunities than their peers. In *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (1990), Sylvia Harcstark Myers states, "the status of the family, the interest of an educated father, the presence of brothers who were being educated, might make it possible for a girl growing up in England during the 1720s and 1730s to receive a careful, sometimes even solid, education" (16). This was the case with many of the prominent women writers and intellectuals who came to be known as Bluestockings: the circumstances surrounding their childhoods and young adulthoods made it possible for them to be educated and, therefore, to gain uniquely influential positions in their society. Many of them were raised in middle- or upper-class families with educated and supportive fathers or brothers. The beginning of this social community was based on supportive friendships between intellectual men and women. In short,

the involvement of male scholars in this community was crucial to the development and growth of the Bluestockings.

Even the term *Bluestocking*, for instance, derived from the male influence of Benjamin Stillingfleet, a botanist and a man of letters, who preferred simple attire at intellectual assemblies for literary conversational meetings. When Stillingfleet declined Elizabeth Vesey's invitation to one of the assemblies, Vesey responded with "Pho, pho, don't mind dress! Come in your Bluestockings" (Burney 98). Stillingsfleet's preference for blue worsted stockings instead of white silk stockings and formal dress was "a gesture rejecting courtliness, luxury, and concern with status" (Kelly ix). In his comments regarding Stillingfleet's excellent conversational skills, James Boswell reports, "We can do nothing without the blue stocking" (qtd. in Rolt-Wheeler 23). Later on, "Bluestockings" changed from the nickname of a singular male member of this coterie to reference the literary society as a whole; the moniker referred to the home-like and informal atmosphere of these intellectual meetings.

The Bluestockings community emerged in the 1750s when intellectual upper-class men and women and professional middle-class authors gathered in the houses of wealthy female hosts in London. Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vesey, and Frances Boscawen were the original hosts of these meetings. Among the men who attended these gatherings were Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, Horace Walpole, and James Boswell. Female attendees included Elizabeth Carter, Hester Chapone, Catharine Talbot, and later, in the second generation, Hannah More, Hester Thrale, and Frances Burney. Unlike many of the eighteenth-century private social gatherings that featured alcoholic drinks and card-playing, the Bluestockings gathered for tea-drinking and serious conversations about literature, criticism, and social manners. Montague and her colleagues also welcomed clergymen to their social circles, forging connections with Church of

England clergymen and bishops who could support them in their quest for education and access to literary outlets. The Anglican Church patronized the Bluestockings and encouraged them to publish some of their works, of which a few served the Church's interests. The clergymen also discerned that the Bluestockings' charitable activities, philanthropy, virtuousness, piousness, and education were worthy of emulation (Staves 87). Thus, these women were in contact with male scholars and publishers before and during the formation of their own community.

The community underwent a transformative phase in the 1770s, when the term "Bluestockings" began to refer only to intellectual women in the social circle of Montagu, Vesey, and Boscawen, excluding the male intellectuals who had participated during the emergence of this society. Not much has been written about the reasons for this shift to a single-sex community. However, Deborah Heller attributes this change to the novelty of the society:

> Initially, Bluestocking was an epithet applied to all who attended these assemblies, both female and male; but the novelty of this new institution of sociability was its inclusion of women as co-partners in the conspicuously public activity of creating and disseminating opinion on matters ranging from literature to social and political issues. As a consequence of this novelty, the word Bluestocking came over time to signify predominantly women Bluestockings; and so, almost from the beginning, it became a site of potential controversy. (155)

Essentially, because women were the unique factor in the formation of the Bluestocking society, "Bluestockings" and "female intellectuals" became synonymous terms.

In the 1800s, the term became more generalized, referring to English women writers and intellectuals regardless of their position in the founders' social circle or participation in their social gatherings. The former male members of the Bluestockings, such as Samuel Johnson, Benjamin Stillingfleet, George Lyttleton, William Pulteney, the Earl of Bath, and the actor David Garrick, continued to value and encourage women's literary ambitions and intelligence but did so as friends rather than as members of the Bluestockings group. Elizabeth Eger's *Brilliant*

Women illustrates that the Bluestockings' recognition of their identity as intellectual women is evident in the titles they gave themselves, such as "Bluestockings philosophers," "Bluestockings Lodge," and "Bluestockings College." These titles associated them with the general aim of the Enlightenment and the public "life of the mind" that they sought to obtain. This was especially important as other modes of public life were barred to them by men of letters. As the notion of the Bluestockings evolved, they operated in letters, published literary works, and celebrated their visions of female intellect, conversation, and patronage in their writings.

Because they emerged in a time when the dominant society often disapproved of women's participation in public discourse and deemed it unfeminine, the Bluestockings attempted to create a public image of themselves as respectable intellectual women. While rising in society, these women had to push against the common, negative views of educated women who displayed their wit in public. From the early eighteenth century, some prominent literary works advocated domesticating women and their intellect. For instance, Alexander Pope's poem "An Epistle to a Lady" (1743) admired domesticated women and censured those who participated in public life:

> A Woman's seen in Private life alone
> Our bolder Talents in full light display'd,
> Your Virtues open fairest in the shade.
> Bred to disguise, in Public 'tis you hide" (lines 200-203).

These lines suggest that women's intellect can only be "displayed" in the privacy of the domestic sphere. Within this understanding of separate spheres, for a woman to expose her intellect in public jeopardized her reputational propriety and virtuousness. In the following lines, Pope strips from learned women their delicate femininity: "Agrees as ill with Rufa studying Locke, / As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock" (lines 23-24). Pope establishes an analogy between the

studious Rufa and the ill-dressed Sappho. Sappho's "diamonds" and dirty look are comparable to the situation of a learned woman, Rufa, who reads philosophy. According to Pope, women like Sappho and Rufa transgressed against their gender propriety, which transforms them to "softer Man."

The Bluestockings were aware of this sexist ridicule of educated women, which in many cases went so far as to associate learned women with sex workers. Catharine Gallagher's *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1920* discusses the issue of associating public female authors with sex workers. A woman writer disclosing her thoughts to the reading public might be associated with sex work for not reserving the contents of her mind for her husband. For instance, Robert Gould (1669 – 1709), a Restoration poet, wrote a poem that links women's intellect to prostitution: "Whore's the like reproachful name, as poetess" and that "Punk [a slang of the time for prostitute] and Poesie agree so pat, / You cannot well be this, and not be that." Thus, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, women writers' publications were not disentangled from bawdiness (Gallagher 23). Gould's poetry illustrates the divide that was conceived and perpetuated between the public and private spheres. To be accepted in public and not stigmatized as promiscuous, the Bluestockings knew that they must support the gender status quo. Therefore, as the Bluestockings attempted to enter the conversation in the literary public sphere, they did so with extreme caution.

At first, to avoid trespassing on men's domains in the dominant public sphere, many of the Bluestockings published either anonymously or under pseudonyms. Montagu was aware that some publications by women might be seen as intrusions into the male-dominated world of letters. After her successful publication on Shakespeare, she wrote in a letter, "there is a general prejudice against female Authors especially if they invade those regions of literature which the

Men are desirous to reserve to themselves" (Holland 78). This belief led Montagu to conceal her name from the reading public in her early years as a professional writer. The same is true for Carter, who concealed her real identity from the public by publishing under the name "Eliza" when she wrote for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Talbot grappled with internal conflict about putting her name on published writings because of her "hatred to this detestable Fame" (qtd. in Myers 213); therefore, many of her works were published posthumously. The publication of Burney's *Evelina* was anonymous; she concealed her identity even from the Bluestockings themselves. It should be noted that some scholars attribute this disguise of the self to the female authors' wishes to safeguard their feminine virtue and/or to receive impartial feedback on their works.[3]

The Bluestockings' reluctance to publish extended even to some members of the second generation. The publisher William Pepys wrote a letter to Hannah More seeking her permission to widely print her poem "The Bas Bleu: or, Conversation" (1786), which was initially well-received: "Miss Hamilton says I ought first to ask your leave [to circulate the poem more widely]; but I tell her that upon these occasions I think the asking leave is as absurd as if I were to ask her leave to give her a kiss, to be sure she must say No" (Pepys 229). In this letter, it becomes obvious that Pepys' assumptions about More's concerns regarding publication of her poem center around her perceptions of the propriety of women participating in the literary public sphere. Pepys' example of crossing boundaries with More is based on gender impropriety (i.e., a man asking for a kiss is as absurd as him asking permission to publish).

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[3] For instance, Catherine Gallagher's *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1920*; Betty Schellenberg's *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain*; and Markman Ellis's "'An Author In Form": Women Writers, Print Publication, and Elizabeth Montagu's Dialogues Of The Dead.'

However, after the outstanding success of More's "The Bas Bleu," the Bluestockings began to enjoy more public presence as an intellectual group of women.[4] Haslett argues that More's poem served as a turning point in the public profile of the Bluestockings circle. She writes, "Its eventual publication (in 1786) seems to mark the point at which the Bluestockings accepted a public profile and recognised that their group had become of interest beyond the circle itself" (89). Thus, according to Haslett, the success of this poem shifted the Bluestockings' position from private circles to the public as a well-known community.

"The Bas Bleu: or, Conversation" distinguished and praised the Bluestockings' community as the incarnation of an intellectual and fashionable society. The poem regards the intellectuality and domesticity that distinguishes this community from others with explicit and implicit references to the three hostesses: Vesey, Montagu, and Boscawen – the "triple crown." It mainly aimed to represent the Bluestockings as respectable social reformers who could change norms through rational conversations. More distinguishes the value of the Bluestockings' conversation from the commercial value of printed books:

> thy commerce, Conversation
> Must give it use by circulation;
> that noblest commerce of mankind
> Whose precious merchandize is Mind (lines 248-52).

These lines suggest that the most precious commodity is dissemination of knowledge. Therefore, the Bluestockings cultural production was less about monetary value and more about cultural value. More's metaphor of conversation as commerce not only suggests the profit to be gained

[4] "The Bas Bleu" was not the only literary work that exemplified the Bluestockings' increasing engagement in public conversations and public presentation of themselves as intellectual individuals. Scott's *Millennium Hall* (1762) is an allegorical fiction that presents the Bluestockings as a utopian community and celebrates its visions regarding female education, patronage, and reformation. Scott's idealized community was founded and run by educated women of a high social rank, like many of the Bluestocking founders, who devoted their efforts and fortunes to help others become an active part of the public conversation.

from intellectual exchange, but also conveys the sense in which the Bluestockings wanted to moralize their relationship to a new consumer culture while encouraging women to pursue a life of the mind (Eger 24). Samuel Johnson commented on More's poem, saying, "in my Opinion a Very Great performance...there is no name in poetry, that might not be glad to own it," and Horace Walpole printed it at Strawberry Hill (*Memoirs* 320). Through works such as this one, the Bluestockings began to break out from their private realm and present themselves to the public eye as a community seeking a reformation of female manners through their literary productions to educate women.

Even though the Bluestockings were conservative, their contemporary readings, magazines, and periodicals provided them with an alternative (though still hierarchical) view of women's role within society; rather than in the position of obedient wives, the women began to look at themselves as men's equal companions. However, here, "equality" does not mean "equity" in the contemporary sense. Rather, the Bluestockings aimed to translate subordination into an ennobling "power" in the domestic sphere, while men could exercise their power in the public sphere.

Thus, despite eighteenth-century societal expectations that women remain in the domestic sphere and outside of the world of men, these women's writings helped to enhance the notion of domesticating women through practicing "feminine" public writing that aimed to "instruct other women" (Schellenberg 2). As the Bluestockings were women with atypical education, they positioned themselves as experts on the subject. Textually, however, these women attempted to take charge of the domestic sphere while legitimizing men's dominance of the public sphere (and of course also suggesting that the man still had the final say in domestic affairs). In other words, they sought to reinforce the gender convention that "made men political

and women domestic" (Armstrong 12). In their writings, these women attempted to associate themselves with male intellectuals by presenting themselves as female moralists through their public "feminine" writings.

Besides being women moralists and educators to the public, these women offered support to talented women writers, especially those from the working class. Montagu offered her full support to Burney's future works after the success of *Evelina*, and expressed her pleasure that it had been written by a woman. The Bluestockings' support extended their reach to women from different classes. Talbot and Carter brought to the attention of the Bluestockings the works of Mary Collyer, a translator, and Charlotte Turner Smith, a novelist, who were writing to support their large families (Collyer had seven children; Smith six or seven). However, the Bluestockings' feminine identity led them to patronize "respectable" women writers who suffered financially but were believed to have a future in the world of literature. Not all genres or women were welcomed in the Bluestockings' circle: the Bluestockings supported only women writers who did not publicly challenge gender conventions and the existing social order.

The first generation of Bluestockings sought to read and write in specific genres and resisted reading and writing fiction. They produced in literary genres such as pamphlets, poetry, essays, dialogues, translation, and criticism, where they could participate in rational critical writing without disconnecting themselves from a feminine social role. They viewed literary reading materials in hierarchical order, and wanted to differentiate their works, in the general reading public, from mere entertainment. Novels, for instance, were viewed negatively at the time, and Hannah More followed suit – she initially rejected the novel because of its affective impact on the reader. She believed that novels led readers to engage in passive mental activity and tended to engage female readers with seductive imagination, which would distract them from

their domestic duties (Grogan; Schellenberg). As public acceptance of novels as a legitimate art form grew later in the century, however, the Bluestockings' views also shifted. This occurred simultaneously with the rise of the Bluestockings' second generation, Frances Burney and Clara Reeve, who embraced the novel as their specialty.

Although the Bluestockings patronized the rise of women's intelligence in the cultural and literary market, the leaders of the community generally resisted patronizing some forms of female art, specifically opera, as they believed public singing was a degrading profession that could appear seductive to men. The Bluestockings viewed musical arts as sensual rather than rational practices, which took women away from their virtuous and pious domestic roles. Thus, they believed the type of intellect they pursued through reading and writing was superior to songs and music since it did not lead to physical over-exposure of the self in public (Staves).

Unlike the Bluestockings, Catharine Macaulay went beyond the expected path of women writers through her publications. Instead of reinforcing notions of domestic women and feminine writing, Macaulay entered the world of politics when she published her eight-volume *History of England from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line* (1763). Additionally, she wrote *Observations on the Reflections of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke, on the Revolution in France* (1790) in refutation of Edmund Burke's negative views about the French Revolution. Macaulay also published political pamphlets and called for an equal education of male and female citizens, an act that was seen as a direct intervention into men's domain. Macaulay's proclivity toward publishing political and therefore "masculine" works ultimately resulted in her being pushed out of the Bluestockings' inner circle by the Bluestockings' leader, Montagu. Montagu, nicknamed the "Queen of the Blues," specifically disregarded Macaulay, as Montagu actively aimed to cultivate an image of conventionally-feminine intellectual women, an image

that Macaulay seemed to refuse to accept for herself. Montagu commented on Macaulay's publications, saying that "If she took her sentiments from her Father, & her language from Mrs Fuzzard [Macaulay's uneducated governess] it must be an extraordinary performance" (Green 29). Montagu stated that she would never read a book by Macaulay. Hence, Montagu, like some other Bluestockings, tried to distinguish and distance herself from radical writers to protect her reputation and maintain the social support of the elite patriarchal public.

The Bluestockings' ideology had an impact on the professional and personal lives of women writers. For example, second or "non-traditional" marriages earned some women the stigma of not being serious intellectuals. In the case of Macaulay, it was not only her publications and intellectual radicalism that led her to be disliked by conservative Bluestockings, but her freedom and what they viewed as her trespass against proper femininity. After the death of her first husband, Macaulay married William Graham, a man twenty-six years younger than she who came from a lower social class. Hester Thrale, a member of Montagu's circle, also married a second time. Two years after her husband's death, Thrale wed the Italian musician Gabriel Piozzi. These second marriages shocked the women's male and female friends, who had initially supported their intellectual ambitions. It is worth noting that most of these conservative women writers who advocated for stereotypical domestic lives were either unmarried, separated, widowed, or estranged from their husbands. Despite that fact, they staunchly opposed Macaulay's and Thrale's second marriages. The Bluestockings considered second marriage a signal lack of seriousness in the intellectual field. It also implied that those women were ruled by passion and sexual pleasure more than by intellect. In the cases of Macaulay and Thrale it can be said that the Bluestockings saw their second marriages to men who were socially inferior to them as an insult to women in their position.

As the more radical of the women writers were pushed out of their own support system, the literary ambitions and achievements of the Bluestockings who maintained feminine and "respectable" personae began to receive increased public praise and recognition. The Bluestockings' successful publications during the time of British colonialism and the cultural battle with France helped to demonstrate the idea of perceived British superiority to other nations. In particular, Carter's translation of *All the Works of Epictetus* contributed to Britain's high reputation among other European countries. Montagu wrote *Essays on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* in defense of Shakespeare against the views of the French philosopher Voltaire. The combined impressions of virtue and wisdom presented in the writings of the Bluestockings made them valued contributors to the construction of the British sense of nationalism and culture.[5]

In addition to works that either praised or defended Britain and its literary icons, some of the Bluestockings' works were concerned with the domestic ideals of the British nation. Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady* (1773) was devoted to educating young women about moral, educational, and social matters of the time. Chapone's book was so successful that it was reprinted at least sixteen times before the turn of the eighteenth century, and continued to be printed in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. It was also translated into French and later taught in schools. Through such writings, women writers obtained cultural authority and contributed to the development of the British nation. The Bluestockings were able to gain public recognition by framing their moral and

[5] Linda Colley claims that recognition of British national identity was formed between 1707 and 1837. She writes, "the manner in which [this national identity] was forged has shaped the quality of this particular sense of nationhood and belonging ever since, both in remarkable strengths and resilience, and in terms of its considerable and increasingly evident weaknesses" (1). Hence, the Bluestockings were involved in forging that sense of British national identity.

domestic commentaries as essential contributions to social reform and the building of the British nation. In addition to wide social acceptance, these successful works provided their authors with a secure financial status.

The social acceptance of the Bluestockings was expressed in a compelling way. Richard Samuel's painting *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain* was displayed in the Royal Academy in 1779. This painting portrays a "network of intellectuals who were involved in a diverse range of cultural activities, from writing poetry, political pamphlets, educational and moral philosophy, legal essays, novels, plays, Shakespeare criticism to performing arias and exhibiting paintings" (Eger 1). In his painting, Samuel portrayed a group of women who contributed in a variety of ways to intellectual life and the British Enlightenment; these women were from different backgrounds and political views (radical vs. conservative). Among those intellectual women portrayed were Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, Hannah More, and Catharine Macaulay.[6]

This portrait was a celebration of women's contributions to the British nation at a time when women were finally welcomed into the world of letters as writers and readers. Their publications on manners and moral values were understood by many commentators to contribute to securing the domestic ideals of the English nation during a time of war. Eger's *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* associated the acceptance of the Bluestockings and other female authors with their contributions to the cultural and artistic world by entering the world of commerce. By patronizing and consuming art, women were able to

[6] As this famous painting would corroborate, some scholars associated Macaulay with the Bluestockings in their high regard for intellectual women between 1770 and the 1800s. In fact, however, Macaulay opposed the Bluestockings' manners and beliefs.

refine the international image of Britain, which could justify both the extension of British colonialism and the claim of Britain's cultural superiority to other nations.

The Bluestockings appreciated this acceptance by the public. After having been depicted in the *Nine Living Muses of Great Britain*, Montagu wrote to Carter:

> Unless we could all be put into a popular ballad, set to a favourite old English tune, I do not see how we could become more universally celebrated. We might have lived in an age in which we should never have had ye pleasure of seeing our features, or characters, in Pocket Books, Magazines, Museums, litterary & monthly reviews, Annual Registers. (Haslett 90)

Carter penned a similar letter in appreciation of the growing social acknowledgment of the Bluestockings as respectable intellectual women.

Not long after gaining acceptance, however, the Bluestockings community began to disintegrate. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, many of its founders, specifically those in Montagu's circle, had passed away. A few months after the death of Montagu, Burney wrote a letter to her father lamenting the death of the group itself: "How is our Blue Club cut up! But Sir William Pepys told me it was dead while living; all such society as that we formerly belonged to, and enjoyed, being positively over" (Burney 211). Although the original group faded, in the beginning of the nineteenth century the word "Bluestockings" expanded to include a wider range of women writers and intellectuals, regardless of whether they had engaged in the early literary gatherings. Eger writes, "By the time of Montagu's death in 1800, 'bluestocking' was synonymous with women writers and intellectuals in general, irrespective of whether they had participated in one of the early salons" (29). Thus, with the passage of time, the Bluestockings went from referring solely to Montagu's circle to encompassing a wider range of English women writers. The Bluestockings' influence is discernible in the groundwork laid to help their successors to enter the public sphere of letters with less trepidation. Women had more access not

only to reading materials but also to the world of publication that had previously been the preserve of men.

As the eighteenth century ended and the Romantic era began, the new iteration of Bluestockings started to lose cultural support and became objects of masculine hostility. With their increasing presence in areas of the public sphere that had been traditionally male-dominated, male authors began to feel threatened. Anne Mellor attributes this change of opinion to the cultural and economic impact of women's participation in the literary market as both writers and readers. The expansion of literacy among women was stimulated by circulating libraries and Sunday schools, in conjunction with appeals for women's education. Mellor adds, "Since women of the middle and upper classes typically had more leisure time to read, they had become by 1800 the primary market for works of literature" (18). According to Mellor, these circumstances made women's public presence more visible in the world of literature and increased male authors' rejection of them for the following reasons. First, it was believed that women readers had "low-brow" and "vulgar" tastes that could trivialize literature, as they tended to read romance and Gothic novels written by other women. Second, reading these female-dominated genres could expose women to new and indecent desires thereby damaging their virtue. Third, women writers' success in publishing books that appealed to the interests of female readers resulted in less demand for male-dominated genres. This negatively impacted the male writers' ability to write for a living, and lowered their profits from writing. In this cultural shift, socially active women became targets of masculine hostility for widening the scope of female social roles.

Due to the public exposure of their learning and their identity as women, some people began to suspect the Bluestockings of being inattentive to their domestic duties as wives and

mothers, and therefore castigated educated women in general. While an earlier generation of Bluestockings had warned against the dangers of too much education for women, public opinion turned in the nineteenth century against women's education generally. Both in private correspondence and in public writings, male authors of the Romantic era did not hold back their hostility towards women writers. Although he admired some female writers of the 1800s, Samuel Taylor Coleridge stated in one of his letters in 1813 that "The longer I live, the more do I loathe in stomach, & deprecate in Judgement, all, *all* Bluestockingism" (qtd. in Mellor 24). In 1820, William Hazlitt announced in an essay, "I have an utter aversion to blues-stockings. I do not care a fig for any woman that knows even what *an author* means" (qtd. in Mellor 24). In contrast to the early association of the founding Bluestockings with British patriotism, early nineteenth-century authors began to accuse the nineteenth-century Bluestockings of being influenced by French culture, cuisines, and politics.

Mellor tracked the redemption of the Bluestockings in the public mind. However, after being satirized and viewed as threatening, the Bluestockings of the early nineteenth century began to retrieve their respectability and authority within society, thanks to the work of early nineteenth century women writers. Hannah More's advocacy for reformation in the education of women succeeded. Her views that women can be simultaneously educated and fulfill their domestic duties as good Christian mothers, wives, and daughters were labeled as "Victorian family values." Thus, women writers combined their public role with domestic duties as respectable Victorian female authors (Mellor 24). This change resulted in another wave of social acceptance of women writers, expressed through literary works such as William Scargill's *Blue-Stocking Hall* (1827) and Leigh Hunt's poem *Blue-stocking Reveals or, The Feast of the Violets* (1837). In particular, Scargill praised virtuous women writers as "Bluestockings" (24). Yet, he

condemned educated women who learned merely to display their wit and women who embraced masculine tendencies, labeling the latter "Female Nimrod[s]" (24). Thus, by the 1840s, the view of Victorian women writers as threatening and ridiculed feminists was transformed back to a view of them as respectable authors and matrons of the Victorian age.

The Bluestockings' legacy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a transnational one. Women's intellectual communities continued to emerge even after the British Bluestockings vanished. In the 1920s, a group of women in Japan established a magazine titled *Japanese Bluestockings Society*. It was mainly concerned with writings by and about women, in an endeavor to extend women's rights. A more recent example of the Bluestockings' legacy is the bookstore *Bluestockings* in Manhattan, New York, that was established in 1999 and offers feminist and radical books focusing on marginalized populations. Thus, even if the Bluestockings' movement was fundamentally conservative, it influenced often more progressive communities that recognize themselves as being part of this intellectual and communal tradition.

Recent Scholarship on the Bluestockings

The definition of "Bluestockings" is contested in both contemporary and historical contexts. The Bluestockings can be defined by specific actions such as publishing, participating in the early salons, or having conservative views on social and gender conventions, along with similarities in race, class, and educational opportunities. Scholars restrict and expand the definition as needed, describing Bluestockings as a limited social group, social reformers, or a centuries-long proto-feminist project. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will use the term Bluestockings to refer to Elizabeth Montagu, the "Queen of the Blues," and women in her

immediate circle who held more conservative views than their peers regarding class hierarchy and gender roles in their time.

In this section, I review the major critical works on the Bluestockings' society. I place the works in chronological order, highlight areas of overlapping themes and arguments, and examine the ways these scholars define the Bluestockings' membership. The analysis of literature shows that the majority of the critics who write about the Bluestockings portray them as Enlightenment-era thinkers emerging from the private sphere into the public sphere—transforming their houses into public spaces for intellectual gatherings of men and women. However, these women understood the constraints of their gender, and therefore distanced themselves from explicitly political matters, which were typically perceived as men's domain. Through their writings, the Bluestockings attempted to enter the larger public conversation and redefine the private social order. Critics examine the Bluestockings in the context of the public, political sphere and the private, domestic sphere. They define the Bluestockings alternately as a small group of writers connected to the salons they hosted, or in conceptual terms as female intellectuals regardless of the original group makeup. Recently, scholarship on the Bluestockings has moved toward an entirely theoretical definition of the term and increasingly associates the Bluestockings with the origins of modern feminism as well.

Sylvia Harcstark Myers' book *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (1990) is a pioneering study of the Bluestockings that provides an unparalleled collection of their primary writing – from private correspondence and diaries to such public writings as poems, criticism, and essays. In addition to studying the content of the Bluestockings' works, Myers describes important social contexts surrounding the lives of the four first-generation Bluestockings on whom her study focuses: Elizabeth Montagu,

Elizabeth Carter, Catharine Talbot, and Hester Chapone. Myers emphasizes the vital support of family and friends in establishing the Bluestocking circle; without these particular social and economic circumstances, those women would not have been able to create their informal community. Since many members of the Bluestockings' first generation were childless and either unmarried, widowed, or estranged from their husbands, they were able to control their time and money. As middle- or upper middle-class women, they were free to pursue intellectual lives based on shared interests. Myers contends that the Bluestockings' friendship allowed them to form a "'female web of experience' which supported their efforts at autonomy" (81). Besides control over time and money, their personal relations, whether in person or in letters, were foundational to the formation of their informal community.

To Myers, the Bluestockings' union was informal and they did not follow political agendas. Rather, the first-generation Bluestockings appealed to a specific use of reason (that is, the use of reason for specifically conservative ends) and feminine virtue, and their community was based on similar conservative interests such as Christian piety and virtue. The Bluestockings desired to enter the world of letters by addressing topics that were not excessively restricted to men. They wrote poetry, literary criticism, and conduct manuals that would allow them to take part in larger conversations happening in society. However, the Bluestockings avoided sensitive topics that would stigmatize them as transgressing learned women, such as history, statecraft, and politics. The Bluestockings attempted to create an image of themselves as respectable writers. To be a Bluestocking was "to be an impeccable member of an intellectual community which included both men and women" (Myers 11). More specifically, Myers' chapter "Feminist Consciousness" shows that these women were not influenced by women writers who had gone before them such as Mary Astell; instead, Myers contends that these women's views about

gender were mainly influenced by writings that "were interested in raising questions about the condition of women: the *Tatler,* the *Spectator*, and the G*entleman's magazine*" (123). Myers suggests that the Bluestockings adapted a neutral feminist stance that did not aim to publicly empower women or seek to equate them with men. Ostensibly, the Bluestockings ultimate goal was to have their voices heard in the world of letters as intellectual human beings, apart from addressing issues of women rights.

The first generation of Bluestockings were not radicals; they were conservative women who, through their exposure to the *The Spectator* and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, began to assert intellectual and social equality with their male counterparts. Myers writes that "the Bluestockings were finding their way slowly and individually because they were not close to feminists who had gone before, and did not regard themselves as inheritors of a 'feminist tradition'" (121). In support of this claim, Myers illustrates the different directions that the Bluestockings took to promote the situation of women. For example, Montagu's philanthropic practices were mainly aimed at impoverished women. Myers also discusses the epistolary debate between Hester Chapone and Samuel Richardson regarding women's independence, specifically the right for a woman to have a voice in marriage. Montagu's philanthropy and Chapone's dispute with Richardson demonstrate the Bluestockings' understanding of themselves as a group marginalized by gender, and therefore attempting to empower themselves and the women around them. Generally, the Bluestockings "hoped to change the attitudes of both men and women by advocating the cause of women. But they had no feeling for political and legal changes which would eventually be necessary" (Myers 121). Myers argues that through their writings and activities, the Bluestockings did not aim to change the status quo for women. Rather, they sought to have an accepted, albeit secondary, position in the world of letters.

Deborah Heller's essay "Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere" (1998) takes Myers' discussion a step further and views the Bluestockings' salons in the light of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, while leaving Myers' definition of the Bluestocking's first-generation writers intact. Her aim is to showcase the Bluestockings as effective participants in the eighteenth-century public sphere by proving that they had intellectual strength and public autonomy. Heller rejects the rigid delineation of public as exterior and private as interior. She contends that despite the fact that the Bluestockings' gatherings were taking place in domestic spaces – the hostesses' homes – these spaces were actually part of public life because they were places of publicly-oriented social practice. She further considers that Bluestockings women were not only participants in the public sphere of conversation, but in fact were "co-architects" of this form of public sphere. The Bluestockings, she points out, were not mere members (as readers, writers, and conversationalists) of this public, they also served as organizers of those social circles because they created the community within the domestic realm and presided over it: "The Bluestocking salon thus takes on interest as the locus where the vexed issues of publicity, reason, conversation, and gender in the eighteenth century all converge" (Heller 61). The Bluestockings' salons took public sphere practices a step forward by including more voices than those in the male publics.

Heller argues that the diversity of the early salons and an increase in their numbers decreased the unity of the Bluestockings' social circles. The inclusivity of men and women gave way to a gender hierarchy. Heller asserts that participation was not ideal, because the female participants faced ideological and gendered obstacles. While theoretically women were full and active peers, in practice they faced gender constraints and therefore had to "adjust to the scene of

conversation" in this broadened sphere (61). In a sphere dominated by men, the Bluestockings took the opportunity to be part of rational critical debate, with some limitations.

While Heller's article fundamentally discusses the Bluestockings' salons and their social activities in physical spaces, Gary Kelly's *Bluestockings Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785* (1999) examines the Bluestockings' written contributions to the literary public sphere. Kelly's discussion focuses more on published works than on the Bluestockings salons, which in turn means that he neglects some members of the Bluestockings, such as Elizabeth Vesey and Frances Boscawen. At the same time, by focusing solely on writings, Kelly widens the traditional definition of the Bluestockings from those who attended salons to those more active in their literary productions. Sarah Scott, who was a distant member of the Bluestockings' public and social events, is one of these women.

Kelly argues that the Bluestockings' writings featured a distinct type of feminism: since they were excluded from public political institutions, the Bluestocking writers focused on reworking existing social structures while rejecting political radicalism. This political radicalism might be embodied in advocacy for full educational access for women, or on a larger scale in articulating an acceptance of the French Revolution and questioning the status quo of the state and social orders of both gender and class. Kelly attributes this conservative position of the Bluestockings to a class connection with the Church and the state which granted them stability. Thus, the Bluestockings claimed rational equality with men to explore historical, educational and theological matters, and to practice philanthropy for other women. They can be placed in the "older feminist tradition" that demonstrates "the social and moral value of female learning" (Myers 121). In his examination of their writings, Kelly illuminates this form of feminism

performed by the Bluestockings. Although these women intellectually transcended conventional gendered norms, they carefully navigated the men's world in a way that did not defeminize them.

Kelly argues that the Bluestockings rejected radical politics and instead devoted their efforts to promoting a conservative understanding of women's social role within the established order. For instance, Montagu's *Essay on Shakespeare* and Carter's *Epictetus* situated them as protectors of British culture and literary heritage and associated them with the domestic and civil progress of the British nation. Catharine Talbot's writings also provide examples of the attempt to promote women's autonomy and homogenize women in society. Through them, Talbot aimed to construct "a new female subjectivity, one which derives power from self-conscious practices of introspection, conduct, and manners" (13). By doing so, Talbot aimed to obtain for women "a speaking position" that would permit them moral and social authority in the domestic realm (13). Chapone's public writings addressed to young female readers demonstrate this "speaking position" in her advocacy for women's education, management of domestic economy, and control over one's self, passion, and manners. Chapone further argued for a woman's right to consent to marriage, in a private correspondence with Samuel Richardson. Kelly echoes Myers when describing the Bluestockings as conservative writers who desired to create an image of themselves as respectable intellectual women in the literary public sphere. Through this approach, women aimed to gain cultural authority in the domestic sphere away from the world of political discourse, which was reserved for men.

In contrast to Heller's argument that seeks to place the Bluestockings within the dominant public sphere, Harriet Guest's "Bluestocking Feminism" (2002) defines the Bluestockings' relation to the public sphere as merely virtual. Guest references Habermas's two forms of public sphere, the virtual "world of letters" and actual "political realm," and positions the

Bluestockings' society within the former. Guest argues that Montagu's contemporaries appreciated her social practice as a salon hostess because she created a new atmosphere for male participants, protecting them from the conflict and hostility that characterized the political sphere. Bluestockings salons affirmed male participants in "reconfirming their identities as what Habermas calls '*human beings pure and simple,*'" private individuals taking parts in the literary public sphere (64). In the world of letters formed by the Bluestockings, men with opposing political views gathered and conversed about topics that were not explicitly political, such as poetry and literary criticism, ostensibly and temporarily putting their political views aside.

The Bluestockings did not participate directly in the political realm. Although they were interested in news and politics, they only observed and privately commented on events relevant to the politics of the Parliament and court. Guest attributes this disconnection from the world of politics to the Bluestockings' conservative views about themselves as virtuous women writers. She quotes Elizabeth Carter's letter to Montagu, in which Carter appreciates her gender's exclusion from the world of politics: "How thankful ought they to be whom their obscurity of private life shelters from the turbulence of ambition, and preserves from the temptation of power" (67). Despite the enjoyment of their privacy, Guests suggests that the Bluestockings' participation in the world of letters may have had an "ambivalent political edge" (63). The Bluestockings' involvement in the world of letters with men allowed them to think of themselves as marginalized by gender. Guest claims that this involvement and marginalization might have "made available the fiction or fantasy of a feminine political voice," and that in turn might have influenced writers like Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft to think of themselves as marginalized by gender, and ultimately to engage directly in political writings (80). Guest means that by conversing with men, these women were able to conceive of themselves as able to reason

as well as men. This in turn helped them to recognize their exclusion from the public sphere of politics, because of unjust gender hierarchy and the sexist stereotype of women's irrationality.

Similar to Heller and Guest, in "The Bluestocking Salon: Patronage, Correspondence and Conversation" (2010), Elizabeth Eger compares the Bluestockings' community to the Habermasian model of the public sphere, paying thorough attention to the Bluestockings' patronage, correspondence, and conversation. Through these social and literary practices, not only were the Bluestockings able to create their own community, but they were also able to insert themselves into the dominant public sphere. Eger contends that "Patronage, conversation and correspondence are forms of connection that both elevate private concerns to the level of public significance and incorporate public spirit into the home" (62). These intellectual activities of the Bluestockings presented their salons as an institution of the Enlightenment, or as Eger calls it, "a demotic and diffused Enlightenment" where women writers assimilated and thrived (26). Moreover, through patronage, correspondence, and conversation, the Bluestockings realized their "specific social mission, their role in spreading ideas for educational reform through their lives and writings" (116). Montagu's wealth, for instance, permitted her to use her house as a place for men and women to publicly exercise their use of reason. Eger describes the Bluestockings salons as inclusive places that incorporated "journalists, Johnsonian coffee-house philosophers, writers of the bluestocking circle, Unitarian ministers, collectors and connoisseurs, scientists and educators, as well as moral philosophers such as Shaftesbury and Adam Smith" (28). Additionally, Montagu patronized women writers to propel them into the literary public sphere through their publications and aimed to grant them financial independence. Thus, through their private practices, the Bluestockings were able to transcend the barriers between public and private realms, which helped them to engage in the public literary society and present their

writings to the reading public. Heller, Guest, and Eger describe the Bluestockings' salons as social and intellectual institutions during the Enlightenment, ones which were inclusive of diverse individuals mainly based on intellectual merits.

Eger builds on Myers' early definition of the Bluestockings in her critical works: *Brilliant Women* (2008), *Women of Reason* (2010), and *Bluestockings Displayed* (2013). For instance, *Brilliant Women* examines two groups of portraits that illustrate the emergence and decline of the Bluestockings community. The book highlights the conflict between the principal Bluestockings and radical writers such as Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft. Another instance of Myers' generally accepted definition appears in Lisa Freeman's "The Woman Writer as a Public Paradox." Freeman argues that the Bluestockings' conservatism helped them to obtain intellectual status without neglecting their identity as women with domestic duties. Freeman grounds her study specifically on Elizabeth Carter as a principal member of the original group associated with Montagu, Vesey, and Boscawen. Her definition of the Bluestockings echoes Myers in revolving mainly around the Bluestockings' intellectual and social practices.

While Eger, Kelly, and Freeman commit to Myers' definition of the Bluestockings, some scholars show a discernable expansion of the definition of Bluestockings within the British context. For example, in "Biographical Sketches of Principal Bluestocking Women" (2002), Anna Miegon compiles biographies of fifteen women writers who have been associated with the Bluestockings, and who had direct connections with all or some of Montagu's acquaintances. Miegon's piece is more inclusive than other traditional definitions of the Bluestockings, affording membership to those without a significant volume of public writing, and those with vast ideological differences (ranging from conservative to radical women). Also, within the British context, Shearer West expands the term Bluestockings to include members with more

liberal careers than the Bluestockings. In “Roles and Role Models: Montagu, Siddon, Lady Macbeth,” West examines how Elizabeth Montagu and the eighteenth-century theatrical actress and writer Sarah Siddon read the character of Lady Macbeth “against the grain.” West considers Siddon one of the Bluestockings not only because of her personal connections with the Bluestockings, but also because of her conservative views of “femininity,” “Englishness,” “Piousness,” and “ideal” womanhood, which align with the primary Bluestockings (170).

Whereas the previous critical definitions of the Bluestockings remain inside the boundaries of British society, Alessa Johns broadens the concept to serve as a framework for a larger European context and uses the term Bluestockings to include male and female members, early and late authors, and European writers who contributed to intellectual, literary, and cultural growth. Similarly, Benjamin Dabby extends the definition to encompass a relatively large number of women writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in Britain and France. Deborah Heller and Steven Heller continue the trend of expanding the definition of Bluestockings by arguing in “A Copernican Shift: or, Remapping the Bluestocking Heavens” (2015) that the Bluestockings’ movement was a phenomenon of modernity that paved the way for organized feminism in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Heller and Heller define not “Bluestockings” but "Bluestockingness," a social role that helped shape "female identities" that participated in the public sphere both economically and politically. Their extraction of "Bluestockingness" from the historical group is a marked departure from previous scholarship focused on specific writers who composed the Bluestockings' membership. Essentially, they contend that the Bluestockings should be defined as a social role rather than fixed circles. Heller and Heller argue against categorizing the Bluestockings in terms of binary positions regarding class, political views, or religious beliefs.

Contrary to Myers, Kelly, Eger, and West, who define the Bluestockings community within the boundaries of conservative tradition, Heller and Heller warn against classifying the Bluestockings as either aristocrats or middle-class writers, Tories or Whigs, liberals or conservatives, Anglicans or Dissenters. In their opinion, there are two problems regarding traditional definitions of the Bluestockings:

> First, all existing enumerations are only partial; that is, they are based on an author's prior definition of what is a Bluestocking, or they are limited by the space constraints of publication. The second problem is that the cast of actors changes over time (some Bluestockings die over the years and other Bluestockings arrive on the scene), and – we must not rule this out—the characteristics of the Bluestockings may themselves change overtime. (18)

Heller and Heller resist drawing boundaries around who the Bluestockings were, as these are boundaries shaped by authors' previous definitions. Additionally, they point out that Bluestockings' membership was not fixed – it changed over time as members passed away and other individuals entered the picture. Some criteria – active writing and publishing – leave significant salonnières such as Vesey and Boscawen out of consideration. Heller and Heller suggest looking at the Bluestockings as a historical cultural phenomenon rather than a group of concrete individuals. According to them, "Bluestockingism" should be thought of as active participation and production in the cultural field of literature and Bluestockings should be viewed as those who adhere to this social role.

Deborah and Steven Hellers' argument for considering a wide range of women writers "Bluestockings," rather than drawing fixed lines around Bluestockings membership, is compelling. However, their argument seeks to broaden the term to such an extent that it loses its meaning as a particular social community. Some women writers they choose to classify as

Bluestockings were likely rejected from the original circles because of their supposed transgressions against established social norms.

Despite many later studies that expand membership to include distant, atypical, or non-prominent actors, the traditional Bluestockings membership and definitions primarily revolve around those who hosted the literary meetings (Montagu, Boscawen, and Vesey) and the men and women who participated in those salons between 1750 and the 1800s. Even though broad definitions of the Bluestockings have become more popular over time, I define the Bluestockings in stricter terms, including specificity of time, location, friendship, and adherence to conservative tradition, as Myers, Eger, Freeman, and Kelly originally defined them. Drawing boundaries around the Bluestockings is essential, as I will be viewing them in light of Habermasian public sphere theory, along with Nancy Fraser's and Michael Warner's notions of counterpublic, where members identify themselves within particular boundaries along with unifying common concerns (i.e. conservative tradition and feminine virtue). Hence, boundaries are definitive characteristics of the Bluestockings as a socially constructed community, rather than an extended form of social network transcending time and locality, as imagined by Johns, Dabby, and Heller and Heller. The use of "Bluestockings" throughout my dissertation aligns with the traditional definitions of the Bluestockings set forth by Myers, Eger, Kelly: the circle of Montagu, Vesey, and Boscawen, the eighteenth-century community of conservative women writers in England.

Some of the scholars above linked the Bluestockings' community to Habermas's theory of the public sphere. However, none of the literature has viewed the Bluestockings in the light of Nancy Fraser's and Michael Warner's notions of "counterpublic." Most scholars viewed the Bluestockings community as part of the larger dominant public, whether virtually or physically, or both. I argue that the Bluestockings were a counterpublic within a dominant public. Because

women writers could not participate on an even ground with men in the world of letters, the Bluestockings were always aware of their subordinate status; they could not remove the disadvantage under which they labored. The Bluestockings' participation in the world of letters was through their marginalized identities: because they understood themselves as marginalized, they adjusted to the patriarchal norms that accepted their unprecedented participation in what was considered a masculine realm. In other words, the Bluestockings appreciated the limits on how far they could proceed in the world of letters, making them a conservative counterpublic. The Bluestockings simultaneously resisted the status quo while still supporting it. By using the power and privilege they enjoyed, they endeavored to make subtle changes and acceptable alternative plans to male authority for women of their position. The Bluestockings supported the dominant public power structure while undermining certain aspects of the traditional order. They obtained a distinctive form of power that allowed them authority over ordinary women, while distancing themselves from the political/masculine realms of power. The contrast between the Bluestockings' public and private writings highlights this contradiction: published pieces support the institutions that marginalized them, but private writings reveal the ways in which they navigated their marginalization. For instance, the Bluestockings' public writings reinforced the notion of not questioning the social hierarchy that domesticated and subjugated women. But privately, the Bluestockings' correspondence rejected and questioned this subjugation. Their recognition and resistance to subordination made them a female counterpublic.

In contrast to the Bluestockings, radical women writers like Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft sought to explicitly acknowledge limitations not only on themselves, but on all women in their society. Most critics see Macaulay and Wollstonecraft as political radicals due to their direct intervention in the political world, while the Bluestockings have been viewed as

non-political women (Myers; Kelly). I will argue that the Bluestockings' choice to conform to the patriarchal order and maintain the existing power structure was itself political. Given their writings and social practices, the Bluestockings formed a conservative female counterpublic that aimed to define women's role in society while maintaining their subjugation.

Chapter Four: The Bluestockings: A Conservative Counterpublic

Despite the restrictive gender hierarchy that governed eighteenth-century social interactions, the women of the Bluestockings community played a major role in the eighteenth-century world of letters. These women writers, often discussing topics deemed appropriate to womanhood, were welcomed and encouraged by men of letters to pursue their intellectual goals. However, due to established gender norms during that time period, the Bluestocking did not obtain the same amount of power and intellectual freedom within the literary world as men. The Bluestockings were in a position to write their ideas publicly; however, they were constrained into writing in a way that did not explicitly challenge gender hierarchy.

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, none of the studies on the Bluestockings viewed them as a female counterpublic in the literary public sphere. For instance, Harriet Guest examines the Bluestockings as a group that embodied proto-feminism and conservatism in Habermas's "world of letters." Guest suggests that even though the Bluestockings' participation was restricted to the literary public rather than the political public, this participation "produces the possibility of Bluestocking feminism" with an "ambivalently political edge" (63). Prominent Bluestockings scholar Deborah Heller contends that the Bluestockings were not just participants in the literary public sphere, but rather "co-architects" of the social and intellectual life in London (Heller 60). She argues that despite performing an active role, the Bluestockings encountered social obstacles resulting from gender hierarchy that led them to "adjust to the scenes of conversation" when interacting with men (61). In a similar manner, Elizabeth Eger emphasizes the social and literary activities of the Bluestockings that allowed private concerns to gain access to public life and "incorporate public spirit into the home" (Eger 62). This access

was possible because the Bluestockings' literary activity through conversation, correspondence, and patronage granted them cultural agency in the world of letters. These scholars generally view the Bluestockings as conforming to male gender expectations in order to access and participate in the public sphere.

However, I argue that the Bluestockings formed a literary counterpublic in the world of letters. In other words, they were a group of marginalized individuals who attempted to moderately resist the dominant literary public sphere of white educated men. The Bluestockings' public, conservative writings serve as a studied concession to lay the groundwork for women's entry into the literary public sphere. This approach explains the contradiction between the Bluestockings' conservative published writings and their rebellious private writings. The Bluestockings' resistance to the established gender order is most obvious in their refusal to acquiesce to traditional marriage. Through their private correspondence and rejection of traditional marriage, the Bluestockings formed a female counterpublic, or as Fraser describes it, a "parallel discursive [arena] where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (67). I refer to this as a conservative counterpublic, by which I mean that they straddled the status quo in which men dominated the literary public sphere that confined women to the domestic sphere. This parallel discursive arena is incarnate in the Bluestockings' published writings, but more obviously in their private correspondence and personal life choices.

As a counterpublic the Bluestockings were composed of and run by female intellectuals who refused the established gendered division that sought to exclude them from public life. While the Bluestockings engaged in the literary public sphere, their participation was restricted

and contained within traditional gendered boundaries; nor did they aim to obtain full and equal rights for women. In fact, the Bluestockings opposed women writers who called for radically reworking the existing social order. Thus, through their public dissemination of conservative views, the Bluestockings intellectually upheld the patriarchal system while in practice subverting it through their presence as women in the male-dominated world of letters. The Bluestockings' public writings highlight this public conservatism and adherence to the status quo, while their private correspondence actually subverts the rigid patriarchal system. I will argue that while the published writings of the Bluestockings implicitly challenge the status quo, their private correspondence and attitude towards traditional marriage show their strong resistance to the established social order.

In this chapter I will offer a framework to understand how the Bluestockings understood their marginalization and operated within the dominant, patriarchal public sphere. I will demonstrate that the Bluestockings' recognition of and adherence to the limits imposed upon them contributed to the elevation of their voices in the world of letters. Unlike radical women writers, the Bluestockings utilized their position as women and the values of British conservatism to ensure a safe entrance into the literary public sphere. The Bluestockings presented themselves as role models of acceptable feminine intellect and virtue in the world of letters. In short, the Bluestockings' conservativism shows a sort of acceptance of the status quo in the public sphere, but in their private writings and personal lives there is active resistance.

The following section shows that the Bluestockings were challenged by influential male scholars such as Samuel Johnson, who can reasonably be seen as a figure reflective of the dominant literary institution. Johnson's interaction with the Bluestockings' salons highlights the gendered boundaries that emerged between the dominant public and the Bluestockings as a

literary counterpublic when they actively pushed themselves as assertive, educated women. The conflict between Johnson and some members of the Bluestockings' circle reveals a gendered contest for cultural authority.

The Bluestockings' Conflict with Male Scholars

Social interactions between Samuel Johnson and the Bluestockings illuminate the ways in which the gender hierarchy positioned the Bluestockings as a counterpublic rather than a part of the dominant public. Johnson's attitude towards women writers is a representation of how gender controlled the level and input of one's participation in the literary conversation of the time. Johnson established his fame as a prominent Shakespearean critic after the publication of his *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765)—a fame he would eventually share with the Bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu, who wrote on the same subject.

Montagu paved her way in the world of letters by publishing *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769), receiving recognition as a successful female author on Shakespeare. Montagu's work was well-received and appreciated in Britain for its defense of Shakespeare against the French critic Voltaire. Voltaire openly attacked Shakespeare's works, arguing that they would "spoil" the artistic taste of the French nation. He described Shakespeare as "the creator of the English theatre … His genius was at once strong and abundant, natural and sublime, but without the smallest spark of taste and void of the remotest knowledge of the rules" (Haines 11). Whereas Voltaire refers to Shakespeare using disparaging language by writing "this Shakespeare," Montagu proudly addressed him as "Our Shakespeare." Montagu defiantly responds to Voltaire's criticism, writing that "the French critic," Voltaire, was "extreamly

mistaken." She adds, "we have many plays written according to the rules of art; but nature, which speaks in Shakespear, prevails over them all" (qtd. in Kelly 31).

Montagu's important contribution in defense of Shakespeare gained her accolades from prominent men of letters. For example, David Garrick, an actor and a friend of the Bluestockings, published verses glorifying Montagu, who "Out rush'd... to protect the Bard." He depicts Montagu's defense of Shakespeare in a war setting against the French critic: "Snatch'd up her Spear, and for the fight prepar'd: / Attack'd the Vet'ran, pierc'd his Sev'n-fold Shield, / And drove him wounded, fainting from the field" (qtd. in Ritchie 69). Montagu's *Essays* rendered her a championed soldier and patriotic defender of Shakespeare, the most celebrated English icon in literature. The success of Montagu's criticism allowed her to break from her virtual feminine restriction and be portrayed in a military scene that is ultimately masculine.

Montagu's book not only defended Shakespeare against foreign critics, but also indirectly responded to Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare*. At first glimpse we can see that Montagu used Johnson as a part of her defense against Voltaire. Montagu claimed that Johnson had already pointed out every discernable defect in Shakespeare's work: "Mr. Johnson, whose genius and learning render him superior to a servile awe of pedantic institutions, in his ingenious preface to his edition of Shakespear has greatly obviated all that can be objected to our author's neglect of the unities of time and place" (7). Despite the fact that Montagu was ostensibly praising Johnson's work, she disagreed with Johnson regarding Shakespeare's moral philosophy. Montagu viewed Shakespeare as "one of the greatest moral philosophers that ever lived" (22). Whereas, Johnson argued that Shakespeare "sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose" (155).

Thus, as Montagu attacked Voltaire's opinion in form and content, she challenged Johnson indirectly.

The discrepancy between Montagu's public mention of Johnson and her private criticism of him proves that social inequality was "not eliminated, but only bracketed" (Fraser 63). As a member of a marginalized group in the world of letters, Montagu knew how far she could go in public writing without risking rejection by the dominant public. Montagu's strategy illuminates how the Bluestockings operated publicly as conservative women writers while still conceding to the dominant public. Whereas her public critiques of Johnson were subtle, her private correspondence contained more forceful criticism. Montagu wrote to fellow Bluestocking Elizabeth Carter, "I think he has not in his criticisms on the plays; pointed out the peculiar excellencies of Shakespear as a *Dramatick* poet, this point I shall labour as I think he therin excells everyone" (171). Once again, in a private correspondence, Montagu castigated Johnson's "superficial" discussion of Shakespeare: "It is strange that Mr Johnson should so superficially examine the merits and faults of his authors plays: he should have said more or have said nothing" (174). Implicitly in her book but explicitly in her private correspondence, Montagu invented a "counterdiscourse" against Johnson's *Preface* as she believed that Johnson did not do justice to Shakespeare's excellencies. Thus, Montagu's defense was against Voltaire's criticism as well as Johnson's.

On the other hand, Johnson severely criticized Montagu's work in public conversations, so much so that a number of their contemporaries viewed Johnson's reaction to Montagu as malicious behavior. When he was asked his opinion on Montagu's *Essays*, Johnson said: "I will venture to say there is not one sentence of true criticism in her book" (Boswell 369). The modern scholar John Busse comments that "Boswell describes this as Johnson's honest opinion,

'unbiassed by any proud jealousy of a woman intruding herself into the chair of criticism,' thereby suggesting what has probably already occurred to our minds" (41). Johnson's distaste of Montagu's book is more obvious when he says, "I tremble for Shakespeare … When Shakespeare has got [Voltaire] for his rival and Mrs Montagu for his defender he is in a poor state indeed" (42). Moreover, James Beattie, an eighteenth-century moral philosopher, commented on Johnson's reaction to Montagu:

> Johnson's harsh and foolish censure of Mrs Montagu's book does not surprise me, for I have heard him speak contemptuously of it. It is, for all that, one of the best, most original, and most elegant pieces of criticism in our language, or any other. Johnson had many of the talents of a critic; but his want of temper, his violent prejudices, and something I am afraid, of an envious turn of mind, made him often a very unfair one. Mrs Montagu was very kind to him, but Mrs Montagu has more wit than any body; and Johnson could not bear that any person should be thought to have wit but himself. (qtd. in Clarke 139)

As a singular event, Johnson's anxiety could stem from mere egotism; however, the larger context of the eighteenth-century world suggests that Johnson's concern stemmed both from a battered ego and his fear for the security of male hegemony in the world of letters. Similar to Habermas's version of the public sphere, these literary assemblies were dominated by white, male, privileged figures, who policed membership in order to retain masculine domination. Johnson once remarked that "Publick practice of any art ... and staring in men's faces, is very indelicate in a female" (Boswell 525). Rather than competing with a prominent male critic, women writers were supposed to seek men's approval and guidance to follow their expected path in the literary world. James Boswell also comments on Johnson's reaction to Montagu's work, writing that Johnson confided that he "is not apt to encourage one to share reputation with himself" (Allen 496). Norma Clarke, the 21st century literary critic, comments on Johnson's attitude as well, writing that "[Johnson] was not inclined to give place to Mrs Montagu, who,

coming after him and basing her reputation on a book about Shakespeare, was rather seizing than sharing" Johnson's reputation (139). Thus, many speculated that Johnson's real issue was that his reputation was threatened by another author. However, Johnson's reaction likely would have been more magnanimous had his reputation been shared, or seized, by another male author rather than a female one.

In fact, when looking at contemporaneous scholar Maurice Morgann, it is clear that Johnson had no real fear of his place as a prominent Shakespearian critic when addressing criticism levied by other male intellectuals—fully equal members of the public sphere to which Johnson addressed his writing. When Johnson was asked for his opinion on Morgann's *Essay on the Character of Falstaff,* he replied "as [Morgann] proved Falsaff to be no coward, he may prove Iago to be a very good character," a bit of sarcasm that illustrates his disapproval of Morgann's work (Boswell 180). Although Johnson disagrees with Morgann's views on some Shakespearean characters, his criticism is free of anxiety, unlike in his attack on Montagu. It seems that Montagu's insult of Johnson's work was intensified by the fact that a female author, a novel member in the literary field, had gained success that threatened to override his own.

In addition to Johnson's criticism of Montagu's book, private records show Johnson's intolerance of Montagu in social gatherings. Frances Burney noted Johnson's intense response to Montagu in one of their literary meetings. When he was informed that Montagu was attending dinner, Johnson urged Burney to disavow Montagu. Burney writes,

> He suddenly and with great animation turned to me and cried, 'down with her, Burney!--down with her!--spare her not! Attack her, fight her, and down with her at once! You are a rising wit, and she is at the top; and when I was beginning the world, and was nothing and no body, the joy of my life was to fire at all the established wits; and then everybody loved to halloo me on. But there is no game now; everybody would be glad to see me conquered; but then, when I was new, to vanquish the great ones was all the delight of my poor little dear soul! So at her, Burney, -- at her, and down with her. (56)

Montagu's rise above her marginalized social status compelled Johnson to protect male dominance in the literary world. While conversing with the Bluestockings Frances Burney and Hester Thrale, Johnson openly expressed his desire to "vanquish" Montagu. Burney reported Johnson's declaration that he will not contradict Montagu's reflections on an earlier incident: "I shan't contradict her again, if she provokes me as she did then: but a less provocation I will withstand" (Burney 56). Johnson's intolerance of Montagu is obvious; the conflict was imagined even before Montagu's arrival at dinner. When speaking about Montagu and the possibility of a quarrel with her, Johnson remarked that Montagu "diffuses more knowledge in her conversation than any woman, or indeed, any man" (Burney 56). Reasonably, Montagu recognized that Johnson saw her as an opponent rather than a peer. Montagu, seeming to reflect on her conflict with Johnson, believed that talent and scholarship could threaten women's relations with both the men and women in her circle. She writes, "It is hard to say whether women remarkable for their understanding suffer most from the envy of their own sex or the malice of the other, but their life is one continual warfare" (Eger 97). Thus, learned woman face rejection from both men and women due to "envy" and "malice." Male scholars, on the other hand, were free to pursue all types of learning they desired without exposure to such negative attitudes. Given that women were not supposed to receive the classical education men received, Montagu's sharp intellect presented a threat to male hegemony.

As a member of a socially subaltern group, Montagu was expected to remain subordinate. However, her self-assertion in literary meetings seemed to have disturbed Johnson, who preferred to ally with women who showed docility and self-censorship in men's presence, such as Burney and Thrale. In her diaries, Thrale once expressed her need for female friends and

complained about the restrictions on her conversations with male friends: “Tis so melancholy a thing to have nobody one can speak to about one’s clothes, or one’s child, or one’s health, or what comes uppermost. Nobody but gentlemen, before whom one must suppress everything except the mere formalities of conversation and by whom everything is to be commended and censured” (Piozzi 400). In this quote, Thrale laments the idea that speaking to men was her only option because that forced her to watch herself in public discourse as “everything is to be commended and censured.” This also suggests that Johnson befriended Thrale because she policed herself and remained subordinate to masculinity.

Montagu’s literary writing coupled with her interpersonal assertiveness formed a visible opposition to the dominant public. Contrary to Burney and Thrale, Montagu’s outspokenness in salon meetings, the publication of her book, and the type of resistance she embodied as a confident female author all seemed to injure Johnson’s pride. Karen Bloom Gevirtz contends that Johnson’s attitude towards women writers varied depending on the topic of their writings: “A woman trying her hand at criticism, regardless of what she was saying, was evidently too much for Johnson, who had otherwise encouraged women such as Hester Thrale—whose work, a diary, was private – and Frances Burney—whose work was public but narrative and fictional” (69). Evidently, Johnson’s support to the Bluestockings was based on his belief that those women “will never openly handle a weapon or in any way defy ‘masculine tyranny’” (Todd 125). Johnson’s speculation holds true for most Bluestockings, who did not challenge his masculine supremacy and were not as self-assertive as Montagu.

Johnson was not the only male scholar of the time who viewed Montagu’s writing on Shakespeare as a female trespass into male discourse. Morgann thought that Montagu’s sex placed some restrictions on her understanding of Shakespeare: “As for you, Mrs. MONTAGU, I

am grieved to find that you have been involved in a popular error; so much you must allow me to say … your manners and your mind are yet more pure, more elegant than your book. Falstaff was too gross too infirm, for your inspection" (qtd. in Smith 270). To Morgann, Montagu's female mind renders her intellectually inferior to Johnson and Morgann when faced with comprehending and criticizing particular elements of Shakespeare's writing, namely those that clash with women's purity and therefore understanding. Gevirtz points out that for Morgann, Montagu's argument "could only be a result of an inferior understanding based on her gender, rather than disagreement of two critical minds" (69). Apparently, women writing on Shakespeare was perceived by the dominant public as an intervention into masculine discourse.

While the conflict with Johnson had its roots in gender, in her defense of Shakespeare, Montagu writes as a British critic rather than as a female author. Several times throughout her essays, Montagu proudly refers to Shakespeare as "Our Shakespeare," an implication of the patriotism and British national unity symbolized by Shakespeare's works. Johnson's inability to publicly critique Montagu's *Essays* could be due to her use of Shakespeare to emphasize her conservatism and Englishness. Montagu's criticism formed a conservative stance by employing her defense of Shakespeare as a national shield against the literary attacks of French critics. This strategy made it harder for Johnson to refute her arguments since doing so would make him appear less conservative, less patriotic, or even less British than Montagu.

In heterosocial meetings, when women break from the social constraints placed on them, they will be reminded to adjust to gender hierarchy. As Johnson's conflict with Montagu was based on her intellectual transgression of writing criticism, his scolding of Hannah More was more directly aimed to remind More to adhere to gendered hierarchy. The hierarchical gender relations in this literary society can be illustrated in Johnson's reaction to More's praise. More,

pleased to meet a well-known figure such as Johnson, sought to flatter Johnson's wit. Johnson responded to her, "Madam, before you flatter a man so grossly to his face, you should consider whether or not your flattery is worth having" (Burney 49). This response shows the extent to which women were expected to censor themselves and their behaviors in the presence of men and when interacting with them.

This incident clearly impacted the rest of the Bluestockings. Frances Burney reflected on this when she wrote in her diaries, "I don't flatter [Johnson]… for nothing I could say would flatter him" (49). Receiving or giving flattery is determined by the hierarchy of relations, and if a woman fails to address that, she will be either reminded or reprimanded. Being a part of the dominant group, though, Johnson flattered women writers as he saw fit, knowing that a compliment from him would be meaningful to those who occupied a lower status in the social order. In short, it was men who determined who would be flattered and whose flattery was valueless.

Despite these brash reactions against Montagu and More, Johnson still supported Carter, Thrale, Burney, and other women as they entered the public sphere of literature, so long as they did not break from gender norms. Women's position, Johnson made clear, was and should continue to be inferior to that of men. From the previous incidents with Montagu and More, one can see that Johnson gave attention to gender hierarchy in the literary public sphere, especially when its manifestations clashed with him personally. It is obvious that Johnson appreciated Burney's understanding and commitment to the gender hierarchy that placed her and women like her on a secondary level—such evaluation being the result of Burney concealing the criticism she voiced in her diary.

Moreover, Johnson demonstrates the prevailing belief that women's presence in the world of letters should not conflict with their domestic duties. Such beliefs constrain the Bluestockings as a counterpublic and prevent them from full entrance into the literary public sphere. Johnson commended women who perform their domestic duties while still participating in the world of letters. Johnson's remarks on Carter show his support to a specific model of literary woman who maintains her domestic skills: "A man is in general better pleased, when he has a good dinner upon his table, than when his wife talks Greek. My old friend, Mrs. Carter . . . could make a pudding, as well as translate Epictetus from the Greek, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem" (Hill 11). Here the making of "a pudding" is a more valuable skill for a woman than translating Greek literature; the juxtaposition of these two skills highlights how ludicrous it is, in Johnson's opinion, for a woman to pursue a life of the mind. If women desired to pursue their intellect, Johnson believed, they should master their domestic duties along with their intellectual practices. Here, Johnson approved of women's education, but only under certain conditions. Johnson's words show that men's approval of women's role is crucial, as men dominated the world of letters and acted as its gatekeepers. Men determined the conditions of women's admittance to the literary public sphere: women could write as long as they preserved domestic ideals without rising above their subjugation. The decline of the Bluestockings' popularity in the early decades of the nineteenth century proves that the Bluestockings' increasing presence in literary fields formed an oppositional stance that threatened men's cultural

hegemony.[7] This conflictual relation between men and women in the world of letters renders the Bluestockings a counterpublic rather than a part of the dominant public.

Conservatively Redefining Women's Position in Society

Despite their adherence to traditional values, the Bluestockings sought to empower women in ways that did not directly offend the patriarchal order. Advocating for women's education, for example, allowed the Bluestockings to work for the advancement of women but couch that work in the language of the status quo. Hester Chapone's book *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to Young Lady* aimed to help women obtain power through education but also advised them not to exceed the limits of a proper education. While remaining within conservative boundaries of "properly regulated" and "well chosen" readings, Chapone instructs domestic women to continue reading to develop their rationality and sharpen understanding. Instead of focusing on the superficial femininity of dress and ornaments, Chapone argues, women need to make their minds "rational by reading." A prerequisite of propriety should be cultivated from rational critical thinking such as "observation and reasoning." Here Chapone is carving a way for women to be counted as rational rather than irrational through basing the social skill of feminine propriety on rationality and knowledge: "in general, propriety of behaviour must be the fruit of instruction, of observation, and reasoning; and is to be cultivated and improved like any other branch of knowledge or virtue" (110).

This rationality is not only contained in an individual act of reading, but also extends to social conversation with company of both sexes, allowing women a more powerful role than the

[7] This point is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Three. For a full chapter length on the fading of the Bluestockings community, see Ann Mellor's "Romantic Bluestockings: From Muses to Matrons."

traditional sense of politeness that made a woman's silence an eminent part of her femininity. Chapone informs women that they can be simultaneously virtuous as well as vocal in social conversations. She advises women to converse as rational beings with men, contending that if a woman has modesty, she will recognize gender boundaries and will "converse with a man, as one rational creature with another, without any view to the possibility of a lover or admirer" (116). Further, Chapone warns her female readers against remaining passive and ultimately silent when socializing. Women should not, Chapone writes, "sit like statues, without sense or motion" and when asked a question, women must not "draw back as unwilling to answer, nor confine yourself merely to *yes*, or *no*, as is the custom of many young persons" (113). Hence, women should venture to have a voice and become an effective part in conversation and not to give brief answers when asked questions. Instead, women should base their answers on their knowledge and experience to be effective participants in conversations.

Chapone advises her young female readers to read classic English by Shakespeare and Milton. While doing so, Chapone chooses to endorse the work of Elizabeth Montagu on Shakespeare rather than that of Johnson or any other male writer: "The admirable *Essay on Shakspeare*, which has lately appeared, so much to the honour of our sex, will open your mind to the peculiar excellences of this author, and enlighten your judgment on dramatic poetry in general, with such force of reason and brilliancy of wit, as cannot fail to delight as well as instruct you" (121). In addition to praising Montagu's work as a good source for judgement and instruction, Chapone increases the publicity of her fellow Bluestocking writer. Also, such glorifying mention of Montagu's work portrays Montagu as public role model for young female readers. Unlike Johnson who restrained women's intellect through the need to master domestic

skills, Chapone excludes the discussion of domestic chores such as knitting and "making pudding" from her *Letters*.

In addition to her emphasis on reading for intellectual development, Chapone advocates for a kind of femininity that earns women a more equitable and trusted role in domestic arrangements. For example, by developing the skill necessary to manage their incomes, Chapone argues that women will earn their husbands' trust and enable "free consultation with him on [their] mutual interest" (96). She attempts to grant women the trust needed to be equal companions to their husbands for the common good of the family. Obtaining this trust would allow women to have voice in familial matters and thereby obtain gradual authority in the domestic sphere. By doing so, the Bluestockings carefully sought to empower women without radically breaking from expected gender propriety.

Chapone's *Letters* formed a conservative counterdiscourse to the established gender norms that sought to ultimately confine women to domesticity and irrationality. Yet the Bluestockings preserved traditional feminine ideals. In affirmation of their conservatism, the Bluestockings excluded radical women writers who transgressed traditional gender norms. In safeguarding their community's femininity, virtue, and proper manners, the Bluestockings expressed their rejection of women writers who violated gender proprieties. Interestingly, gender propriety could be determined through the types of published books one perused. At that time, masculinity was strongly associated with the active, public world and femininity was associated with the passive, private domestic sphere.[8] Similarly, certain genres of writing were associated

[8] Women were expected to abide by social conventions as an external sign of their internal modesty and the chastity that derives from their feminine nature. Mary Poovey's introduction to *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* argues that eighteenth-century women writers found ways to express their desire without seeming to be self-assertive.

with the predominant gender definitions: politics, history, and philosophy were classified as masculine genres and topics while translations, dialogue, essays, plays, and novels were viewed as both masculine and feminine.[9] Thus, women writers were only allowed to participate in a restricted manner within non-prohibited areas.

When women violated their accustomed roles as domestic authors, they would not only be castigated by male writers, but also by conservative women writers who sought to preserve some distinctions between the two sexes. When Catharine Macaulay published her volumes on history, for example, Montagu condemned her violation of the gender norms that limited women to writing novels or translations and wrote that she would never read one of Macaulay's books. Montagu thought that "[Macaulay adopted] masculine opinions and masculine manners. I hate a woman's mind in men's cloaths.... I always look'd upon Mrs Macaulay as rather belonging to the lads... than as one of the gentle sex. Indeed, she was always a strange fellow" (qtd. in Eger 104). Macaulay's writings intruded on what was perceived to be an explicitly men's domain. Ultimately, this drove the conservative Bluestockings to dismiss Macaulay from the group, since she had violated gendered, literary boundaries.

Many Bluestockings participated in attacking more radical women writers who did not, in their estimation, display the deference natural to their gender. Elizabeth Carter reacted with

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[9] Claire Grogan contends that "eighteenth-century female writers were only tolerated so long as they restricted themselves to 'minor' (read: feminine) genres of children's literature, educational treatises, polemics on household economy, and certain types of fiction. Women, because of their presumed intellectual limitations, were deemed ill-equipped to write in the 'major' (read: masculine) genres of political polemics, scholarship and philosophy. As a consequence, they often combined several genres within a single work to circumvent such restrictive edicts about female intellect or propriety. That the novel as a genre allowed and accommodated a wide range of other (often 'masculine') genres is evident in the way women writers presented poetry, autobiography, drama, natural history, botany, philosophy, and history within the novel" (22). Grogan cites the eighteenth-century author Elizabeth Hamilton, who acknowledged this limitation placed on women writers: "it may be censured by others, as presumptuous effort to wander out of that narrow and contracted path, which they have allotted to the female mind" (30).

similar vehemence to women transgressing social boundaries. Carter's nephew, Montagu Pennington, recorded her reaction to radical Mary Wollstonecraft in his memoirs: "[Carter] detested the principles displayed in Mrs Wollstonecraft's wild theory concerning the 'Rights of Women' and never wished them to interfere with the privileges and occupations of the other sex" (28). Pennington further writes that Carter would not read any work in which "there seemed to be the least tendency towards levelling or democratic principles" (28).

While Carter's prominent writings were not as concerned with gender propriety as those of Chapone, Burney, and More, she advocated for the maintenance of gender differences and conventional roles. Hannah More was also very loyal to the socially and politically established order, and therefore expressed her disapproval of Wollstonecraft's writings, proclaiming that she would never read Wollstonecraft's *Vindication.* As the Bluestockings' conservative views urged them to condemn some women writers, they also dictated the ways in which they formed their community of carefully selected members. For example, in their literary meetings, Montagu welcomed the conservative Dorothea Gregory, whose father wrote in *A Legacy for Daughters* that woman should be "malleable and docile." Women like Gregory were admitted into the community because they were tamed to appropriateness in traditional discourse, and would not, at least publicly, challenge the established order. This selection of like-minded conservative women allowed the Bluestockings' community to save their reputation from association with such writers as Macaulay and Wollstonecraft. Their conservativism also allowed the Bluestockings to pave their way less shockingly into the world of letters.

Hester Chapone and Hannah More: Publicly Conservative, Privately Rebellious

While the Bluestockings maintained conservative views in their public writings, their private correspondence reveals the rebellion that constitutes their status as a female counterpublic. During the eighteenth century, private correspondence routinely made its way into a wider public rather than one addressee: "The familiar letter has often been understood as a private form of communication, addressed to a named individual, but in this period letters aspired to readers beyond their addressee, circulating within a domestic and friendship circles of recipients" (Ellis 213). Hence, the Bluestockings employed private correspondence as a way of rejecting their marginalization in an indirect way, one that would still preserve their propriety as conservative women writers. In other words, writing in what seemingly appears to be a private space allowed the Bluestockings to indirectly push further in opposing the patriarchal order than they could do their public writing.

The Bluestockings literary opposition to the gender status quo is highly visible in their private records of disputes with male scholars. By juxtaposing the public with the private writings of Hester Chapone and Hannah More, one can see the contradictory component of their conservative position as female writers. Though Chapone's and More's public writings were aligned with the generally accepted discourse, their private correspondence shows their resistance to their status in society. Chapone's correspondence with Samuel Richardson regarding women's right to have a say in marriage and More's reports of her rigid encounters with Samuel Johnson reveal a change in attitude, specifically in how these female authors regarded themselves as opponents to their male counterparts. They enact a less moderate tone than in their public writings, and instead embody more powerful voices. Publicly, Chapone instructs young women to comply with their traditional roles in society; privately, both she and

More write against the gender norms that constrict them. The Bluestockings were aware that their private thoughts would be gradually disseminated more widely, even after some time. This approach allows us to understand their position as a counterpublic that aimed to strategically oppose the dominant public.

When tackling issues of the relationships between children and parents, Chapone assumes a conservative and traditional stance by emphasizing the importance of parental guidance against some kinds of relations such as friendship and love affairs. In describing the toxicity of some friendships, Chapone calls them "odious cabal" as they can negatively impact one's manners and also warns against young women having affairs with men without the knowledge of their parents: "if, for instance, [a friend] should intend to carry on an affair of love, unknown to her parents—you must first use your utmost endeavours to dissuade her from it" (80). This line calls attention to the importance of parents' opinions when a young woman is considering an affair with a person from the other sex. Moving forward with this discussion, the author emphasizes her warnings and discourages young women from involving in "marriage unsanctified by parental approbation" as guardianship of parents "will effectually preserve" their children (73). By demonstrating the importance of parental approval for a woman's love life, Chapone is sides with traditional parental authority. For Chapone, parents' intervention in their daughters' marital decisions serves to prevent their "beloved" daughter from "pin[ing] away her prime of life in fruitless anxiety" (74). A daughter may misunderstand this protection and "accuse [her father] of tyranny, because he restrains her from certain ruin." Thus, parents' duties oblige them to use their authoritative positions to protect daughters from "certain ruin" as the consequence of unwise decision that can end in "destruction of her health, spirit, and of all improvements and

occupation" (74). In short, the argument here is that subjection to parents is necessary for a daughter's protection.

While Chapone publicly commits to this generally accepted discourse of her time, her position shifts remarkably when corresponding with Samuel Richardson about parental authority. For Richardson, children must be obedient, grateful, and dutiful to their parents even if the parents were "unkind" and did not fulfill their duties to their children. Richardson addresses his female audience with didactic and moral messages regarding their duties as children. In his *Moral and Instructive Sentiments,* Richardson writes, "it is better for a good child to be able to say, her parents were unkind to her, than she was undutiful to them"[10] (427).

Chapone's Letters on *"Filial Obedience"* show the author use of a different tone regarding a woman's choice in marriage. Chapone finds faults with Richardson's argument, and contends that women should be able make themselves heard regarding arranged marriages. In her very lengthy letters, Chapone relentlessly holds the stance that grown-up daughters should have freedom of choice and freedom from their parents' authority; by adulthood, she argues, daughters are reasonable beings capable of judging for themselves. Chapone's argument here is grounded in her personal experience. She was engaged for roughly six years and during that time she endeavored to gain her father's approval, using reason to convince him of her independent decision. This dispute with Richardson differs from the message in her own book, which seeks to strengthen familial bonds and justifies hierarchical relations within domestic concerns and about personal choices.

[10] Richardson's side of the correspondence did not survive.

Even though Chapone begins humbly in her letter, she relentlessly defends her position against Richardson's. She begins her argument stating that she desires to have her opinion "rectified" by Richardson. The perceived superiority of Richardson's position becomes obvious when she writes, "you have given me leave to oppose my weak arguments to yours, till I can bring my reason to give its free assent to your opinion" (206). That Chapone seeks permission to oppose Richardson's opinion is very illuminating—she recognizes that she is opposing the gender hierarchy when debating on behalf of women against conventional matters. In a different correspondence, Chapone reports to Elizabeth Carter the unusual debate she had with Richardson. She acknowledges the imbalance of the two parties, which proves that the Bluestockings were conscious of their counterpublic position: "Does it not sound strange, my dear Miss Carter, that a girl like me should have dared to engage in a dispute with such a man?" (*Works of Chapone* 17). Chapone herself is astonished by her unusual interaction as an opponent in a rational critical debate with Richardson.

Chapone asserts that parental authority resembles all other forms of authority of one person over another that are designed to "to promote the happiness and good of the person who is to submit to it" (207). In contrast to her conduct book in which submission to parents is depicted as obligatory, here submission is optional. She argues for the temporality of children's obedience to their parents: "obedience ceases when the children are grown up, and endued, as it may happen, with stronger reason than their parents" (207). Further, she asserts that children's obedience should cease when it conflicts with "a higher duty, or where the sacrifice [the children] are expected to make is greater than any degree of gratitude can require" (207). Here the language is defiant in explaining that parental authority is not an absolute power, but a restricted one. Thus, according to Chapone, parental authority must discontinue as children

become reasonable creatures capable of practicing their own rational thinking and decision making.

Continuing her argument, Chapone persists in identifying flaws in Richardson's argument. In response to Richardson's use of John Locke's argument on parental control, Chapone asserts that Locke's theory on the topic of dispute benefits her argument more than it does to Richardson's.[11] She writes, "my dear Mr. Richardson has himself asserted, that Mr. Locke, even in the very passages I have quoted, is of *his* side. I am pretty sure that Mr. Locke is on *my* side; therefore it is plain that we are all three on the *same* side" (229). It is discerning that Chapone cites a male author in her literary quarrel with Richardson. It suggests that she recognizes there may be more power in employing the arguments of a male scholar, one that Richardson recognized and publicly admired, and utilized that to her advantage. Also, saying "it is plain that we are all three on the same side" alludes to her superiority of understanding to Richardson as she attempts to enlighten him on where he himself actually stands in this dispute, and that his use of Locke's passages benefits the opposing argument rather than his own.

Chapone's rebellious argument about arranged marriages was energetic in her private correspondence. Yet she might have reasonably anticipated that Richardson was going to circulate their correspondence which, perhaps, caused her to fill her letters with apologies and compliments that assert her femininity and malleability. Chapone ensures Richardson that she is not calling for daughters to choose a husband, but mainly she calls for their right to refuse an unwanted marriage: "in the particular case of marriage, I only [insist] on a negative for the child"

[11] It is difficult to verify Richardson's precise use of Locke's argument as his side of the correspondence did not survive. Locke argued that parents' authority over their children should be both limited and temporary ("Parental Power").

(234). Here, Chapone's conservatism restricts her advocacy for women's rights to fit with patriarchal teachings.

Indeed this correspondence eventually made its way to the political public arena. Chapone's brother, John Mulso, reported that some men of distinction read his sister's correspondence: "Several great men as the Bp of London, the Speaker &c: have seen this Dispute & think Mr. R— hard pressed, & Heck has gained great Honour" (146). The wide circulation of the correspondence and deep cultural concern about protecting filial duty led this correspondence to make its entry "into the political agenda in a prolonged national debate which culminated in Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753. The Act amounted to a powerful legal intervention on the side of parental authority, by ruling clandestine marriages void" (Keymer 103). Richardson himself lionized the Marriage Act. He wrote to Elizabeth Carter that Chapone's letters may have contributed to passing the Marriage Act ,as they had "obtained the notice of those who brought it and carried through a Bill, which should, by a national law, establish the parental authority." Richardson proceeds in writing that this "parental authority" was "so violently attacked by a young lady, who is admired by all that know her" (Hohn 127).

In a similar vein, Hannah More's conduct manual contradicts her reported private opinions regarding feminine manners. Known publicly as one of the most conservative members of the Bluestockings, More's *Essays on Various Subjects* advocates for the development of submissive and deferential manners in women's interaction with the opposite sex. She states, "Girls should be taught to give up their opinions betimes, and not pertinaciously to carry on a dispute, even if they should know themselves to be in the right" (137). In private letters to her sister, however, More celebrates her triumph when debating literature with Samuel Johnson. More's advice also belies her reported attitude when interacting with Johnson during literary salon meetings. Her

sister, Sarah More, observed, “Dr. Johnson and Hannah, last night, had a violent quarrel, till at length laughter ran so high on alludes, that argument was confounded in noise” (Boswell 285). As it was a “violent quarrel” between two members of distinct sexes, More violated established feminine manners. On another occasion, More wrote to her sister that Johnson reprimanded her when she “differed from him in opinion” but More celebrates that she was “very bold in combatting some of his darling prejudices” (287). Reporting a literary dispute with Johnson, she wrote, “I quarreled with him sadly. I accused him of not having done justice to the ‘Allegro,’ and ‘Penseroso.’ He spoke disparagingly of both. I praised Lycidas, which he absolutely abused” (289). In her quarrels with Johnson, More embodies a female counterpublic standing against a representative from the dominant public, Johnson.

In the previous instances, Chapone’s and More’s public works are complicit with the patriarchal order, in contrast to their rebellious actions and words in private. These contradictions indicate that the Bluestockings perceived themselves as a counterpublic marginalized by their gender. This understanding is what made them use moderate approaches and mild tone in public-facing writings, whereas they had a little more freedom to rebel in private writings or conversations.

Privately Addressing Their Marginalization

Despite the fact that the Bluestockings maintained conservative views regarding the established gender order, they were aware of their position as a counterpublic due to their marginalization by men of letters. When privately navigating this marginalization among themselves and within their close circles, the Bluestockings assembled an arena where they could more freely question and criticize the system that subordinated them. Even though the

Bluestockings' objections were discussed in private correspondence, as pointed out earlier, those private letters would likely find their way to print. In other words, as this was a common practice in the 18th century, it is likely that these women knew their private correspondence would eventually become public. This makes the Bluestockings opposition to the status quo postponed, but not silent.

Delayed entry into the public aside, the Bluestockings were well aware of the extent of their marginalization in their desired field. After her *Essays on Shakespeare*, Montagu wrote a letter complaining about some responses to her publication: "There is a general prejudice against female authors, especially if they invade those regions of literature which the men are desirous to reserve for themselves" (Huchon 147). Clearly, Montagu was agitated by the gender division that put limits to women's intellectual freedom. Female authors who do not adhere to traditions are viewed as invaders in male territories.

In another occasion, Montagu addressed the issue of placing restrictions on learned women. She wrote to her friend Lord Lyttleton, "Extraordinary talents may make a Woman admired, but they will never make her happy. Talents put a man above the World. &in a condition to be feared and worshipped, a Woman that possesses them must be always courting the world, and asking pardon, as it were, for uncommon excellence" (qtd. in Eger 33). Apparently, Montagu was irritated that gender determined the perception of intellectual people in society. Whereas men could take pride in displaying their education, women sought to pardon themselves for rising above their anticipated status. A similar comment arose from another Bluestocking writer, Anna Letitia Barbauld, regarding educated women's situation in society. When Montagu suggested forming a "Literary Academy for ladies," Barbauld wrote a letter acknowledging the difficult position these women occupied as learned ladies. Barbauld wrote:

> Young ladies, who ought only to have a general tincture of knowledge as to make them agreeable companions to a man of sense, and to enable them to find rational entertainment for a solitary hour, should gain these accomplishments in a quiet and unobserved manner...the thefts of knowledge in our sex are only connived at while carefully concealed, and if displayed, punished with disgrace." (qtd. in Aikin 19)

The fact that these educated women were treated as transgressors for displaying their knowledge made them feel as "invaders" and "thieves." This demonstrates their recognition of themselves as a counterpublic rather than a part of the literary dominant public. Montagu and Barbauld felt that their education was perceived as a moral evil since their intellect was described as "thefts of knowledge in [their] sex." This moral evil was a sin "punished with disgrace" when committed by a woman. Whereas the situation of educated women in society annoyed Montagu and Barbauld, Carter navigated this marginalization from a different angle. She complained privately to her friend Montagu about the exclusion of women during one of Bluestockings' literary meetings. That Carter was irritated by the gendered stratifications in these gatherings is obvious in her letter:

> As if the two sexes had been in a state of war, the gentlemen ranged themselves on one side of the room, where they talked their own talk, and left us poor ladies to twirl our shuttles, and amuse each other, by conversing as we could. By what little I could overhear, our opposites were discoursing on the old English poets, and this subject did not seem so much beyond a female capacity, but that we might have been indulged with a share of it. (*Unpublished Letters* 68)

The terms used, "state of war" and "our opposites," demonstrate that, based on men's behavior, the Bluestockings saw themselves as an opposing party. Or, at the very least, that they knew they were interpreted as such. To Carter, women were unjustly excluded from men's conversations that were not "beyond female capacity." Not only was Carter upset by the exclusion of women at some Bluestockings literary meetings, she was also dissatisfied with the situation of women writers in general, a thought that was not expressed publicly. Montagu Pennington, Carter's

nephew, writes that Carter "thought that men exercised too arbitrary a power over them, and considered them as too inferior to themselves. Hence she had a decided bias in favor of female writers, and always read their works with a mind prepared to be pleased" (*Memoirs* 341). Apparently, the Bluestockings supported women writers and were pleased that women began to break from patriarchal constraints by receiving recognition in the world of letters.

These anecdotes illustrate that despite the treatment and limited freedom of the Bluestockings in salon assemblies, they maintained their public literary practices. This continuation of literary practice renders the Bluestockings a counterpublic that is resistant to masculine domination by merely existing in public life. They were not vocal in their resistance to their marginalization even though they were conscious of it. Because of their conservative status, the Bluestockings' resistance was more obvious in the private correspondence that would eventually be publicized.

The Bluestockings' Resistance to Traditional Marriage

This section will show how the Bluestockings resisted traditional marriage by example. The Bluestockings' private correspondence, diaries, and, more importantly, their lived lives prove that they formed a conservative counterpublic that, by practice as well as in writing, brought new options for women. Their life choices against established marital norms rendered them an oppositional party that ultimately rejected its subordination. Their lived experiences allowed them to be instructional examples for other women. The Bluestockings knew that they were public figures and presented themselves as models based on which other ordinary women could imagine a life other than that of a subservient, uneducated wife. The matter of matrimony demonstrates the Bluestockings' advanced resistance to masculine superiority and highlights the

contested relations between the Bluestockings and the patriarchal system. They questioned wives' total subjugation to their husbands and resisted masculine superiority. Much of this protestation, however, was not in the form of active, public resistance, but rather through private and personal resistance.

That the Bluestockings embodied a counterpublic in their resistance to masculine superiority can be seen in their fight for adjustments to women's matrimonial status. Their personal experiences, along with their private writings, illuminate their sincere refusal to enter into marriage in its traditional form. Some, such as Elizabeth Montagu and Frances Burney, resisted but eventually acquiesced to marriage (but only under their own terms). Others, like Elizabeth Carter and Hannah More, chose to remain unmarried. Hester Chapone's and Sarah Scott's marriages were terminated by either widowhood or separation, yet neither of them remarried.

Elizabeth Montagu's private writings demonstrate her understanding of the necessity of marriage while simultaneously exemplifying her defiance of the traditional marriage role; she wanted, she wrote in a letter to her sister, to "marry a rich man with gout" (qtd. in Myers 95). In other words, she wanted her future husband to be wealthy but ill. Openly, Montagu wished to gain the financial and social benefits associated with marriage without fulfilling the duties expected from her as a wife. She aspired to a particular kind of marriage, one that would elevate her social position and grant her secure economic status without subjugation. As she wrote in a letter to the Duchess of Portland, "Gold is the chief ingredient in the composition of earthly happiness" (*Letters* 81). Her lived experience bore the sincerity of these remarks.

With a small dowry, Montagu was able to marry Edward Montagu, who was a wealthy man of high social standing as a grandson of the Earl of Sandwich, Member of Parliament, and

businessman. “Although she did not have a particular high opinion of men or the institution of marriage,” Montagu’s attitude before marriage and her choice of Edward Montagu imply that she saw in marriage a chance to escape the threats of financial instability and social pressure that existed for unmarried women (Schnorrenberg). This is also evident in the estrangement that arose between Mr. and Mrs. Montagu soon after their marriage. But this did not seem to bother Montagu, as it was obvious that she looked at marriage as an opportunity for upward social mobility rather than an intimate or holy institution that unites two individuals.

Even though she resisted the duties expected from other women in her position, Montagu began to express her unhappiness with the constraints placed on her as a wife. She was critical of the fixed hierarchical relations between husband and wife. For example, in the course of one summer, Mr. Montagu thought that his wife “had rambled enough [that] summer,” and therefore, attempted to limit her forthcoming visits to see friends. After a quarrel, Mr. Montagu relented and permitted his wife to travel but Elizabeth Montagu was irritated by this experience and wrote to her sister complaining about the way her husband tried to control her visit to Frances Boscawen at Hatchlands:

> You wd have laughed if you had seen the gravity with which he frank’d a cover for ye letter which I said I was to write to acquaint her with his denial, he thought I shd repeat my request, point du tout, I took the cover with great indifference & was determined either to have my pleasure or give a signal mark of my obedience to his noble exertion of prerogative. Do not you admire these lovers of Liberty! What do the generality of men mean by a love of liberty but the liberty to be saucy to their superiors, & arrogant to their inferiors, to resist the power of others over them, & to exert their power over others. I am not sure that Cato did not kick his wife. What inconveniences cd be to his honour that I shd be in Hillstreet, in the County of Middlesex rather than at Hatchlands in ye County of Surrey, he being all the while in Coun. Berks. and the pretence of my keeping order in the family is trifling, as I shall leave all the Servants here but my own Maid & footmen. But these Lords of the Creation must be lordly. Thanks to termagantism there are some Ladies of the creation who have them due subjection. (qtd. in Myers 139)

In questioning her husband's double standards regarding liberty, Montagu is clearly provoked by the idea of masculine superiority over women. Even when following her husband's orders, Montagu determined to at least signal her dissatisfaction with her situation as an obedient wife. Montagu was aware that she was transgressing gender norms by travelling alone. Anticipating that people around her would judge her for these solitary trips, Montagu wrote to her friend, Duchess of Portland, "I hope you don't think there is any imprudence in a Young Woman going without her Husband to such a place" (qtd. in Myers 102). Nevertheless, Montagu defied the gender hierarchy that confines her at home and continued to travel as she wished.

Frances Burney is another Bluestocking who disdained and opposed traditionally arranged marriage. Unlike Montagu, she did not see it as an opportunity to climb up the social ladder; instead, Burney believed that marriage should be founded on mutual affection. Burney once wondered, "[H]ow short a time does it take to put an eternal end to a Woman's liberty" (17). Because liberty is precious, Burney remarked that if she is to marry, then it had to be with her "whole Heart;" thus, unless she found a person to whom she can surrender her liberty, Burney hoped to remain unmarried.

Burney's opposition to arranged marriage became apparent when she received her first proposal, from Mr. Thomas Barlow in 1775. Because the man was "decent, honest... and good looking" Burney's family did not see a reason for her refusal to this marriage proposal. Yet Frances had a different opinion, which she expressed when corresponding with Samuel Crisp, whom she refers to as "dear Daddy," remarking that "In short, I long since settled to either attach myself with my whole heart, or to have the courage to lead apes" (76). For her, the choice was either to marry a man she loved, or to die unmarried. She insists on this position when exclaiming that she did not wish to sign herself "other than ... Frances Burney" (76). However,

the pressure imposed on Burney by her aunts, grandmother, and sister increased when her father approved the match. Frightened, Burney penned her feelings: “I was terrified to Death -- I felt the utter impossibility of resisting not merely my Father’s persuasion but even his Advice ... I wept like an infant... Eat nothing – seemed as if already married -- & passed the whole Day in more misery than, merely on my own account, I ever did before in my life” (69).

In her diaries, Burney records her combat with social expectations regarding marriage when she declares that she cannot “outlive such a thought.” This is indicative of her rejection of traditions that could put “an eternal end to [her] liberty.” Burney was vocal in her refusal to this proposal and in an emotional encounter with her father, she “cried I... I wish for nothing! Only let me live with you.” Dr. Burney responded kindly by supporting her decision to remain unmarried. Relieved by this resolution, she happily reported her feelings as “relieved, restored to future hopes... light, happy and thankful as if escaped from destruction” (70).

It was not until 1793 that Burney met the right man and subsequently changed her decision regarding marriage. However, this was not an “ideal” marriage, therefore, it led to some tension between her and her family. When Burney was visiting in Norbury Part, she was introduced to “French exiles, whose cultivation and good manners impressed her favourably” (Harman 228). As she mingled with the French, she became acquainted with her Alexandre D’Arblay, an aristocratic but penniless French refugee in England. Burney’s choice to marry this French Catholic countered the contemporary social expectations of marriage. After a few months, Frances married D’Arblay, although she encountered challenges in presenting her unconventional suitor to her conservative father. When Mr. D’Arblay visited the Burney family, Dr. Burney did not hide his grudgingness: “[He] prepared himself, drily, & sans commentaire: my Mother was taciturn, but oddly smiling” (80). Frances understood that her father’s objections

to her marriage were relevant to the "otherness" embodied by a penniless French Catholic suitor. "Dr. Burney, it may well be believed, was startled, was affrighted when a proposition was made to him for the union of his daughter with a ruined gentleman—a foreigner—an emigrant" in addition to "the dread of pecuniary embarrassment" (179). Despite the unwanted characteristics of this suitor, Dr. Burney did not disapprove of his daughter's marriage, but "he hesitated and demanded time for consideration" (180). Eventually, perhaps because at age forty-one, Frances' chances of suitors had decreased, or simply because of her strong passion, Frances' father reluctantly approved the marriage. Thus, like Montagu, Burney refused to surrender her liberty unless it was for a man of her choice. Moreover, marrying unconventionally to a Catholic foreigner from a rival country proves Burney's opposition and defiance to traditional marriage conventions.

While Elizabeth Montagu and Frances Burney eventually acquiesced to marriage under their own terms, Elizabeth Carter enjoyed her independence and chose to live a single life; she never accepted any of the marital proposals made to her. Thus, Carter offers another example of a learned conservative woman who was able to avoid marriage and the subordination that it traditionally entailed. Carter addressed the limitations imposed on married women, and was convinced that marriage puts an end to women's previous relations:

> people when they marry are dead and buried to all former attachments, I could not think of resigning a friendship which constitutes some of the brightest intervals in my life, without a very severe uneasiness; for to converse with her in the dull, formal, indifferent way of a common acquaintance, was a change I could not think of with any degree of temper. (Hampshire 56)

Carter believed that becoming a wife meant aligning herself with her husband and giving up various forms of freedom, including the freedom to have other social relations. In a letter, written

to Catherine Talbot expressing her opinion on the impact of marital relations on the wife's life, Carter stated,

> If I have suffered from the troubles of others, who have more sense, more understanding and more virtue than I might reasonably have expected to find, what might I not have suffered from a husband! Perhaps be needlessly thwarted and contradicted in every innocent enjoyment of life: involved in all his schemes, right or wrong, and perhaps not allowed the liberty of even silently seeming to disapprove them! (33)

Obviously, Carter was aware of the conventional hierarchical relations between husbands and wives, and disliked the total obedience expected from wives to their husbands, as well as the ways in which marriage limited personal liberty and hindered women from expressing their opinions. Carter's misgivings about marriage could have resulted from seeing women who had partially or completely surrendered their intellectual pursuits for their wifely duties. Women like Boscawen and Thrale were married and had children, and the duties of being wives and mothers kept them from extensively engaging in literary life and from publishing with the rest of the Bluestockings. For instance, Susanna Highmore's life seemed to be a cautionary tale to other Bluestockings: she was a woman of letters who had the potential to join the Bluestockings' circle but withdrew from the literary field due to her commitments as a wife and mother before the formation of the Bluestockings group (Myers 120). Of course, indulging in marriage and motherhood would have imposed additional limitations on the Bluestockings' lives and impeded their intellectual and public practices.

Like Carter, Hannah More remained unmarried.[12] Unlike her Bluestocking fellows who disclosed their private discontent related to traditional marriage, More did not publicly or

[12] More was engaged for about six years. She received and accepted a marriage proposal from Edward Turner, a man of a large fortune and nearly twice her age. During the six years of their engagement, Turner continuously postponed the wedding and eventually broke off the engagement (Hopkins 35). Following this incident, More

explicitly resist the idea of traditional marriage. More was more cautious in questioning and criticizing traditional marriage, seemingly because of her very reactionary views compared to those of the other Bluestockings. Rather, she tended to imply her discontent with marriage in her public works. More's published works, including for instance her didactic literature, imply that marriage is the end goal for women, even though she did not use a romanticizing language. Her *Strictures* suggests that she did not view marriage positively. Robert Hole notes, "In *Strictures*, [More] described marriage in a very guarded terms as seldom exquisite though 'often very tolerable'; it took her nearly twenty years and a dozen editions to change the word 'tolerable' to 'happy'" (xvi). More believed that social hierarchy is natural and necessary. She argued in "Village Politics" that "woman is below her husband, and the children below their mother, and the servant below his master" (8). Thus, even though she never attempted to rework the hierarchy within marriage, she was an example of a conservative unmarried woman.

In addition to the possibility of a wholesale rejection of marriage, some Bluestockings presented the option of temporary marriage. The marriage of Montagu's sister Sarah Scott did not live up to the expectations of the ideal eighteenth-century marital life. Sarah loved and married George Lewis Scott in 1751; however, after a year, this marriage broke up for unknown reasons.[13] After separating from Mr. Scott, Scott moved to Bath and lived with her friend Lady Barbara Montagu. Living without a male protector meant that Scott had to earn her own living through writing; therefore, she devoted her time and energy to that purpose. Thus, Scott was able

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suffered from "a morbid sensibility of constitution"; this condition can be translated into "nervous breakdown" and therefore, she refused subsequent marriage proposals, including one from the poet John Langhorne (Jones 18).

[13] Some scholars have extrapolated that Scott's separation from her husband could be due to the interference of Scott's friendships with her marriage (Myers 137).

to oppose the patriarchal order while retaining her respectable status as a conservative and independent woman writer.

In their various approaches to resist traditional marriage, the Bluestockings formed a counterpublic in practice more compellingly than in writing. They challenged the marital status quo by refusing to enter into wedlock or conforming to patriarchy. Even though the Bluestockings' influence was not immediate, because they did not publicly call for women to follow their suit, the Bluestockings offered an acceptable alternative for women. Therefore, Bluestockings' personal lives formed an opposition to the status quo by presenting new and unordinary options regarding marital life to other women in society. In their lived experiences, the Bluestockings opened a space for women to conceive for themselves a different life than one as an uneducated and subservient wife. This new type of life would allow women to escape the gender constraints placed on them as subordinate wives while still retaining their virtuousness, propriety, and the ability to earn a living through their own writings. The Bluestockings proved to other conservative women that remaining unmarried or childless, or even discontinuing one's marriage, can be better for women than unwanted marriage. In the following chapter, I will explore the escalation of women's matrimonial concerns from a private conversation to a public concern in Scott's novel, *The Test of Filial Duty*. In her novel, Scott brings private concerns, women's personal thoughts, fears, and desires to public discussion. In doing so, Scott proposes revisions to traditional marriage for the benefit of women and their family as a whole.

Chapter Five: Sarah Scott, The Bluestocking Novelist

I argued in the previous chapter that the Bluestockings embodied a conservative counterpublic. Despite the fact that the Bluestockings' public writings conformed, to some degree, to patriarchal teachings, their private correspondence and private life choices prove that they resisted their marginalization. This chapter will show how the Bluestocking novelist Sarah Scott ventured to bring the Bluestockings' private questioning of their marginalization into the public discourse. Her epistolary novel, *The Test of Filial Duty* (1772), presents the conservative Bluestocking position that defends gender and class hierarchy, but also communicates resistance to patriarchal hegemony over conservative women. She questions the subordination of a woman's right to choose a husband to her family's demands and, in doing so, goes a step further than other Bluestocking authors to publicly challenge the patriarchal system. Scott utilizes the epistolary form to highlight the marginalization of women by using the genre's ability to connect with readers through its portrayal of a protagonist's spontaneous thoughts and psychological responses in a way that makes fictional private correspondence a matter of the non-fictional public sphere. By bringing private correspondence between the Bluestockings and their acquaintances into public discourse, Scott challenges the dominant public view of women.

In this chapter, I will show how Scott's novel represents a female conservative counterpublic in the literary public domain by presenting a "conflictual relation to the dominant public" (Warner 118) and arguing against the prevailing discourse that is reinforced by figures like Samuel Richardson. I will also emphasize that the novel seeks to "present amendment plans" (Warner 118) to widen the scope of women's right to have a say in their marriages, with the caveat that this scope only extends to upper class women–those who are well-educated and who

embody conservative attitudes and ideal Englishness. In other words, Scott defends the rights of a particular type of woman: one who encapsulates the ethos of the Bluestockings and resembles them in class, education, and conservative beliefs.

Scott's sentimental epistolary novel weaves its plot through the exchange of letters between two correspondents, Emilia Leonard and Charlotte Arlington, both well-educated, dutiful daughters who discuss the need for women to refuse unwanted arranged marriages. Charlotte is granted liberty of choice by her father and scrutinizes her suitors' sincerity in marrying her for her person and not for her fortune. In the end, her lover, Edward Edmondbury, proves sincere and the two are happily united. Emilia, on the other hand, is presented with two unpleasant proposals—the first from her lover's father, Sir Joseph Leonard, and the second from Lord Wilton—both old, wealthy men. Her lover, Mr. Charles Leonard, is promised to her sister Sophia. Afflicted by her situation, Emilia seeks to retire from social life by travelling to a convent in Wales. Mr. Charles Leonard follows Emilia to Wales, rejects his betrothal to Sophia, and proposes to Emilia. As Emilia has thereby proven her filial duty, the two are united with the parents' consent.

By contrast, Sophia, an orphan stepsister of Emilia who lacks discipline and training, represents a cautionary tale. Sophia's mother died while Sophia was an infant; since that time, she has been raised by a governess, Mrs. Jackson, a narrow-minded woman with "low and mean" views who has allowed Sophia to "act without controul." When Sophia is promised to Charles Leonard, who is loved by and loves Emilia, she chooses elopement over fulfilling her filial piety. Scott depicts Sophia as an undisciplined sister who enjoys spending her time in public. Misled by her ill-manners and full independence, Sophia elopes with a man who pretends to be an aristocrat and who leads her to lose her fortune.

While both the Bluestockings and the epistolary novel have garnered much critical attention, Sarah Scott's novel remains understudied. Even at the time of its publication it did not receive much critical attention in public reviews, and no personal correspondence among the Bluestockings relating to the novel survives. Only a handful of secondary sources discuss this work. For instance, Caroline Gonda explores the ways in which Scott's novel depicts parental authority, arguing that although paternal authority may be violent and may be tender, it is still an authoritarian relation that is difficult for young women to disobey. She writes, "A father who 'layeth aside his Authority, and persuades only by his Kindness' is not necessarily less effective in his methods of coercion" (511); thus, according to Gonda, Scott's novel shows that parental coercion can take a sentimental form. Laura Thompson contends that Scott's novel criticizes paternal authority, in particular "the ways in which parental interference restricts young women's emotional freedom especially in courtship and marriage" (109-10). This chapter will take these arguments a step further to argue that Scott does not ultimately reject social hierarchy despite her attempts to navigate it. As a member of a subaltern counterpublic, Scott seeks to present new alternatives for women's situations without breaking from her conservative background. In other words, while the novel criticizes parental intervention and ultimate subjugation of learned and moral women, it still shows that those hierarchical relations are justifiable for women who do not adhere to conservative traditions.

Scott's novel seems to respond to the Marriage Act of 1753, which caused a huge controversy in the House of Commons. This act, also known as Lord Harwicke's Act, was a reform in the history of English marriage law. Before the passage of the bill, the exchange of vows between men and women was enough to perform a valid marriage. However, after the bill's passage, only marriages conducted in a church with authorized clergymen were valid in

England and Wales; furthermore, couples younger than 21 had to gain the consent of their parents for the union. This law aimed to regulate marriages for young heirs and heiresses. Such laws limit the freedom of women in order to "protect" them from being taken advantage of by their economic and social inferiors. The Marriage Act was in force from 1753 until 1823 in England and Wales, but was not enacted in Scotland, leaving an outlet for young couples who were determined to marry. Whereas the Act's proponents saw in it a chance to prevent clandestine marriage and therefore protect economic and social values, its opponents described it as a "cruel enterprise against the fair sex" (*Parliamentary History*). Elizabeth Chudleigh criticizes this Marriage Act's efforts to enhance parental control over their children[14]:

> Such important regulations as those made by this act in a matter of such universal concernment as marriage, could not fail of dividing the public opinion, and of being the subject of very warm debate both in the houses of parliament and without doors, while it was passing into a law. It was represented as laying an impassable line between the rich and the poor, and controlling all the emotions of love and genuine affection in youth, by the frigid maxims of avarice and ambition imbibed by age: and if the former frequently betrayed a want of judgement and discernment, the latter as often enforced a splendid and wretched state of legal prostitution; in which the happiness of the party was sacrificed to family pride. (36)

This text was published by Joseph Johnson, a publisher known for printing texts by radical writers. The excerpted lines show that the Marriage Act functioned to protect wealthy families and to maintain socially stratified classes through perpetuating the boundaries between "the rich and the poor." Chudleigh also critiques the ways in which the Marriage Act repressed young couples' emotions by applying a conservative model of marriage that disregards the parties' happiness for the sake of "family pride." This radical text contends that the dismissal of young

[14] Elizabeth Chudleigh (1720- 1788), Duchess of Kingston who lived a scandalous life and was accused and convicted of bigamy (Kinservik 158).

adults' voices in marriage, through the coercion of tradition, renders arranged marriages a form of "legal prostitution" in which the individual's happiness is traded for economic interests.

The Test of Filial Duty aligns partially with the radical contention above. While Scott's novel seeks to advocate for affective individualism[15] by protecting the emotions of daughters, it simultaneously aims to preserve class stratifications. For the Bluestockings, some but not all women should have the right to refuse an unwanted marriage. Scott's novel attempts to loosen the constraints placed on aristocratic and gentry class daughters, but remains cautious not to support removing or fundamentally reworking them.

The Eighteenth-Century Novel

Scott's use of the novel was astute and deliberate: she stated that she chose the novel form "to take advantage of the reigning taste for novels" (6). Scott was aware that the novel's popularity would be the best way to distribute her ideas. The novel was one of the earliest and most effective modes in the eighteenth-century literary public sphere. The novel's non-traditional features distinguished it from the literary forms of poetry, epic, romance, and play to form a firmer connection with its audience. Habermas argues that realistic novels provided an initial platform for the political public sphere (29). The novel provided a distinctive aspect of this public sphere in which individuals were able to identify with fictional characters and reflect upon themselves as unique individuals. The novel's distinctive features are highlighted when viewed in the light of Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination.*

[15] Affective individualism is a term applied to the "formation of marriage ties on the basis of personal attraction, guided by norms of romantic attachment" (*A Dictionary of Sociology*).

Watt's and Bakhtin's studies on the novel illuminate the features that define the novel as genre and allow it to maintain relevance today. The novel's features were enhanced by the rise of print in the eighteenth century. The expansion of print made the novel's mode of reading possible as it permitted novelists to offer a thorough and more "convincing presentation of the inner lives of their characters and of the complexities of their personal relationships than literature had previously seen" (Watt 202). Another feature that sets the novel apart from other literary forms, Watt explains, is that in the novel "the plot had to be acted out by particular people in particular circumstances" in contrast to the earlier epic literary traditions that portray "general human types against a background primarily determined by the appropriate literary conventions" (15). Thus, literary forms that preceded the novel were a mere representation of the ideal and generic rather than the ordinary and probable, which that widened the gap between older literary works and their audience (Bakhtin; Watt).

In distinguishing between the novel and other genres of literature such as epic, Bakhtin contends, "The novel is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding" (Bakhtin 7). The novel is an incomplete and developing genre because it reflects the dynamics of time. It represents the issues, beliefs, and events of its own time at a historical point, making it a developing genre. The novel "reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making" (Bakhtin 7). The novel's release from the traditional plot allows it to become an inconclusive genre that moves with time and reflects on the lives of its consumers.

Further, the novel has distinctive narrative features that enable it to be one of the most enduring forms of the public sphere. The dynamic nature of the protagonist in the novel is usually conveyed through first person narration or epistolarity, both of which allow readers a

fuller exposure to characters' lives and minds than they encounter in other, earlier literary forms where soliloquies provided the only access to the characters' inner thoughts and feelings. All these features allow the novel to provoke the reader's imagination about their own thoughts and feelings. Watt distills the previous features in what he calls formal realism:

> the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. (Watt 32)

In short, formal realism is what permitted the novel its unprecedented popularity among other literary genres. This unique presentation by the novel made it a crucial part of the Habermasian public sphere.

This formal realism is also conveyed through the life-like heroes, familiar places, and particular times and events in the novel as well as through its language since the novel uses phrases and words that have an everyday familiarity to the reading public. According to Bakhtin, "The novel should not be 'poetic,' as the word 'poetic' is used in other genres of imaginative literature" (10). Bakhtin means that the language of the novel should not be elevated to a level that no longer reflects real life, which would render the represented art more imaginative than lifelike. The novel's non-poetic language, the habitual status of its protagonists, and the normal actions that occur within it all render the novel a depiction of "the contemporary world," whereas the epic was a representation of "the ancient world" (Bakhtin 10). In a similar vein, Watt contends that "the adaptation of prose style to give an air of complete authenticity" (27). Thus, the novel's use of common expressions and phrases enhances its verisimilitude and therefore its authenticity and closeness to its readers' lives.

In addition to language, both Bakhtin and Watt agree that the novel is distinguished by the ordinary representation of its protagonists: "the hero of a novel should not be 'heroic' in either the epic or the tragic sense of the word: he should combine in himself a negative as well as positive feature, low as well as lofty, ridiculous as well as serious" (Bakhtin 10). Unlike earlier literary forms, the characters in the novel should be relevant to its reader, depicting regular traits of human life, morals and flaws, strengths and weaknesses, desires and ambitions. Thus, the hero should not be depicted as a flawless "completed and unchanging person" but instead, should be drawn as a person that is "evolving and developing, a person who learns from life" (10). By contrast, Bakhtin identifies some characteristics of other genres and their distant relationship with reality that results from "their stilted heroizing, their narrow and unlifelike poeticalness, their monotony and abstractness, the pre-packaged and unchanging nature of their heroes" (10). These characteristics mean that the older genres maintain their distance from their audience. On the other hand, heroes in novels are depicted as ordinary people with realistic names and human traits. By engaging with novels, the reading public became able to identify with the fictional characters they encountered. This type of reading trained them to criticize and form judgements about what they read and then apply these judgements to their own lives and situations.

In particular, epistolary novels, those written in the form of letters or series of documents, decreased the gap between text and reader by depicting their protagonists as both rational and emotional human beings. The epistolary novel flourished in the mid- to late eighteenth century on the basis of its connection to non-literary forms such as letter writing (Ballaster 411). This enabled the epistolary form to bond with readers' reality more than other forms of narration. By "writing to the moment," Samuel Richardson added a new dimension to the verisimilitude that would come to characterize the epistolary novel (Park 113). The protagonists' accounts of their

psychological experiences and descriptions in autobiographical form create bonds between the reader and the protagonist. The immediate self-expression and personalized narration embody the sentimentality and autonomy of the protagonists as real and rational, meritorious individuals who share humanity with their audience. This connection is not only formed by life-like language and representation of everyday life in events and places, but also by the expression of various and intimate emotions.

Along with the epistolary format's ability to capture emotional responses, its encapsulation of rhetorical boundaries between public and private mark it as unique. As it is ostensibly directed at a single known reader, the letter has the potential to be circulated and distributed among many readers and it can eventually become even more publicized by finding its way to print. Dena Goodman marks letter writing as "the dominant form of writing in the eighteenth century" and contends that letter writing connected the public to private: "The epistolary genre became the dominant medium for creating an active and interactive reading public" (137). Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook also illustrates the flexible and fluctuating position that epistolary writing takes between the public and private domains:

> Against the swarm of public print forms that proliferated in the early decades of the century, the letter became an emblem of the private; while keeping its actual function as an agent of the public exchange of knowledge, it took on the general connotation it still holds for us today, intimately identified with the body and the somatic terrain of the emotions, as well as with the thematic material of love, marriage and the family. (6)

Cook argues that the letter, in both form and content, linked the public networks of circulation with the private spaces of feelings.

Habermas highlights the significance of the epistolary novel's ability to contribute to manufacturing an individual's subjectivity in writing. He contends that epistolary form enabled "the individual to [unfold] himself in his subjectivity" (Habermas 48). Thus, it was not only

realist techniques that enhanced the influence of the novel on eighteenth-century readers, but also the psychological insights embedded in epistles. The form of letter writing provided the readers with an opportunity to reflect upon their own lives and view themselves as individuals with emotions and autonomy. By delving into the inner thoughts of the protagonists through epistolary techniques, novelists created characters and emotions that appeared real to readers, who in turn fashioned their own existence after the models they encountered in fiction. Habermas explains, "In the age of sentimentality letters were containers for the 'outpourings of the heart' more than for 'cold reports'... From the beginning the psychological interest increased in the dual relation to both one's self and the other I" (49). Most epistolary novels feature one or two correspondents employing a free flowing, informal style characteristic of that between close friends or family members such as a parent and child. The correspondents' perspectives on the action of the narrative and the record of their thoughts and actions in what seems to be their real time enhances the realistic dimension of this particular form. Thus, in addition to realism, the emotional and psychological dimensions that are conveyed by the techniques of epistolarity enable the reader to form an immediate engagement with the characters, as though they have been given access to private correspondence. The psychological aspects of epistolary fiction decrease the gap between private lives and domestic issues into emotional contact with the reading public.

Scott the Progressive

While novels by white male authors like Samuel Richardson represented the dominant public and played a crucial role in the formation of the literary public sphere, novels by white women writers were functioning as fictional (literary) counterpublics, aiming to propose new

alternatives to women's situation within society. In this section, I will illustrate how the Bluestocking Sarah Scott employs the novel to resist social conventions such as pressures placed on young women regarding marriage, ideas that were reinforced in works like Richardson's *Clarissa.*[16] Scott utilizes the Richardsonian format to form a literary counterpublic that presents amendments to the conventions that marginalize women.

Unhappy with the unjust social system and the restrictions placed on well-behaved women, Charlotte and Emilia criticize arranged marriage in their letters. Only in their private correspondence are Emilia and Charlotte able to express not only their resentment of traditionally arranged marriages, but also express positive views regarding single status for women. By condemning marriages that are arranged solely on the basis of economic benefits and neglect the couple's emotions, the novel advocates for conservative women's right to refuse an unwanted marriage arranged by their parents. Scott's novel rejects such marriages that are based on family property and fortune, and depicts companionate and affectionate marriages as an ideal alternative for learned, obedient women. But while the novel offers a pushback against the conventional system of marriage, it simultaneously adopts the Bluestockings' conservatism in other aspects; notably, it ends with Charlotte's and Emilia's happy marriages and ultimately condemns Sophia's clandestine elopement. Hence, Scott makes certain to combine her progressive ideas with conservative doctrines to mitigate the effect of her counterargument against the dominant public.

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[16] Richardson's *Clarissa: Or, The History of a Young Lady* (1748-9) is a cautionary epistolary novel about a virtuous young woman, Clarissa Harlowe, who refuses her parents' arrangement for her to marry Roger Solmes, a rich man, but rather chooses to elope with her vicious lover, Robert Lovelace. As a result of defying her filial duty, Richardson punishes Clarissa's elopement with emotional and physical destruction: rape and eventual death.

Scott depicts the ideal marriage as characterized by companionship and freedom of choice without the primary foundation of parental arrangements for economic interests. In marriage, daughters' emotions are worth consideration. Using Charlotte's voice, Scott advocates for companionate marriage, suggesting that domestic life can provide "the greatest happiness" when "we conduct ourselves in it as we ought; and have the good fortune of being united with one who *deserves* and *returns* our affection: all is calm content, heart-felt joy; every hour gives pleasure as it passes, and satisfaction on the review" (145). Here Scott argues that "the greatest happiness" is founded on affective individualism. The couple's reciprocal passion trumps financial gains in marriage. Financial problems can be dissolved if a woman marries a man she loves and who "returns" her love and respect. This domestic tranquility outweighs the financial one; therefore, parents should consider their children's affection and consent when arranging marriages.

Scott further emphasizes the idea that domestic happiness requires "deserv[ed] and return[ed]" affection by expressing Charlotte's fears and concerns that her marriage will be based solely on financial interests. As suitors begin to pursue her, Charlotte worries that the proposals she receives are "solely to [her] fortune," which deters her from accepting any of them. She does not want to surrender her happiness in order to fulfill her filial duty for a marriage emptied of affection and acceptance, which "is surely a melancholy exchange." Charlotte makes explicit that "to marry one towards whom I feel a total indifference, appears to me very dreadful" (20). Charlotte is aware that by entering wedlock, she will lose control over her property and inheritance: "My fortune is so ample that in marriage, however great my husband's estate, I can never have so much at my command" (21). Therefore, she believes it is important to be certain that her suitor is not coming after her money, but her person. Knowing that, by marriage, she will

eventually become a *feme covert*, Charlotte wants to ensure that she can gain something more worthy than money out of her marriage. This issue found an echo in the line of Sarah Chapone in *The Hardships of the English Laws in Relation to Wives*, who writes "a Woman by our Law alienates all her own Property so entirely by Marriage, that if she brought an hundred thousand Pounds in Money, she cannot bequeath one single Penny" (29). Although Scott does not criticize women's loss of fortune through marriage in that time period, she ventured to bring this discussion to the public. Despite her use of mild language in this discussion, Scott is aware that women's loss is doubled when they concede their money to an incompetent husband. Charlotte refuses to surrender her financial security unless ensured that her husband will provide her with an even more important type of security: emotional peace.

As she is granted freedom of choice, Charlotte resolves that she will only marry a man "who convinced [her] that [she] should be a great gainer" (145) or else remain single. For Charlotte and women of her class, marriage is an option rather than a necessity. Although Charlotte is indebted to her father for granting her liberty of marital choice, "the liberty I have hitherto enjoyed, of refusing all the proposals of marriage that have yet been made me" (20), she experiences some fear of potential parental interference in the future because, to her, to "disappoint their wishes" will be "extremely painful." She also fears that in the future her "parents' indulgence" will "force [her] into a marriage to which they find [her] averse" (20). This fear illuminates that Charlotte is a dutiful daughter who is careful not to harm her parents' emotions while simultaneously having rigid views about what constitutes a good marriage. By refusing to depict Charlotte as blindly obedient female character, Scott rejects the patriarchal discourse that depicts blind obedience as a virtue at the cost of women's power of choice in marriage.

Scott forms a literary counter argument by employing Charlotte's voice to castigate marriages that commodify women and subordinate their happiness to economic advantage. Charlotte calls these unaffectionate, traditional marriages "mercantile," echoing Chudleigh's critique of marriage as "legal prostitution." To Charlotte, this notion is repugnant and "very dreadful" because she might be united for economic gain with "a rigid censurer" rather than a loving husband. Because such a husband will exercise social authority over her, she foresees that she will have to control and even conceal her emotions. In explaining the severity of wives' situations in such emotionless marriages, she writes, "I must watch his eyes … for the rule of my actions; and yet, if they are not very intelligible, may ignorantly commit a thousand offences, for which my peace may be the sacrifice" (21). Scott attempts to elicit the readers' sympathy by calling attention to the ways in which married women sacrifice their own peace of mind to keep the peace in such "mercantile" relations. A mercantile marriage can descend into "legal prostitution" when considering the fact that such marriages are primarily based on economic benefit rather than consent or affection. In a mercantile marriage, a wife will perpetuate her efforts to maintain peace in her marital life since a married woman can barely survive without her husband's finances.

As a result, in a mercantile marriage, a woman must also restrict her actions and regulate her emotions. Charlotte writes, "I must smile when he smiles; but alas! Must not frown when he frowns." Moreover, a wife is expected to endure the pain of "neglect, perhaps indignities, with patience, or increase them by resentment." Once again, Scott makes an emotional appeal to her readers by employing sentimental language to convey women's anguish in unaffectionate marital relations. Charlotte sums up the marital situation by labeling women in this state of relations as "the servant to [her husband's] convenience, and the slave of his caprices" (21). Here, Scott

argues through Charlotte's voice that traditionally arranged marriages can ruin the tranquility of domestic life because in them women are viewed as inferior humans to their husbands. This inferior position requires women to repress their emotions and thoughts. Moreover, wives are expected to suffer poor treatment without showing resistance or uttering a word in protest. The power of these relations subjugates even the behavioral and emotional expressions that may appear on a woman's countenance.

Charlotte's thoughts on language shed light on how daughters' consenting speech plays a role in their subjugation. To adhere to the standards of proper womanhood, daughters must modulate their speech to soothe their fathers and deny or repress their own desires verbally: "We follow the dictates of our inclinations with some dignity, when we can pretend that our compliance arises from an effort of duty. 'To please you papa; is a delicate kind of consent; but, 'it pleases me papa,' is a bolder speech than your immoderate bashfulness will ever suffer you to pronounce" (54-55). In this passage, Scott criticizes young women's self-denial embedded within their filial piety. This presents defiance of traditional ideals that give little or no attention to women's desires. Women's self-denial drives them to put their parents' desires before their own and to repress their own preferences, even if only linguistically. In contrast, when young women express their desires to their fathers, it renders them "bold" and "indelicate." Here, Scott castigates the tradition that coerces daughters to please their parents at the cost of their own happiness in order to fulfill their filial piety.

Scott's arguments against traditional marriage run counter to Samuel Richardson's teachings. Scott astutely uses the Richardsonian epistolary format to argue from a different point of view; by doing so, Scott is constructing, in Warner's words, a conflictual position to the dominant discourse. As shown above, she rejects the image of the ultimately subservient and

happily obedient woman that Richardson depicts in *Pamela*. For instance, when Mr. B, Pamela's future husband, dictates his rules and expectations about manners of dress and family schedules, Pamela is receptive to his rules and happily requests more of his "injunctions" because they "oblige and improve" her. Pamela requests that Mr. B proceed with his orders: "Dear sir, said I, pray give me more of your sweet injunctions" (706). Here, by emphasizing Pamela's gratitude for the benefits she receives as a subservient wife, Richardson normalizes women's subjugation. Significantly, Pamela does not give orders of her own or dictate her expectations from her future husband. Muting Pamela's voice suggests that men are in charge in the domestic sphere. Scott resists such representations and does so using Richardson's own literary format—the epistolary novel.

Beside challenging Richardson's depiction, the novel embodies a female counterpublic against the dominant, patriarchal discourse. This feminist counter position is visible when Charlotte and Emilia express equally radical thoughts on the subject of unmarried women. At the time, the accepted conservative viewpoint was that remaining unmarried was a fate worse than being in a loveless marriage. Amy M. Froide contends that in the eighteenth-century, "The old maid is something to be avoided at all costs" (154). She also adds that in the eighteenth century "lifelong singlewoman was... satirized, scorned and even derided as a menace to English society" (155). Yet Charlotte defies this belief, arguing, "One would imagine the single state a most horrible evil, that so much care is taken by our kind parents to save us from the danger of continuing in it for life. I cannot see it in that light" (21). Charlotte continues to mitigate the harsh views of unmarried women: "Some of the happiest, as well as most useful persons that I know are old maids; and such I much wish to be, if my heart always keeps as indifferent to the other sex as it has yet been" (21). Charlotte implies that domestic life can impede married

women from becoming “useful persons.” Emilia expresses similar thoughts, saying that, to her, the idea of single life seems “very just” a notion, despite the common belief that such a state is “selfish” because marriage “is a duty” (22). Perhaps the most radical of the comments on this subject comes from Charlotte, who argues that ridiculing single life for women “has been a great piece of male policy; but I hope I shall never be the dupe of so poor an artifice” (21). Here, Scott is calling the attention of her “young readers” to the notion that pressure placed on women to marry works for the benefit of men, rather than women. Charlotte and Emilia’s advocacy for single life is a public echoing of the Bluestockings’ private correspondences and diaries on that topic. This is an explicit attempt to challenge the conventional views by arguing that marriage may appear to protect women while in fact it perpetuates their subjugation to men.

Scott moves from the theoretical discussion found in Charlotte and Emilia’s correspondence to depicting actual unjust paternal practices on young women. Whereas Charlotte enjoys the liberty and time to scrutinize her future husband, Emilia faces a difficult situation when her father arranges for her to marry the old and wealthy Lord Wilton to secure her financial future. Her father’s concern about the transfer of the family’s property through marriage leads him to neglect his daughter’s emotions. Emilia narrates, “He now feels the happiness of living in friendship with the family that must inherit from him, as it has removed the vexation he has long suffered by knowing, that for want of a male heir, his fortune must descend to people against whom he had conceived a strong aversion” (23). She is aware that her father wants her to marry a person to whom he does not have “strong aversion,” as family property is a crucial factor in marital arrangements.

Informed about the proposal from Lord Wilton, Emilia felt “Abashed, confused, frighted, I could make no answer, but, more dead than alive, retired to my chamber, where for some time I

remained like one thunder struck; my heart scarcely beat, my blood seemed stagnated, my senses suspended" (68). By using this sentimental language, Scott questions the patriarchal system that represses women's voices and desires. Initially, Emilia is only able to express her objection to this proposal to her mother in a private conversation. During that conversation, Emilia questions her father's love, but her mother responds in justifying the father's decision:

> he thinks he is acting for your advantage; weaning you from an attachment which even his consent could not render successful; and establishing your fortune beyond the most ambitious wish of your partial friends, by uniting you with a man, who, we have no reason to believe unworthy of your heart, and whose affection and generosity he thinks cannot fail of making an impression on it. But you are too apprehensive; do not injure so good a parent by your excessive fears. (69-70)

In the mother's lines, Scott echoes the arguments behind the Marriage Act, portraying parents' ultimate goal as to secure their children's finances along with "family pride," and protecting inheritances even if doing so comes at the cost of children's emotions. The mother highlights Lord Wilton's worthiness by first stating that this marriage can establish Emilia's "fortune beyond the most ambitious wish of her partial friends." Emilia's parents' views emphasize the value the conservative model of marriage places on property over affection.

Grieved by her situation and the early proposal of Sir Joseph, her lover's father, Emilia's request to go into exile at a convent in Wales is granted by her father. Scott, like other eighteenth-century authors, depicted convents as a respectable, although harsh, alternative to imposed marriage. While convents could appear to many young women as synonymous with prisons and torturous isolation, Emilia "would travel with joyful steps" (80). Her decision to go in exile illuminates the limited options available to women. Emilia prefers escaping her situation altogether rather than facing an arrangement to marry Lord Wilton, as her physical existence makes her subject to marrying against her will. Scott elicits her audience's sympathy by

presenting Emilia's choice to suffer a physical exile that distances her from her beloved family and home rather than being emotionally confined in an unwanted marriage.

Scott the Conservative

Despite her somewhat progressive suggestions, Scott adheres to the conventional discourse on marriage that puts women's virtue and loyalty to husband under question if she does not fulfill parental obedience. When in exile, Emilia is followed by her lover, Charles Leonard, and eventually reunites with him. However, though her lover "begged" and "knelt" and "wept," she does not accept his proposal, contending that if she does so without her parents' approval, she "could no longer deserve his love. What dependence could a man have on the fidelity of a wife who had violated her faith to her father, and failed in her first duties?" (127). Here, Emilia's voice echoes the conventional discourse that associates a young woman's virtue as a wife with her duty as a daughter. Scott reaffirms the conservative stance that condemns full independence of children by suggesting that a woman who defies filial piety is unrespectable and morally corrupted. Had Emilia accepted that proposal, she would be stigmatized as a wife unworthy of trust for committing "a crime of disobedience."

Because marriage without parental approval cannot be accepted within conservative conventions, Scott employs Mr. Lewis, a wise old man, as a father figure to justify the union of the two lovers, Emilia and Charles Leonard. Mr. Lewis' presence functions as a substitute for the parental approval that is still required for the lovers' union. As Emilia, urged by her filial obedience, rejects Mr. Leonard's proposal, Mr. Lewis steps in as the voice of reason, assuring Emilia that she is not "slave to love, being under the equitable government of duty" but in fact, "[her] sensibilities are too strong, and [her] heart too tender," which drives her to "sacrifice love"

whereas she can remain committed to her filial piety but her "fears conquer [her] reason" (129). Here, Mr. Lewis confirms that Emilia is a rational being yet the social pressure placed upon her made her "fears conquer her reason." By balancing reason with emotion, Mr. Lewis comes up with a resolution to the problem of Emilia and Leonard. Mr. Lewis addresses Emilia, saying, "your father … would not refuse you to the man whom he so ineffectually desires for your sister, when good part of his motive for doing so will be answered by your union with Mr. Leonard; the estate will still be in the family; he will acquire for a son the man he so highly esteems, and complete the happiness of a much loved daughter" (130). As long as the family property will not be transmitted to people of whom the father disapproved, and since Mr. Leonard was formerly approved as a suitor for Sophia, Emilia's fears of disobedience are ill-grounded. This semi-parental arrangement is later confirmed in "procuring [Emilia's parents'] full consent" (152).

Despite the fact that parts of Charlotte's and Emilia's letters question some of the conventions placed on women, they are both rewarded with marriages to men they desire. Also, Scott's conservative views dictate the fate of the remaining female character, Sophia, who elopes against the wishes of her father. In the novel's preface, Scott explicitly states that she opposes children's violation of their filial duty through committing clandestine marriage:

> Few young persons consider a clandestine marriage as in any respect criminal; and were it not for pecuniary considerations, we should, I fear, seldom see any regard paid to the consent of parents. This inattention to one of the greatest duties of social life, and which is so frequently the source of much unhappiness to those who violate it, induced me to take advantage of the reigning taste for novels, to set it in a strong, but just light, to my youthful readers, in hopes some may be thereby led to reflect upon it with the seriousness and impartiality it deserves; and if I am so fortunate, as by the following sheets, to be the means of saving one family from the complicated affliction which is usually the consequence of such marriages, I shall think myself greatly rewarded for my time and trouble. (6)

Sophia enters into the type of clandestine marriage against which Scott warns her readers. In addition to the bold statement in the preface, Scott emphasizes her opposition to daughters' full independence and unlimited liberty through her harsh and frequent criticism of Sophia's conduct. Sophia's lack of discipline stems from her lack of a mother's influence: her mother died while she was infant, and her father was overly sympathetic and acquiesced to her bad behaviors. Sophia's actions are criticized through multiple voices in the novel, including Emilia, Emilia's mother, and Charlotte. By employing and criticizing a living rebellious example, Scott is reinforcing restrictive gender norms.

Sophia fails to abide by proper English womanhood in several ways. Emilia describes Sophia as "the prettiest fairy imaginable; but whenever she appeared in public, one would cry out Mademoiselle Catherina to the life! another, a doll just sent over from Paris to an English milliner ready dressed, as a sample of the reigning fashion! A true Catherina she was, it must be confessed" (16). Comparing Sophia to a "doll" suggests that what astonishes people about her is merely her appearance, rendering her a public spectacle. Also, linking Sophia to a French figure "Catherina"[17] emphasizes her distance from ideal Englishness and associates her with the cultural rival, France. In her reference to France as a model of improper femininity, Scott emphasizes the sense of English conservatism in defining proper womanhood. Sophia's undisciplined femininity makes her "flattered by the observation she attracted from men" (16). Moreover, her lack of refined sociability and naïve, doll-like personality make Sophia vulnerable to flattery and seduction by the ill-intentioned men who admire her appearance. By exposing

[17] This is likely a reference to Queen Catherine (1519-1589), wife of King Henry II of France.

herself in public, Sophia dismantles herself from English domesticity that preserves women's virtuousness at home.

Unlike Sophia, who actively seeks and enjoys men's attention and compliments, Charlotte states before meeting her suitors that she will not use "feminine arts" to attract them: "I will frankly confess to you, that I do not design to use any of those feminine arts" that is because "If the elegant simplicity of extreme neatness" is not sufficient to her husband, he then "may carry his addresses to those who confound nature, by all the tawdry trappings with which they can load their persons" (19). In this example, Scott valorizes Charlotte's refusal to become an object of spectacle and male admiration. Charlotte will not mask herself with "tawdry trappings," because she defines proper womanhood differently than does Sophia. Charlotte therefore embodies the proper Englishness and feminine modesty that represent the ethos of the Bluestockings' conservative project aiming to preserve women's virtuousness and domesticity.

As an additional contrast to Sophia, Scott presents Charlotte and Emilia as worthy of autonomy because they are well-educated. Throughout their correspondence they frequently quote Milton, Shakespeare, Dryden, and Pope. As educated, middle- and upper-class women, they can judge for themselves, make their own decisions, and negotiate desirable arrangements. On the other hand, the antithetical Sophia is unworthy of such autonomy due to her disdain for education: Sophia's readings "had been confined to novels." Emilia reports that despite their father's effort to provide his daughters with good education, it was little to Sophia's advantage as she "*could* not *endure* French; drawing she *hated*; music was her *detestation*; geography she *abominated*; and reading made her head-ach" (9). As a result, Scott implies, marriage laws exist for Sophia's protection, since she is not qualified to judge on her own behalf. Women who abide by conservative teachings and English manners can be trusted with their own judgements and

deserve to have their voices heard. Thus, marriage laws should be revised for *some* women. Women who are well-behaved, moral, and conservative like Charlotte and Emilia.

Besides juxtaposing conservative and non-conservative examples, Scott emphasizes her conservative stance through rewarding Charlotte and Emilia with companionate marriages at the close of the novel. Thus, despite the non-conservative hints that Scott presents in the discussion of single life, she remains within the constraints of conservative teachings in advocating marriage, with some adjustments. Even though Charlotte and Emilia mention their support for single life, there is no single instance in the novel of happy "old maids," except Charlotte's brief and vague mention that "Some of the happiest, as well as most useful persons that I know are old maids" (21). There is no actual exemplar of a single woman who embodies this happy life, only an anecdotal and hypothetical one of women who are not even named. It seems that Scott's inability to push further in this argument for single life is due to her awareness of her subordinate status as a female author. Scott chooses to introduce the notion of acceptable single life hesitantly and briefly because her participation in the world of letters, determined as it was by social inequality between participants, is "bracketed" (Fraser 63). In other words, Scott's ability to participate in the world of letters while countering conventional discourse had its limits. Her awareness of her subordinate status as a woman writer forced her to adjust her argument within a conservative context.

While the epistolary novel's "letters were containers for the 'outpourings of the heart'" that saw a greater relationship between "both one's self and the other I" (Habermas 49), the allegorical novel appeared to take a step back from realism to offer more radical claims. Scott's allegory *A Description of Millennium Hall* (1762) presents a more extreme example of advocacy for an acceptable single and "useful" life for women. This work depicts a female utopian

community founded and run by educated women and celebrates its visions regarding female education, patronage, and reformation. In this allegory, Scott portrays single women's involvement in philanthropic activities and charitable works that benefit the general public instead of limiting women's usefulness to the familial realm.

Scott believed that marriage and domestic duties could conflict with women's literary and public activities; in *A Description of Millennium Hall*, Mrs. Morgan, a major female character, justifies why she and her fellows "promote [matrimony] in others which they themselves do not choose to practise" by saying that they see themselves "perform[ing] knight's service," and were therefore "excused" from "entering into [wedlock] [them]selves" (145). Scott's allegorical depiction runs more visibly against social conventions because it allows women to imagine how exercising their free will could lead a variety of possibilities other than the roles that confine them to the domestic sphere. In Millennium Hall, single women can practice philanthropy and produce intellectual works since they did not surrender their liberty to a husband through marriage. In *The Test of Filial Duty*, on the other hand, Scott ceases to offer affective freedom after marriage. Even after a freely chosen marriage, women will remain domestic and subordinate to their husbands. Hence, in allegorical format, Scott enjoys a more flexible position in challenging the usefulness of marriage as the founding institution of the English society.

Scott's conservatism is evident in her acceptance of gender hierarchy despite her attempts to renegotiate its boundaries within her epistolary novel. For instance, she suggests women's social inferiority when she places men as morally superior to non-conservative women and invests them with authority that renders them capable of regulating those women's conduct. Emilia reports her father's thoughts about arranging marriage for Sophia and Mr. Leonard, writing that her father rightly believed "Mr. Leonard's virtue, prudence, and excellent

understanding, rendered him of all men the most proper to regulate the conduct of a young woman" (67). That is because, in Sophia's case, gender hierarchy serves the purpose of regulating the wife's conduct by providing a male "director and guide" who can "rectify [Sophia's] errors, and lead her into a due conformity with his inclinations, without making her reformation a suffering penance" (67).

Thus, because Sophia does not adhere to restrictive gender norms and does not fall within the parameters of English and conservative womanhood that is worthy of male companionship, her subordination to her husband is justified. Scott's treatment of Sophia's situation parallels the conservative discourse by the jurist and Tory politician, Sir William Blackstone. In his *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* Blackstone writes, "The husband also (by the old law) might give his wife moderate correction. For, as he is to answer for misbehaviour, the law thought it reasonable to intrust him with this power of refraining her, by domestic chastisement, in the same moderation that a man is allowed to correct his apprentices or children; for whom the master or parent is also liable in some cases to answer" (432). Sophia's marriage to a penniless man is her punishment for violating her filial piety and eloping to Scotland. Her husband, who "not having inherited any fortune" spent his life "living some years in good figure, accumulated debts" (155-56) that will be "repaid out of her fortune." Unfortunately for Sophia, she "put her happiness into the power of a man, of whom she knew nothing, but a little that can be learnt at balls, and a clandestine correspondence, where every deceit may be practiced" (148-49).

By depicting emotional distress in epistolary form, Scott refuses the ultimate subjugation of conservative women, such as that reinforced by Richardson, and instead argues for a more egalitarian marital relationship. Overall, the novel attempts to emancipate well-behaved and

learned women from some social limitations. In doing so, Scott cleverly weaves her progressive amendments into a conservative context to expand possibilities for some women. These possibilities are discernable in either practicing freedom of choice in marriage or in presenting single life as an acceptable option. Combining progressive approach with conservative doctrines illustrates not only Scott's conservative stance as a woman writer, but it also demonstrates her understanding of her marginalized status as a woman writer in the world of letters. Thus, Scott emphasizes her rejection of women's full independence, as in the case of Sophia. In the following chapter, I will show how the Bluestockings' counter-position regressed significantly due to the impacts of the French Revolution. The conservative reformer Hannah More embodies a counterpublic that seeks to reform women's position in society while still reinforcing and justifying the social hierarchy, gender, and class in response to the Reign of Terror.

Chapter Six: Hannah More, The Bluestocking Activist

I argued in the previous chapters that the Bluestockings formed a conservative counterpublic through their presence and active participation in the world of letters that was dominated by men and through their attempts to renegotiate women's position in society within a conservative context. Despite their attempts to argue new forms of domestic power within the gendered world in which they found themselves, the Bluestockings' position as a counterpublic began to dwindle. In other words, the Bluestockings' "conflictual relation to the dominant public" became less intense amidst the threats posed by the French Revolution.

In this chapter, I will show how the Bluestocking Hannah More used her pen to justify class and gender hierarchy in reaction to the French Revolution. This shift in time forced the Bluestockings to reorient themselves away from a direct conflictual relation with the dominant public and toward efforts to justify and rationalize the order of things. Hannah More's writings serve as an explicit example of the way existing gender and class hierarchies were reinforced amongst the Bluestocking writings. Following the path of the Bluestockings, More's writings appear to function as a counterpublic that seeks to propose an alternative to women's current status in society. Even from a marginalized position, however, More acknowledges that women occupy a distinct role from that of men and therefore calls for a type of education "to qualify [women] for the performance of [their female duties]" (*Strictures* 4). In this manner, More is not radically challenging the status quo, but in fact serving it by safely enhancing women's role in the domestic sphere. More's writings exceed the boundaries of her Bluestocking fellows by engaging in explicit political discussions to maintain the status quo that marginalizes women and the poor. In short, More, despite her transgression into the political sphere, was a marginalized

individual supported by the dominant public precisely because she did not challenge that dominant public. Even though More and the Bluestockings represented a conservative female counterpublic, they worked to put down attempts by women and working-class writers to rise and participate in the literary public sphere for the purpose of "formulat[ing] oppositional interpretations" against the prevailing discourse (Fraser 67).

Hannah More, known as a conservative reformer by twenty-first century scholars, is a case study in the ways that the opinions and actions of an eighteenth-century female author are both complex and, at times, contradictory. More exercised her authority over ordinary women through her writing on matters of proper femininity and its subordination to masculine dominance. While she openly supported the status quo that ranked both gender and class in their own hierarchical ladder, she also subverted gender conventions by engaging in political discussions, opposing slavery, and playing an active role in abolitionist campaigns. She advised her female readers against playing an active role in public life; yet at the same time, More directly engaged in larger public and political matters, the very ones from which she argued that women's voices should be excluded.

This chapter will offer several cases that illuminate how More played a political role contradictory to her outwardly stated beliefs regarding women's domesticity. When writing on gender conventions and feminine propriety, More invoked perceived natural (biological) distinctions between men and women. That is to say, she held the view that the different mental capacities and physicality of men and women determined their distinct social roles (public vs. private). However, More defied her own argument by existing in the world of letters as a woman and by extending her participation into the masculine realm of politics. When writing on explicitly political topics, such as class and slavery, More emphasizes the morality of each issue

(e.g. suffering from poverty is moralizing and abolition is a moral good), which in turn justifies her access to the public sphere as a woman moralist.

More's Domestication of Women

Britain and France, though longtime enemies, shared many similarities in government and social structure in the eighteenth century. The social system in France was divided into three distinct classes with different privileges based on their position: the first estate was the clergy, the second estate was the noblemen, and the third estate was the common people. However, during the French Revolution, the National Assembly's *Declaration of the Rights of Man* (1789) laid out a new vision of the French social order. Its fundamental principle was that "all men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can be based only upon public utility" (Anderson 58). Jonathan Israel comments that this new philosophy

> proved and established the people's 'rights' demonstrating that all France's existing laws were born of 'prejudice' and 'ignorance' while those 'we lack are those made by nature and reason'. The nobility endlessly cite charters, titles, and privilege... Suddenly, everyone grasps that this is all nonsense. Precisely the principle of general equality taught by 'philosophy' revealed to the people that they possessed natural rights and that these rights must ground the new order. (775-76)

This pre-Revolution social order was mirrored in Britain's aristocracy, the gentry class, and the poor (with the religious class straddling the gap between aristocracy and gentry). France and Britain were neighbor states that shared analogous system of monarchy. This resemblance made it possible to imagine a replication of French revolutionary thinking as well as a reign of terror in Britain. Along with questioning the class order, gender became a major issue. The coherence of a distinct power structure between men and women was viewed by conservatives as a traditional English pillar that should be defended because it helped assure the continuation of Englishness

across generations through dedicated sires and child-bearers; challenges to the power relations of gender threatened to deconstruct society as a whole. Thus, the French Revolution incited both hopes and fears among the British as they saw the possibility of change in traditional political and social systems.

The conservative backlash this fear incited found a voice in Hannah More's writing, the printed word being the traditional Bluestocking's vessel to convey the practical application of their ideals. Before publishing her works as a Bluestocking, More already had an influence on the public when it came to the topic of women's education. More's older sisters, Mary, Elizabeth, and Sarah, established a boarding school in Bristol in 1758. The students at this school paid a tuition and were drawn from the middling classes: "daughters of slave traders and merchants of bustling Bristol" (Ford 5). Hannah and Martha were quite young when the school was established, but they joined their sisters and began teaching in their early adulthood. This school was one among several newly emerging schools in Bristol. The sisters were very active and enthusiastic about teaching reading, arithmetic, and catechism: "the primary focus was on practical moral and ethical instruction which the sisters taught personally. Their curriculum centered on reading the Bible and devotional works as well as drilling students in writing and arithmetic" (Ford 7). The sisters' teaching plans provided an alternative to the ornamental education of young women that was common at that time. The school achieved recognizable success, and therefore, it became very well known.[18]

[18] According to Hopkins, "As the More family had no capital to start the Bristol boarding school, they raised funds by subscription. The solicitation of donations from wealthy families was an accepted method of financing an educational or philanthropic venture" (17).

The Mores' school put into practice a philosophy of educating women so that they would be better prepared to run households and manage the domestic domain, a philosophy soon to be widely disseminated by More's publications. Rather than being viewed as subversive, their school earned high praise from England's intellectual elites, underscoring the ways in which More's agendas upheld conservative ideals. Although education for women could appear to be an attempt to propose adjustments in the social order for women, its goals and curriculum were anything but radical.

For example, Samuel Johnson praised the "honourable and useful" teaching of young ladies. Commending the More sisters, Johnson said, "I love you all five. I never was at Bristol. I will come on purpose to see you. What five women live happily together! I will come and see you. I have spent a happy evening. I am glad I came. God for ever bless you: you live lives to shame duchesses" (*Memoirs* 47). The school was also commended by Montagu, who wrote, "I passed a most agreeable day with Miss Hannah More and her three sisters. They are all women of admirable sense, and unaffected behaviour, and I should prefer their school to any I have ever seen for girls, whether very young or misses in their teens" (qtd. in Jones 3). More's practical approach to education was glorified by the elites. Her pedagogy was aligned with the dominant public and would come to anticipate both the words she would publish and the accolades she would receive.

The established gender tradition in the British society placed men in the "world" and women at "home"; as a result of these separate spheres, men and women were educated differently to fulfill their social roles. As her writings were mainly addressed to middle- and upper-class women readers, More aimed to reproduce educated women who, through their domestic role, resisted the reworking of the social order caused by the new French "philosophy."

This status quo that determined the power relations between men and women was founded on beliefs about natural distinctions and gender propriety. Through her teachings, More refused to equate women with men; instead, she reinforced women's subjugation and domestication as divine and natural. If France had the audacity to suggest equality between class and gender, More's reaction was to position such displacement as unnatural and, patriotically, un-English.

More balked against the superficial education of women and provides suggestions for women's proper education to prepare them for their domestic duties and to reduce the intellectual gap between men and women. In *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), More argued that in her time women receive the most "defective education" (x). Her dissatisfaction with the situation of women's education served as a call for reform in the educational system. The superficial education that women had traditionally received ill-prepared them for the marriage market by emphasizing ornamental skills such as dancing and drawing without devoting attention to the real need of intellectual improvement which More believed would make young women better suited for marital life. More rhetorically inquired about the purpose of educating women in "arts to which little intellect is applied," she wrote, "Do we not educate them for a crowd, forgetting that they are to live at home? for the world, and not for themselves? for show, and not for use?" (*Strictures* 72). The focus on ornamental skills for women, More suggested, has at most a temporary benefit for the lives of women who will eventually spend their time "at home." More's argument for women's education supported the established gender order that reinforced women's existence in the domestic sphere as natural, and therefore, positioned women as secondary in the social hierarchy.

Before delving into what More advocated for women to learn, it is important to highlight that More believed in innate differences between male and female mental capacities. More

emphasized that the delicate and domestic nature of women is associated with different intellectual capacity from men: according to her, women's nature is more associated with sensibility, not understanding. Women "feel what is just more instantaneously than they can define it," she explains (*Strictures* 26). In More's view, women are unable to reason as men; they "feel" instead of simply articulating and communicating what they think. According to More, women's nature fits the domestic realm; their nature therefore determines their social duties.

In her *Strictures*, More emphasized that differences in men and women's mental faculties are perhaps natural, but that without a similar extent of education, such differences were only hypothetical. She walked through her analysis of this situation by first granting that an in-born intellectual variance between the sexes may indeed exist:

> In summing up the evidence, if I may so speak, of the different powers of the sexes, one may venture, perhaps, to assert, that women have equal parts, but are inferior in wholeness of mind, in the integral understanding: that though a superior woman may possess single faculties in equal perfection, yet there is commonly a juster proportion in the mind of a superior man; that if women have in an equal degree the faculty of fancy which creates images, and the faculty of memory which collects and stores ideas, they seem not to possess in equal measure the faculty of comparing, combining, analysing, and separating these ideas; that deep and patient thinking which goes to the bottom of a subject; nor that power of arrangement which knows how to link a thousand connected ideas in one dependent train, without losing sight of the original idea, out of which, the rest grow and on which they all hang. (*Strictures* 26)

Despite the fact that More rejected the argument above, she agreed upon the natural difference between men and women's mental capacities. First, she argued that women's intellect could not be compared to that of men who have had decent education because such comparison is unfavorable to women who had been receiving defective education. To More, then, there could very well be a difference in capacity. This concession includes deference to lines of natural hierarchy of the sexes (e.g., women may have evidence and ideas but are unable to assemble them in the coherent way a man naturally would). However, without providing similar degrees of

educational cultivation, these differences will only ever be a *perhaps*. Lest her readers take her for a wild radical thinker like Wollstonecraft, More made sure to posit that it is possible for an *individual* woman to be better than an *individual* man, however women as a category are by nature inferior to the category of man. More, within this moment, was calling for education not as a right, but as more of a diagnostic tool. Perhaps, she claimed, women are indeed naturally subordinated (and perhaps not?), but we shall always wonder unless educational parity is achieved. Then, and only then, could women's lower status be confirmed (or, unstated here, even denied). As More wrote, "we have no juster ground for pronouncing that [women's] understanding has already reach-ed its highest attainable perfection" (*Strictures* 27) "till the female sex are more carefully instructed, this question will always remain as undecided as to the *degree* of difference between the under-standings of men and women ... can never be fairly ascertained" (27).

While it is tempting to view this wholly in the tradition of Enlightenment humanitarian progress, the calls for testing are just that: calls for assessing the parameters of difference rather than efforts to dismantle the hierarchy. When she did return to her central point, that of women's education, she stated, "Thus, though in what relates to the actual difference of mind in the sexes, the distinction itself seems clearly marked by the defining finger of the Creator, yet of the *degree* of that native difference a just estimate can never be formed till the understandings of wo-men are made the most of" (*Strictures* 29). More believed that men could effortlessly defeat women in intellectual competition due to their ability to concentrate, and attributed this variation "of mind in the sexes" to the pre-ordained divinely nature. More was *not* asking for equality because it is inherently just amongst a society of equals. She was appealing for a full understanding of differences to make the homes that women are confined to more accurate to their capacities.

More contended that the natural variation between men and women's mental capacities remains undecided until "women are more reasonably educated." This statement illuminates More's belief that there is a gap between the two sexes' intellect, though the extent of the gap remains unascertained. Even though she called for women to be educated, the goal of that education was to make her a better domestic person, the end result to make the domestic woman a happier domestic wife: "And let the weaker sex take comfort, that in their very exemptions from privi-leges, which they are sometimes disposed to envy, consist their security and their happiness" (37). Thus, even though More valued education for women, this education should serve conservative ends by confining women to their secondary role as domestic people exempted from "privileges" that are granted to men. Women's "exemption from privileges" and "public life" works for their own benefit as this separation of spheres protects women from "envy" and secures their "happiness."

Despite her beliefs about variations between men's and women's intellectual capacities, More carved out an exception for herself. More's father was "remarked for his strong dislike of female pedantry" (*Memoirs* 18). His sexism was evident in his belief that "female brains were more delicate in texture than male and easily wrecked by book learning" (Hopkins 14). So, when More's father noticed his young daughter's quick comprehension of his teaching, he "was soon frightened at his own success" and discontinued her lessons in mathematics (Roberts 18). However, with the support of her mother, More resisted the father's decision and pled for the opportunity to continue: "as the father was fearful of [the education's] consequences; and his consent to her entering upon any new studies was only wrung from him by [More and her mother's] joint opportunity" (*Memoirs* 18). More's insistence on continuing her studies despite

her father's disapproval is an instance of her challenging the same patriarchal order that she enthusiastically defended against female Jacobins like Mary Wollstonecraft.

Due to the supposed difference in the mental capacities of men and women, More justified the designation of the public sphere for men and the domestic sphere for women. In More's opinion, women excel in certain skills founded on taste and delicacy that allow them to "possess in a high degree that delicacy and quickness of perception, and that nice discernment between the beautiful and defective" (*Strictures* 25). In More's opinion, women "excel in details"; however, women "do not so much generalize their ideas as men, nor do their minds seize a great subject with so large a grasp" (*Strictures* 25). Also, in their domestic realm, women were "secured from the difficulties and temptations to which men are exposed in the tumult of a bustling world" (*Strictures* 35). Due to these dangers and difficulties of "the bustling world," domesticating women served for their protection. Remaining in the domestic sphere sheltered women from being "agitated by the passions, the businesses, the contentions, the shock of opinions and of interests which convulse the world" (*Strictures* 35). Thus, women's delicate nature does not permit them to compete in a man's world. Evidently, More was strongly dedicated to the doctrine of the two spheres based on gender propriety, founding her arguments of domesticating women on natural variations between men and women that entailed placing each sex in its proper realm of either public or domestic. More drew on a religious argument to impose natural hierarchy:

> Natural propensities best mark the designations of Providence as to their application. The fin was not more clearly bestowed on the fish that he should swim, nor the wing given to the bird that he should fly, than superior strength of body and a firmer texture of mind given to man, that he might preside in the deep and daring scenes of action and of council; in government, in arms, in science, in commerce, and in those professions which demand a higher reach, and a wider range of powers. The true value of woman is not diminished by the imputation of inferiority in these respects; she has other requisites

> better adapted to answer the purposes of her being, by HIM who does all things well. (*Strictures* 23-24)

Thus, as fish are given fins to swim and birds are given wings to fly, men are given "superior strength" and mentally "firmer texter," which naturally and divinely situates them in the public realm. By contrast, women's nature renders them more fit for the domestic realm, which protects them from the dangers of public life.

More proposed an alternative plan for women's education with the intent of addressing any non-divinely ordained gap between men and women's intellectual capacities, but in fact suggested little more than what was necessary to equip women for their domestic duties as wives and mothers. Women could read on topics of history and philosophy to sharpen their understanding of the world around them and to have a constructive discourse with their husbands and fathers. More suggested for women to read books such as William Duncan's "Little Book of Logic" and "Mr. Locke's Essays on the Human Understanding," along with history books that provide "leisure, and capacity" and make a woman "an able counsellor" (*Strictures* 214). Along with the study of philosophy and history, More suggests that women should study math to help with the household economy: "it is the exercise of a sound judgment exerted in the comprehensive outline of order, of arrangement, of distribution; of regulations by which alone well governed societies, great and small, subsist" (*Strictures* 5). Such learning could prepare women for their domestic roles as discerning wives and mothers who possess "sound judgement" and logical thinking.

This type of education also granted women, as mothers, a type of power that suited the domestic realm and extended to future generations. In this specific moment, More reworked the family as a social institution with "a mother rather than a father as its center" (Armstrong 103).

She depicted future generations as being formed morally and intellectually by domestic women: "On YOU, depend in no small degree the principles of the whole rising generation. To your direction the daughters are almost exclusively committed" (*Strictures* 63). Here, More's plea to women as the standard-bearers of Englishness is evident: birthing and raising children is not just natural and divine, but the way to guarantee the continuation of the English way of life. As morally superior to men, women can exercise power over their children, particularly daughters. Through moderate education and mastering domestic duties, More argued, women could become good companions to men and good mothers to the future generations.[19]

More argued that the readings mentioned previously were a good substitute to foreign readings such as "French philosophy, Italian Poetry, and fantastic German imagery" (*Strictures* 214). By avoiding foreign sources of readings, More attempted to preserve readers' Englishness from foreign influences that may lead to imbalanced social order. This concern becomes obvious when More asserts that "the attacks of infidelity in Great Britain are at this moment principally directed against the female breast" (*Strictures* 46). Fearing that foreign readings could corrupt the chaste minds of female British readers, More advised women to avoid foreign books that lacked that value "which the books of their own country so abundantly furnish; and the acquisition of which would be so much more useful and honourable" (*Strictures* 77). Contrary to books produced by British authors, More noted that foreign books do not provide readers with valuable knowledge because they are often "imperfectly [understood] and... they are likely to

[19] The idea that women should be involved in their child's domestic and cultural education is not unique to the conservative social sphere of the Bluestockings. Women on the both ends of the political spectrum saw education of children as a primary female responsibility: Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, contends that an "ignorant woman" cannot be "a good mother" (216).

make no use" (*Strictures* 77). Thus, reading books by local authors permitted women to gain valuable knowledge and to preserve British ideals against contagious foreign philosophies.

More championed the status quo for domestic women by assigning them a patriotic role in defending British ideals and institutions. Women, from their private sphere and while maintaining their proper femininity, should "contribute their full and fair proportion towards the saving of their country" (*Strictures* 4). In an attempt to reject the implications of the French Revolution that aimed to reconstruct the social order, More urged her female audience to resist foreign influences. In times of "alarm and peril," More notified her readers with "a warning 'voice,' which should stir up every latent principle in their minds, and kindle every slumbering energy in their hearts; I would call on them to come forward" to save their country (*Strictures* 4). However, the contribution of women should not make them "[depart] from the refinement of their character" or "[derogate] from the dignity of their rank" or "[blemish] the delicacy of their sex" (4). Hence, these lines emphasize the notion that women's place during times of peace and war should not depart from the domestic realm and feminine conventions. Domestic women's power is encapsulated within their moral and religious authority especially in the context of foreign threats against domestic stability. While More stresses the importance of women's role in the domestic sphere, she simultaneously advises against their participation in the public sphere. She warns her female audience from engaging in politics and from creating public lives for themselves because such involvement clashes with their nature and propriety. When mentioning "female warriors" and "female politicians," More cannot evaluate which of the two is "the most disgusting and unnatural character" (*Strictures* 6). Propriety for women, acting in accordance with their gender role, which is an expression of their nature, outweighed other characteristics: "A woman may be knowing, active, witty, and amusing; but without propriety she cannot be

amiable" (*Strictures* 6). Women who engage in politics remove themselves out of their natural decorum and designed sphere. *Strictures*, like many other eighteenth-century conduct literature "always saw the domestic world as one that ought to be realized" (Armstrong 102). Through her teachings, More aimed to reproduce a woman who accepts and values her domestic role and distances herself from the political public life.

Beyond warning about the unpatriotic nature of foreign influence, More dictated that there are types of impractical education for women, such as learning how to paint, act, or engrave, that do not prepare women for their domestic roles. For young women of the middling classes in the early eighteenth century, mastering these skills was a mark of refinement: "Private girls' boarding schools or ladies' academies began to flourish in the early decades of the eighteenth century; here girls gained some general learning and were taught the "accomplishments"-- including dancing, music, singing, and drawing --that would confer social distinctions and improve their chances in the marriage market" (Lynch 180). These skills could also open up opportunities for women to practice their accomplishments in public as vocational training, which ran the risk of making women independent.

For More, these skills were no longer appropriate for women's domestic roles as mothers and wives towards the end of the century. These professions were more concerned with public accomplishment and amusement than with domesticity: "it does not seem to be the true end of education to make women of fashion dancers, singers, players, painters, actresses, sculptors, gilders, varnishers, engravers, and embroiderer" (*Strictures* 111). The importance of women's domestic role surpasses accomplishments pertinent to the public because More viewed these ornamental skills as a form of "woman's participation in public spectacle that injures her, for as an object of display, she always loses value as a subject" (Armstrong 85). More stated that when

searching for wives, men were concerned about their future wives' ability to maintain their domestic duties as mothers and wives, not as artists: "when a man of sense comes to marry, it is a companion whom he wants, and not an artist" (*Strictures* 112). More's interpretation of women's education apparently revolved around what men want, thus More's educational proposals served the interests of the patriarchal system. At times, More's teachings were less concerned with the development of women than with the benefit of their husbands.

Rather than spending their time and efforts in learning superficial skills, More argued that women should devote their time and efforts to useful purposes to benefit themselves and their families. Besides benefiting their loved ones, women who practice domestic chores were practicing moral values that suppressed their vanity and helped them strengthen their familial relations: "[T]he service of those to whom they are bound by every tender tie, would not only help to repress vanity, but by thus associating the idea of industry with that of filial affection, would promote, while it gratified, some of the best affections of the heart" (*Strictures* 119). Women's education emphasized their role as subservient wives to their husbands and dutiful mothers to their children. A woman's domestic role purposefully focused on preparing her to be someone "who can comfort and counsel [her husband] … one who can assist [her husband] in his affairs, lighten his cares, sooth his sorrows, strengthen his principles, and educate his children" (*Strictures* 112-13). These lines reveal More's efforts to valorize domestic woman through granting her moral authority in service to her husband and in raising his children.[20] This authority

[20] In highlighting the importance of domestic chores for women, More gave an example from ancient Roman culture in which women would make the garments of their husbands and fathers. She alludes to this division of domestic and public duties = when she writes that in the Roman tradition, "no citizen of note ever appeared in public in any garb but what was spun by his wife and daughter" (*Strictures* 119). Thus, women's presence in the public is symbolic and reflected in their fulfillment of their domestic chores for the service of their husbands.

certainly did not challenge the established gender norms, but safely adjusted women's situation while reinforcing the gender hierarchy and women's domesticity.

Elizabeth Montagu, the "Queen of the Blues," penned a letter that commends More's *Strictures* in stressing the importance of women's virtue and domesticity: "I have a most confident hope [Strictures] will be of great service. If our women lose their domestic virtues, all the charities will be dissolved... the men will be profligate, the public will be betrayed, and whatever has blessed or distinguished the English nation above our neighbours on the Continent, will disappear" (*Memoirs* 48). The two Bluestockings agreed that women's domestic duties outweighed their public accomplishments. Women's virtue and domesticity preserved the British nation and enhanced its perceived superiority to other nations. More's female audience was encouraged to utilize their knowledge domestically and use their "infinite" feminine power to preserve the British domestic ideals for the present and future generations.

More reinforced paternal hierarchy and thus objected to the ideals of the French Revolution through her emphasis on filial obedience. In renouncing the threats to domestic hierarchy, More castigated sons' and daughters' attempts to adopt a "spirit of independence, and disdain of control" (*Strictures* 172). She marked these attempts of independence as a "revolutionary spirit" plaguing society and explained to her readers that their obedience to their parents is drawn "on the high principle of obedience to Christ" (*Strictures* 143). For More, filial obedience is based on divinely ordained and natural hierarchy. Thus, More attacked emergent philosophies that posed an immediate threat to the domestic ideals in form of "rights."

Obviously, the idea of obtaining "rights" bothered More as she continuously resisted the teachings of Wollstonecraft. More wrote in detestation,

> The rights of man have been discussed, till we are somewhat wearied with the discussion. To these have been opposed with more presumption than prudence the rights of woman. It follows according to the natural progression of human things, that the next stage of that irradiation which our enlighteners are pouring in upon us as will produce grave descants on the rights of children, the rights of babies!" (*Strictures* 173)

Here, More referenced Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* and rejected its redefinition of class and gender power relations. Moreover, More sarcastically anticipated that the progress of Wollstonecraft's writings would seek to rework the order of domestic relations between parents and children of all ages.

This chapter on filial obedience in particular was commended by Dr. Charles Burney, who wrote to More: "[W]hat you say in your sixth chapter of 'filial obedience not being the character of the age,' is so true in these topsy turvy times, that it seems as much abolished in this country, as nobility and loyalty in France." Echoing More's parallels between the national and the domestic, he continued: "Parents are now afraid of their children—masters of their servants—and in state trials, judges of the prisoners. This whole chapter is an excellent sermon on the duty of parents as well as of children" (*Memoirs* 38). As conservatives, More and Burney clearly agreed on the necessity to maintain the existing social structure and the need to protect it from the threats produced by the French Revolution. When connecting the national realm to the familial realm, the French philosophy of self-emancipation from traditional systems of power directly jeopardized the hierarchy of relations. More and Burney saw that the stability of various hierarchical domestic relations were exposed to immediate danger that questioned the traditional order of relations and sought the Enlightenment ideal of "self-release."

As More's work was in allegiance with conservative gender roles, its reception was positive among people of high rank and the Bluestockings community. In a letter to More, the Bishop of Exeter reported that Queen Charlotte said "many things in commendation of the new

work" (*Memoirs* 120). Elizabeth Montagu also composed a letter to commend More's writings on women's education. The goal of educating young women and sharpening their talents was to obtain, Montagu noted, "the virtues that make domestic life happy" (*Memoirs* 47). Clearly, *Strictures*, like other examples of eighteenth-century conduct literature, "demonstrate[s] how a woman who sought to enhance her value through forms of self-display would significantly diminish her family's possibilities for happiness, but more than her restraint from such behavior was required in order for the ideal domestic situation to be realized. The simple absence of domestic virtue would eliminate that possibility" (Armstrong 89). Hence, the domestic realm sets boundaries for women's participation. This belief reflects the conservative stance of the Bluestockings discussed in the previous chapter, when they rejected excessive education and pedantry as inappropriate for their feminine selves (or rather, for other women). More, like other Bluestockings, campaigned for women's education that primarily helped with domestic management.

Not only did More's female audience find *Strictures* praiseworthy, but many prominent male readers also complimented her work. Men of position and power like Dr. Richard Watson, Thomas Robinson, and Charles Burney praised *Strictures* for its value for their daughters.[21] Dr. Watson thanked More for her "valuable present" and mentioned that he had "put it with great satisfaction into the hands of [his] daughters" (*Memoirs* 38). Robinson wrote that More's Strictures accomplished God's ends, aiming "his own purposes of mercy by your services" (*Memoirs* 41). Similarly, Burney praised More and compared her work with that of Samuel

[21] Dr. Richard Watson (1737-1816), Bishop of Llandaff and the author of *Thoughts on French Invasion* and *An Apology for the Bible* in rebuttal of Thomas Paine's writings. Thomas Robinson (1749–1813) was an Evangelical minister in Leicester from 1774 to 1813. He "was concerned about threats to unbalance the religious and political status quo" (Rimmington 105).

Johnson: “The subjects of your several chapters are admirably chosen, and treated with a force of sentiment and language which I have not seen equalled since the death of our great and pious moralist, Johnson” (*Memoirs* 38). Comparing More to Samuel Johnson is further proof that More’s definition of womanhood did not defy established gender norms. Despite the fact that More was trying to adjust women’s position in society with new forms of education, these adjustments functioned in favor of the patriarchal order and ensured its stability. In fact, the new patriarchal order would seem to require this kind of education.

More against Wollstonecraft

The philosophical outcomes of the French revolution were objects of both derision and desire among eighteenth-century British authors. Conservative Tory authors fought against the French Revolution and sought to maintain the existing social structures of gender and class, while Jacobin authors sought to question and rework these orders.[22] Whereas More embodied conservative values, her literary opponent Mary Wollstonecraft incarnated radical thinking. Thus, More’s embodiment of a conservative counterpublic, a female author existing in the world of letters, ultimately sided with the dominant public against the radical parties.

More objected to Wollstonecraft’s public literary activity that sought to directly rebut “natural” gender conventions and social hierarchy. Shortly after the publication of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, More proclaimed that she would not read it. In a letter to Horace Walpole in 1793, More expressed her agitation towards Wollstonecraft’s

[22] It can be argued that Hannah More was influenced by late seventeenth-century Tory feminists such as Aphra Behn and Mary Astell. Tory feminists’ attempts to advance the situation of women were "not born of liberal impulses but of conservative values. She preached not women's rights but women's duties, not personal fulfillment or self-expression but corporate responsibility, not a secular but a religious way of life" (Kinnaird 73).

objection to women's subordination. To refute Wollstonecraft's argument, More claimed that women are inherently "unstable and capricious"; therefore, instead of ruling, women ought to be ruled – "so many women are fond of government, I suppose, because they are not fit for it" – and added, "there is no animal so much indebted to subordination for its good behaviour as woman" (*Memoirs* 426-27). Subordination was an element of feminine propriety to which women should abide.

While Wollstonecraft called for liberty and equality, More rejected excessive liberty for women, and confessed that she had "more [liberty] than it was good for [her]" without divulging exactly why that was the case (*Memoirs* 427). For More, the rejection of *Vindication* stemmed from its attempt to apply unnatural characteristics to women. Similar to the earlier generation of Bluestockings, Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montagu, More resisted writings by Jacobin authors that sought to level women's situation with that of men. This outward rejection of the radicals' philosophy united the ethos of the Bluestockings with the dominant public.

In a similar vein, Horace Walpole corresponded with More to criticize Wollstonecraft for her proclivity to advocate for women's rights in education and commended More's refusal to read the book. Beside classifying Wollstonecraft as one of "the philosophizing serpents" among other Jacobin authors, Walpole mentioned Wollstonecraft in the plural form "Wollstonecrafts," suggesting that her *Vindication* had gained the approval of some readers who were poisoned by her opinions and became stigmatized as her followers. More described *Vindication* as a "metaphysical" work, and Walpole asserted that it was even beyond metaphysics and politics for its remarked deviation from the natural sense. In their correspondence, Walpole and More associated Thomas Paine with Wollstonecraft on the basis of their positive commentaries on the

French Revolution and for their advocacy for thorough change in Britain's political and social conditions.

Despite the opposite views of More and Wollstonecraft, some contemporary readers drew parallels between the two authors. Mary Berry, an eighteenth-century literary woman, saw a resemblance between More's and Wollstonecraft's writings on women's education. Soon after the publication of Strictures in 1799, Berry wrote,

> In the many hours I have spent alone this last week, I have been able, though by very little bits at a time, to go entirely through Hannah More, and Mrs. Woolstonecraft immediately after her. It is amazing, or rather it is not amazing, but impossible, they should do otherwise than agree on all the great points of female education. H. More will, I dare say, be very angry when she hears this, though I would lay a wager that she never read the book. (91-92)

Berry was aware of More's views on Wollstonecraft's radical thoughts, and amazed by the parallels between *Strictures* and *Vindication* that sought to moderately empower women by reworking their educational system. Although More's and Wollstonecraft's works appealed for educating women, their works advocated for different types of education and each of these works aimed to serve an opposite purpose. More's *Strictures* sought to moderately empower women in the domestic sphere, however this empowerment served to reinforce the patriarchy by subjugating women to their husbands and excluding them from the public life. On the other hand, Wollstonecraft sought to diminish gender hierarchy and called for public education for women. The positive reception of More's work in the dominant literary community demonstrates that More's appeals to reform women's educational system were not at all radical.

Throughout her book, More textually resisted Wollstonecraft's argument in *Vindication* by echoing the language of rights and condemning women's aspirations for power. In defense of her views, More stated that she was not "undervaluing her own sex" but instead she asserted her

objection to women's "imaginary rights" (*Strictures* 23). More acknowledged that improper education led women to deviate from their proper duties and from "the practice of domestic virtues" and that learned women did not seek power because they could discern that "there can be no happiness in any society where there is a perpetual struggle for power" (*Strictures* 14). Prudent women would have "accurate views" about the position that they were "born to fill" and they would readily acclimate themselves to that position, while "vulgar and ill-informed women," usually predisposed to be "tyrants," and would always "struggle most vehemently for power"; upon gaining power, they "would not fail to make the worst use" of it (*Strictures* 14). Hence, More warned her female readers against seeking power as she believed that "Each sex has its proper excellencies, which would be lost were they melted down into the common character by the fusion of the new philosophy" (*Strictures* 21). Obviously, More stood against Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in a continuation of conservative feminists' philosophy that considered gender differences to be unique and worth preserving.

More's attention was mainly directed to female readers, and as a woman moralist among few other women who rose to prominence in the world of letters, More had authority over other ordinary women. Eventually, More's instructions for women paved a path for More into that world of letters, placing her side by side with male authors. Since she did not pose a threat to the established order, More received enormous support from prominent men of letters. Her career itself, though, undermined that order. Through utilizing moral, religious, and national duties, More reminded her readers that the optimal status for the British nation was their status quo. Whether to preserve the British domestic ideals, to properly raise children, or to accept women's domestic duties and limited learning, More's instructions went hand in hand with the patriarchal

order. This order that allowed her to subvert gender expectations by stepping out of the domestic sphere only did so on the condition that she taught other women to continue in their subjugation.

Ironically, More herself did not adhere to the type of proper femininity that she proposed as a model for other women to follow. More and her Bluestocking friends formed a counterpublic by stepping out of conventional femininity and actively engaging in the world of letters. This counter position was accepted so long as it sought to maintain a separation between the masculine and the feminine. Dr. Randolph, a clerical friend of More's, commended More and condoned her departure from feminine gender roles: "Well, my dear friend, though I do not in general admire women in men's clothes, you have my full permission to wear them" (*Memoirs* 154). In his own words, More, unlike other women, was allowed to undermine proper femininity and even more to be intellectually considered as a man.

Montagu used a similar analogy, yet it was to condemn Catharine Macaulay's transgression of expected gender norms: "[Macaulay adopted] masculine opinions and masculine manners. I hate a woman's mind in men's cloaths.... I always look'd upon Mrs Macaulay as rather belonging to the lads... than as one of the gentle sex. Indeed, she was always a strange fellow" (Eger 104). Conversely, More's association with masculinity was not a condemnation but a piece of high praise because her writings served to protect the established social order. In championing More for endeavoring to save the British nation's ideals, Randolph continued, "God bless you and preserve you to us many years; we shall want, I fear, many like you, and your friends in Hampshire, to save us" (*Memoirs* 154). More's accomplishments in the world of letters granted her flexible gendered restrictions as she proved that she was not advocating for a threatening change in women's status. In theory, More's reformation projects fell within the

parameters of the established gendered order while in practice she undermined the conventional feminine boundaries.

Through her moralizing teachings, More exercised her authorial voice over ordinary women to make slight changes in their status. Although it can be argued that More sought to empower women in the domestic sphere, those attempts merely aimed to reproduce a form of subjugated women within the patriarchal order. This reinforcement of the older tradition of gender hierarchy aimed to resist the legacy of the French Revolution, which called gender and class hierarchies into question. While More supported empowering women within the domestic sphere to some degree, she simultaneously reinforced the notion of domestic patriarchy through employing women's little empowerment in the service of their male counterpart. Thus, as a member of a female counterpublic engaging in the world of letters, More was proposing acceptable challenges to the status quo. Her teachings safely modified the position of women within society, without defying the conventional gender discourse.

More's Moralizing Class

More's experience undermined the conventions she aimed to reinforce in her writing. During times of political turmoil, and specifically during the French Revolution, More and her acquaintances among the elite were frightened that the French experience, particularly the violence around class and gender hierarchy, would be reproduced in Great Britain. This fear led them to lend their ultimate efforts to the maintenance and protection of the current status of the state. Eventually, with relatively few pieces written in defense of the status quo compared with those supporting France, More broke from the feminine restrictions (that she herself advocated for) and began to write about political matters. Despite her position as a woman writer

representing a female counterpublic, much of More's literary contributions were geared towards maintaining the status quo of the British class order. In order to achieve this end, More directed many of her writings toward instructing the poor on moral, religious, and economic matters. So More, the conservative Bluestocking writer, was actually a prominent participant in political discussions that were meant to be exclusively masculine.

One relevant political discussions into which More interjected herself was that between Paine and Burke on the subject of the French Revolution. The two male authors were political thinkers who had a foundational disagreement regarding man's relation with the government. Thomas Paine published *The Rights of Man* (1791) in refutation to Edmund Burke's anti-French Revolution piece, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790). Burke argued that the French Revolution was the result of passion rather than reason, and therefore created an imbalance in the relationship between the individual and society. This imbalance favored the individual but was destructive to society as a whole. Burke advocated for moderate reforms to the existing political systems, whereas Paine saw in the French example an opportunity to redefine men's rights and relations within their society.

In *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and The Birth of Right and Left*, Yuval Levin reports Burke's recognition of the emerging political parties in Britain in conjunction with the French Revolution. Burke writes that the reactionary party are men who "consider the conservation in England of the ancient order of things, as necessary to preserve order everywhere else, and who regard the general conservation in other countries, as reciprocally necessary to preserve the same state of things" (Levin 199) In describing the opposing party, Burke writes, "the other party which demands great changes here, and is so pleased to see them every where else, which party I call Jacobin" (199). This observation marks

the distinction between the thinking of the conservative party supported by the Bluestockings and the progressive Jacobin party to which Paine, Wollstonecraft, and their supporters belonged. The discussion that began by questioning the hierarchy of public political power found its way to questioning the domestic hierarchy. Thus, gender tradition became one of the areas that the conservative party sought to protect from Jacobin influence.

In *The Rights of Man*, Paine spends a great deal of time responding to Burke's reflections. In his rejection of absolute and subjective power of government, Paine contends that the "government is governed by no principle whatever; that it can make evil good, or good evil, just as it pleases" (126). Succinctly, for Paine, "government is arbitrary power" that is distilled in one powerful individual. In resisting this type of despotic power, Paine stresses the significance of a democratic constitution that aims to protect every man's natural and civil rights. Paine further condemns the contemporary class system, writing that "Man has no property in man." He suggests instead that "men are all of one degree, and consequently that all men are born equal, and with equal natural rights" (49). Paine's bold views about the arbitrariness of power and the wrong paths of some Parliament members inspired a master plan for the new reform movement of the 1790s (Clayes 74). Paine saw that people were entitled to elect their own government, and the government was responsible for protecting people's choices and rights. This could only be achieved by a thorough revolution against the existing system.

The seriousness of the debates between Burke and Paine led More to subvert her own views of feminine propriety and intervene explicitly in politics to defend British hierarchy. More's "Village Politics, Addressed to all the Mechanics, Journeymen, and Labourers in Great Britain" (1792) is a fictional dialogue between two Englishmen, Jack and Tom, with opposing views towards the French Revolution. Under the pseudonym Will Chip, More opposed Paine's

ideas by discussing the French Revolution from a conservative standpoint. To further conceal her female identity, More did not send this piece to her usual publisher, Thomas Cadell, but instead to James Rivington, who distributed it by the thousands (Demers 111). Moreover, More's Bluestockings friends including Horace Walpole, Elizabeth Montagu, and Frances Boscawen, helped in distributing "Village Politics" by sending copies "far and wide" (Demers 112). Many of More's friends "Beauforts, Cremornes, Kennicotts, Montagus, Orfords, sent their thanks and congratulations" (112). The Bishop of London wrote to More that the poet Owen Cambridge thought even Jonathan Swift "could not have done it better. I am perfectly of that opinion. It is a masterpiece of its kind" (Hall 50). More's belief in the poor's tendency to be impacted by the new French ideals led her to engage in explicit politics for what she believed was the common good of her nation. In More's own words, this work was intended for the poor, or as More put it, "it is only designed for the most vulgar class of readers" (*Memoirs* 430).

In the voice of Jack, More emphasized the limitations and the irreversible harm that would inevitably occur to the English nation if they ventured to rework the status quo of class and redefine individuals' rights within their society. As Tom questioned power dynamics and wanted a new constitution that embraced equality, liberty and "the Rights of Man," Jack called Tom's attention to the drawbacks of such movements against their government. Tom, representing Paine's position, asserted that he wanted "freedom and happiness, the same as they got in France" (4). Jack responded, "What... we imitate them? We follow the French?" Jack denounced such a notion, using England's presumed superiority over the French to put down this claim (5). England, More argued through Jack, should be held up as the ideal. To illuminate English superiority, Jack sarcastically questioned Tom's hypothesis, saying, "why I'd sooner go to the Negers to get learning, or to the Turks to get religion, than to the French for freedom and

happiness" (5). Here, More expanded her illustration of British supposed superiority to other nations not only in politics but also in religion and education. More's belief in British superiority reveals xenophobic and racist aspects regarding African and Muslim nations, who were viewed as uneducated and irreligious, respectively.

In advancing her argument against Paine, More explained that hierarchical relations best served the nation's interests, whereas equality and absolute freedom were destructive to everyone. The argument to uphold hierarchical relations reflected More's beliefs regarding hierarchical gender relations in the domestic sphere. Jack explained that in France, "they are all so free, that there is nobody safe" (4). In other words, people's safety collapsed with the collapse of the French monarch who previously kept the state in order. To further demonstrate the severe conditions in France, Jack explained that even with the wrongdoings of the French monarchy, an unjust system is "better than none." After the French Revolution, it became impossible to keep unruly individuals from mistreating others; they became "free to rob whom they will, and kill whom they will" (4). Thus, More believed that non-hierarchical relations ruined society with their "nonsensical equality," while hierarchy granted weaker parties protection and safety. Consequently, social and political stratums benefit nations.

In explaining the necessity of ranking order, More connected the situation of political public affairs to that of familial domestic relations. To persuade Tom of the necessity of stratified society, Jack claimed that the relation between state and nation was just as sensical as the norm that a "woman is below her husband, and the children below their mother, and the servant below his master" (8). More argued that such positioning of relations benefits the lower in the hierarchical ladder more than it benefits the powerful because through this system the weaker is granted protection. The fear of potential political disorder led More to break out from her

feminine propriety and debate with Paine over political matters with the goal of calming the British mob. In doing so, More directly transgressed the established social order that associated women's writing with strictly domestic concerns.

By engaging with a male scholar on political topics, More was aware of her departure from the Bluestockings' ethos and her break from her feminine nature. In acknowledging this serious offense, More admitted to Bluestocking Frances Boscawen in 1793 that she wrote "Village Politics" while "in an evil hour, against my will and my judgement, on one sick day" (*Memoirs* 430). The severity of this transgression became more obvious when she mentioned that the Bishop of London "with dismal countenance" told her that she should "repent" this sinful act on her deathbed (*Memoirs* 430). This participation in masculine matters sickened More because she considered it "repugnant to my nature" (*Memoirs* 431). Despite feeling ashamed, More also saw her intervention as urgent for the good of her country. Thus, she resolved to circumvent gender boundaries by publishing anonymously. More justified this transgression by separating it from its political parameters, contending that her participation was "of peace rather than of politics" (430). Within the world of letters, More took part in the pamphlets' war and joined male writers to assure stability in her country. More believed that speeches asserting liberty were "poison [that] should not be doled out to the English" because they threatened the nation; therefore her intervention was urgent to provide "some corrective" pamphlets (413). Obviously, More made a deliberate direct choice to intervene in politics while still embracing the conservative view that women who engage in politics were, in More's words, "disgusting and unnatural." Thus, More embodied an apologetic position for taking up space out of her "natural" role as a female author who should be wholly concerned with writing for and about women.

While debating with a male scholar was a violation of gender norms, gender restrictions were more flexible when addressing the poor via religious and political teachings. In her persistent attempts to protect her country from the contagious concerns pertaining to class uprising against social hierarchy occurring in France, More wrote and supervised literary periodicals, *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-1798). The *Tracts* aimed to calm the poor classes from making potentially rebellious acts against the British social order that saw itself as under a potentially severe threat.[23] The tracts were called "Cheap" as their cost was in general "halfpenny or a penny, and will seldom exceed two-pence" and therefore were mainly addressed to the poor.[24] Performing her role as a woman moralist instructing the poor, More was able to shift her argument towards religion and away from politics.

Like More's other conservative pieces on gender propriety, the *Tracts* were widely distributed, as they were intended to protect the status quo in Britain. As More reported, her work received "no small support" and widened her personal network with "many of the wise and good in very remote parts of the kingdom" (*Memoirs* 434). The Bishop of London "turned his library at London House into a warehouse for the Tracts, some of which, 'he gives to every hawker that passes'" (Jones 141). Published on monthly basis, More's *Tracts* "sold three hundred thousand copies in less than two months and two million in the Repository's first year" (Demers 110). The *Tracts* were not only circulated locally; thousands were shipped to "America, circulated in the West Indies, Sierra Leone, and Asia, and even translated into Russian." More wrote in depicting her achievement as an extraordinary success of 'a female, and one, too, in

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[23] Over the course of three years, from 1795 to 1797, More superintended the production of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. More was an editor in chief for over 200 of these tracts and author for about fifty of them (Hole 621).

[24] McGill Library archives: https://archive.org/details/McGillLibrary-PN970_C52_no_A-1754/page/n7/mode/2up.

very delicate health,…[in] in defeating the most daring and open attack on religion that was ever made" (Demer 109-10). It is evident that More's works reached a wide audience whether disseminated for free or to a paying clientele.

More's political works demonstrate her attempts to calm the British masses and distance them from the possibly destructive impact of the French Revolution. More believed in the hierarchical divisions among classes and called on Providence to justify these stratifications. In one of the *Tracts*, More took a palpably political stance to maintain the social class structure in Britain. Aiming to abate conflicts and riots by the mob, More employed religion to condone class stratification within the British society, arguing that the suffering of the poor was called upon them by God. She reminded them that some kinds of distresses are better than others.

More used Christian doctrine as a foundation for her argument to persuade the poor of the virtues of their situation. In her *Tracts*, More attempted to alert the poor to vices associated with the "constant" and "common reward of industry," which would prevent people from looking beyond their present worldly status. The focus on "constant" rewards and worldly gains distracted people from upholding their "strong ground of faith" and caused them to neglect "the Scriptures scheme," which could result in overlooking the "day of final retribution" (4). More endeavored to comfort the poor in regards to their situation by reminding them that their lengthy suffering would lead to rewards in the afterlife. Here, More merged her moral and religious authority as a woman moralist with a political stance. In this case, More believed that she was not directly violating her ordained role; for this reason, there was no need for her to repent as she'd done with "Village Politics." Since More intended "Village Politics" to refute Paine's argument, that work represents her direct "unnatural" engagement with a prominent male scholar regarding political, masculine affairs. Of course, More's anonymous interaction with Paine

protected her from an inevitable association with authors like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft who openly defied the gender hierarchy. *Cheap Tracts*, on the other hand, were published periodically, and proudly, under More's name over the course of three years during which she addressed her social inferiors, the working poor.

In another effort to support the existing social order, some of More's writings suggested that prosperity lies in hard work, not in wealth. She directly addressed the poor and implied that their condition relied primarily on how they dealt with their circumstances. Her story "The Way to Plenty'" revolves around the experience of Tom White, a poor man who transformed himself from an "idle" to a "respectable farmer" by his hard labor. To diminish the significance of opulence, More wrote that Tom knew "a time of public prosperity was not always a time of public virtue; and he thought that what was true of a whole nation might be true of one man" (5). Virtue and prosperity are not always aligned, and prosperity and instant rewards limit one's attention to the present day. While prosperity is a sign that one is distant from God, "poverty and affliction" are marks of God's chosen people (5). Tom fears, therefore, that affluence would lead him astray, and "[prays] that prosperity might not corrupt his heart." On the other hand, in times of hardness, he was content knowing that circumstances would improve "in the long run," believing that "a little poverty might bring on a little penitence" (5). Striving to convince her readers of the graces and morality of their status, More directed their attention to the hereafter and the significant role of poverty in cleansing one's soul. Further, More drew comparisons between a man with low income who is prudent and has control over desires to a wealthier man who lacks those attributes. As More wrote, the poor man is "richer than a lord who was tormented by vanity and covetousness" (6-7). Idealizing poverty was a way to pacify the poor into accepting their conditions and remaining peaceful and focused on a better life to come. This

technique used Christianity in an effort to numb More's audience to the difficulties of their condition in hopes of protecting the social order from social uprising.

Another tactic More employed to redirect the poor's attention was suggesting that their conditions were a result of their own mismanagement of time. She depicted the poor as imprudent people who, rather than completing their obligations, preferred to observe religious holidays and commit the "sin of wasting time and getting drunk" (11-12). Tom pointed out that the poor's inability to "buy a bit of meat" was due to their dereliction. In a private letter, More stated that her intention in "The Way to Plenty" was to call the attention of the poor that "Their distresses arise nearly as much from their own bad management as from the hardness of the times" (343-45). Attributing the poor's austere conditions to their own mismanagement of time and money helped to ensure class stability.

In addition to its religious narratives, More's story attempted to portray the humanity and generosity of the upper-class. Business-owners and farmers made choices that benefited their people, believing that "charity begins at home." They resist the temptation to export their produce for "extravagant price" and instead resolve to selling their produce to "the neighbouring poor far below the market price" (19). Another instance of the rich's charity is when Tom prefers to help his people rather than his animals: "So he parted from a couple of spaniels he had; for he said he could not bear that his dogs should be eating the meat, or the milk which so many men, women, and children wanted" (18-19). Evidently, More aimed to decrease the poor's hostility towards upper-class members through depicting the latter's continuous compassion and charity. This favorable depiction of business-owners served to encourage acceptance and, therefore, a peaceful continuation of the existing social structure.

Through institutionalizing her teachings, More did want to educate the poor but in fact she used this education to diminish any possible revolutionary spirits. In 1789, More established Sunday Schools in Mendip villages to educate the poor. She believed that the working class were prone to the new French fashions of rebellion and self-liberation and thought one way of suppressing the poor's tendency to insurrection was to provide them with approved reading material. She wrote, "To teach the poor to read, without providing them with safe books, has always appeared to me a dangerous measure. This induced me to the laborious undertaking of The Cheap Repository Tracts, which had such great success, that above two millions were sold in one year, in the height of our domestic troubles" (*Mendip Annals* 6-7). Therefore, she resolved to teach the poor with "safe books," the very ones that she and her supporters wrote, to put down any potential revolutionary reaction from the poor against the oppression practiced on them. In a private letter to her friend Dr. Beadon, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, More stated that "[her] plan for instructing the poor" was "very limited and strict" (9). She wrote,

> they learn of week-days such coarse works as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing for the poor. My object is not to teach dogmas and opinions, but to form the lower classes to habits of industry and virtue. I know no way of teaching Christianity without a thorough knowledge of Scripture... To make good members of society (and this can only be done by making good Christians) has been my aim...Principles not opinions are what I labour to give them. (*Mendip Annals* 9)

Openly stating her intentions behind instructing the poor is very disturbing, but it is also revealing. More sought to limit her pupils' exposure to various thoughts by intellectually confining them to conservative and religious teachings. For her, the poor should not be empowered to an extent that would allow them to have their voices heard in the larger public conversation. Apparently, More's plans for educating the poor were not to enhance their living status but rather to ensure their endurance of their situation. This approach allowed More to

maintain social control and exercise "tutelage" over the poor. This is a crucial moments that reveals More's resistance to Kantian Enlightenment ideals. More's insistence on limiting the poor's writing ability was a way of limiting "self-emancipation" and the rational thinking that was encouraged by progressive Enlightenment thinkers. More's instruction of the poor solely concentrated on religious aspects – she taught "Testament Class" and "Psalter Class" – and when her pupils become tired, More entertained them by "singing a hymn." Her lesson plans essentially revolved around religion to "awaken their gratitude to their Redeemer" (*Mendip Annals* 9).

Besides religious instructions that would arouse gratitude in the minds of the poor, More believed that they should learn skills that would enable them to earn a living and refine their abilities. Demers reports, "[T]housands of children learned to read and count as well as knit, sew, and spin" in More's school (99). It is obvious that More succeeded in helping her pupils refine skills that promoted industry without allowing them to escape the constraints of their social class. She wished to purify their souls from vice and to prepare them for work fit for the poor. The ultimate purpose of her educational project was to make the poor receptive to her ideas and prepare them to comprehend her teachings without independently forming judgements or questioning the information provided. This approach hindered the poor from taking or forming positions but rather reassured their docility.

More and the Milkwoman Poet, Ann Yearsley

More's beliefs about the vices of the poor was also discernible in her conditional patronage of the milkwoman poet Ann Yearsley. More's support of class hierarchy is apparent in her literary productions that addressed the general poor as well as in her personal relations. Even

though her existence in the world of letters was an embodiment of a counterpublic, More still supported the dominant public that marginalized women and the poor. For example, a conflict between More and Ann Yearsley illuminates that More believed in the benefit of a class hierarchy that limits the power of the poor. The hierarchy of class and gender intersect in the story of Yearsley. Yearsley was a poor woman who was forced to marry a "silly" husband; she was responsible for six children and an elderly mother. More discovered Yearsley's talents in poetry through More's cook, whom Yearsley met while seeking "hogwash" to feed her pig. More was fascinated by Yearsley's lines and determined to patronize this newly discovered and poor "poetic genius." However, More's patronage of Yearsley was conditional and could not survive a break in the relationship. More sought to help Yearsley rise in the world of letters and profit from her own writing, yet More withheld financial independence from her protégée.

More's patronage of Yearsley was conditioned by maintaining her status as a dutiful woman and as a working-class poet. Financial prosperity, More believed, could corrupt Yearley's heart and distract her from her domestic duties. In a letter to Elizabeth Montagu, More reported that the milkwoman would not abandon her domestic chores to write poems: "She never allowed herself to look into a book till her work was done and her children asleep" (Lonsdale 392). Here, More assured Montagu that the milkwoman would not be distracted from her domestic service as a mother and wife, while More herself came to know the milk woman through a domestic servant who worked in More's home.

More and Montagu, therefore, did not fear that their patronage of Yearsley would disrupt the existing order, since Yearsley was clearly committed to her role as a wife and mother. Thus, in Yearsley's case, combining education with domestic chores was possible, particularly given that Yearsley proved that she could have a promising future as a poet. Montagu described

Yearsley's talent after reading her stanzas, writing, "Indeed, she is one of nature's miracles. What force of imagination!" (*Memoirs* 206). More also said that Yearsley's poems "breathed the genuine spirit of poetry and were rendered the more interesting by a certain natural and strong expression of misery, which seemed to fill the heart and mind of the author" (393). More and Montagu wanted Yearsley's genuine and compelling "expression of misery" to receive public attention, so they supported Yearsley in accessing the world of letters while simultaneously limiting that access. Supporting Yearsley was acceptable to them so long as she did not deviate from her status as a working-class woman who fulfilled her feminine role as a mother and wife.

More, with the help of Montagu, focused her efforts on controlling Yearsley's finances. The two Bluestockings assigned themselves trustees for the profit of Yearsley, to protect Yearsley from moral collapse and the innate vices of poverty. More and Montagu designed to give Yearsley some of her earnings and invest the rest on her behalf. Their rationale was to "put [the money] out of the husband's power to touch it" and to secure the children a stable financial life. This resulted in a scandalous quarrel between Yearsley and the two Bluestockings. As a patron with expertise, Montagu warned More about the negative outcomes of unguided patronage, writing:

> I speak not this out of an apprehension of merely wasting a few guineas, but lest I should do harm where I intend to confer benefit. It has sometimes happened to me, that, by an endeavour to encourage talents and cherish virtue, by driving from them the terrifying spectre of pale poverty, I have introduced a legion of little demons: vanity, luxury, idleness, and pride have entered the cottage the moment poverty vanished. However, I am sure despair is never a good counsellor, and I desire you to be so good as to tell her, that I entreat her, in any distress, to apply to me, and she may be assured of immediate assistance. (*Memoirs* 209)

After signing the agreement, More gave Montagu a detailed account of how the milkwoman's earnings would be managed. She wrote, "I paid near fourscore pounds all expenses; have lodged

£ 350 in the Five per Cents which will produce about £18 a year, and shall take her down about £20 to cloathe her family and furnish her house" (465). In specific amounts down to the pound, More decided how much money Yearsley could spend and on what she could spend it. More continued, "I have laid out the money in your name Madam and Mine, having first had an instrument drawn up by the Lawyer signed by Yearsley and his wife allowing us the controul of the money" (465). This contract was purposefully structured to put the money "out of the Husband's power to touch it." More and Montagu's refused to grant Yearsley control of her finances because they believed that the poet would submit to the dominance of the more powerful, her husband. More demonstrated her rooted faith in the established social order and the legitimate hierarchical power when she wrote to Montagu expressing her wishes to have Montagu control her own money: "I wished to have the honour of your name to sanction my own" (465). These words reveal More's sincere belief that the stratified social structure and its power relations were justifiable, ordained, and contributed to the benefit of the less powerful. Further, it was not only Yearsley's income in More's hands, but also the gifts (books) that More received on behalf of Yearsley. When Yearsley complained about not receiving the gifts sent to her, More explained that she intended to keep Yearsley's books only until Yearsley became able to "find a few second-hand shelves to place them on" (*Memoirs* 210). With this intense control that More practiced over Yearsley, More effectively dominated the milkwoman instead of empowering her.

Yearsley's side of the narrative illuminates that More justified social hierarchy because she saw the poor as an inherently corrupt class. Yearsley claimed that More pressured her for control over her money and explained that she naively submitted to More and Montagu's plans: "every circumstance was calculated to depress a mind naturally despairing." In moments of

“despair” Yearsley “signed this incomplete and unsatisfactory deed” (Yearsley, xxi). This submission did not last long, and Yearsley persistently asked to be granted access to her own money. Extremely upset about More’s unauthorized control over her funds, Yearsley went to More’s house to discuss the matter. This attitude by Yearsley drove More to suspect that Yearsley was drunk, to which Yearsley replied, “you are very wrong to think I have drank. I am only anxious on my children's account. Circumstances may change, ten or twenty years hence, when perhaps I am no more” (Yearsley, xxi). Asking for her rights to obtain her own earning drove More to believe that Yearsley was committing one of the poor’s vices: “drunkness.” More saw her authority over Yearsley as beyond question, and therefore, Yearsley’s objections to it made her seem a violator. Montagu shared similar views against economic and class mobility. As a result of this conflict, Yearsley lost the support of More and Montagu. However, she became able, after few publications under More’s patronage, to pursue her literary work, established a small circulation library, and apprenticed her son to an engraver (Clarke 181).

Overall, Montagu and More’s attitude towards Yearsley’s situation was a restatement of their commitment to the established social order that marginalizes the poor. This position towards the marginalized enhanced the Bluestockings’ status as a conservative counterpublic because they were assisted and protected by the privileged and the dominant. It is worthy to note that at the time of conflict with Yearsley, “Hannah More had been, and still was, much closer to the poverty end of the spectrum than she was to the wealth Elizabeth Montagu lay lapped in. If she hadn't grown up poor she had at least known what it was like to have 'more desires than guineas.' Her life pattern had been defined by upward social mobility” (Clarke 175). Once again, More saw herself an exception and therefore earnest in climbing up the social ranks. In her own

case, More did not consider rising above the social status to which she had been born a defiance of the natural and divine orders.

More's severe guardianship over Yearsley can be read as an attempt to elevate her own status as woman writer and a patron among people in the world of letters. Clarke attributes More's involvement in patronage and philanthropy to a desire not only to assist the less powerful but also to call attention to More's own elevated position in the literary field: "Becoming a patron, like building a house – which Hannah More had also done for herself in the 1780s – was a sign of maturity in the profession" (172). Hence, patronizing the milkwoman was beneficial to More as an enhancing factor to her status among her peers in the world of literature. The benefit was mutual between the patron and protégé. While More opened up opportunities for Yearsley to grow literarily, More was taking the opportunity to place herself among prominent names in the field who were also patrons like David Garrick, who patronized More in her early years, or the wealthy Montagu. More stated what she hoped for her protégée, writing, "for it is not fame, but bread, which I am anxious to secure her" (175). Clarke astutely comments on those lines of More's, writing, "What 'fame' actually meant--for Hannah More, for Ann Yearsley -- was some access to the lives lived by those in the privileged classes... Fame was more of a threat to the order of society than was the charitable provision of bread" (175). More wanted Yearsley to remain within the constraints of poverty and in a station that would not place her among the powerful in the world of letters. More definitely wanted for the milkwoman to secure her living, but without rising above her intersected marginalization as a woman and a poor. For More,

Yearsley meant to remain the object of charity rather than an equal subject via upward social mobility or revolutionary political change.[25]

More used double standards in her preaching to the poor and her relationship with Yearsley. In the *Tracts*, More stressed that the poor are God's chosen people and their poverty purified their souls. She also preached that patience during hard times would be followed with rewards and prosperity. But when prosperity was approaching for the milkwomen, More exerted her power to hinder the milkwoman from affluence that may corrupt Yearsley's soul. When it came to the established order of gender and class in Britain, More's writings prove her to have been a relentless defender of these conservative orders. More has always been described as a reformist female author; however, the types of reformations she advocated were restricted to the benefit of the established authority of gender and class. Falling under a particular gender or class category, for More, was a way of determining the power relations among all individuals. As illustrated in More's literary activity and patronage, the poor should accept the absence of their voices from public discussions. While they accept their own subordination, the poor can have little adjustments to their situation as she saw fit. Those adjustments should not interfere with the existing hierarchy and should not allow subaltern groups to rise above the station to which they were born. On some occasions, More saw the poor as morally purer than aristocrats and the gentry classes, as the poor were God's chosen people for enduring the hardships of poverty. But,

[25] More's beliefs about disempowering the poor were not only relevant to suppressing their voices in public. They extended to restricting their financial empowerment. In "Piety and Patriotism," Ford discusses More's views in opposing the tipping of domestic servants: "More predicted that scrapping of disruptive traditions within genteel households would buttress national identity as well as social hierarchy" (100). Beside resisting the deconstruction of domestic and social hierarchy, More rejected the French influence of independence in all ways and forms.

when this purity interfered with the established authority over them, More, Montagu, and other conservative authors stigmatized the poor as morally corruptible.

More and Slavery

Whereas More embodied a conservative position in her beliefs relevant to gender and class, she embodied a visible progressive counterpublic position in her campaign to abolish slavery. Again, More defied her own teachings that stigmatized "female politicians" as "disgusting" and "unnatural." Whereas More's instructive writings on gender and class primarily focused on morality and religiosity, her discussion of slavery was more explicitly political. As a woman, she knew that she was unable to vote. Yet she also recognized that as a woman writer, she could influence the decisions of her male readers and thereby influence the vote. By linking the practice of slavery with irreligiosity, More used religion as a tool to attack the slave trade while similar religious appeals were used to reinforce gender and class hierarchy. For More, slavery was un-Christian and she believed that "White and Black people were equally created by God" (Hole 620). More sought to use her role as a domestic woman writer to enact change. More's treatment of the issue of slavery allowed her to enter the political public scene as a woman moralist who sought to impact men's political decisions. By doing so, More was clearly constructing "a conflictual relation to the dominant public" (Warner 118): the power structure that operates and profits from the slave-trade.

Through her diaries, published writings, and private correspondence, it is clear that More actively discussed and entirely opposed the African slave trade. This freedom to express her views in part stemmed from her established connections with prominent male authors, politicians, and religious figureheads. In her diaries, More recounts an argument with Scottish

judge Lord Monboddo that occurred over breakfast in 1782: "We then resumed our old quarrel about the slave-trade: he loves slavery upon principle. I asked him how he could vindicate such an enormity" (*Memoirs* 147). Private conversations like this one reveal that More regarded slavery as an atrocity against humanity. In letter to Walpole in 1788, More mourned that "slavery is vindicated in print, and defended in the House of Peers!" She laments "Poor human reason" and questions when people will "come to years of discretion?" (*Memoirs* 293). More's diaries from 1794 also reveal her belief in liberty and humanity when it came to the matter of slavery. She prayed for a bill to pass the Parliament: "my dear friend Wilberforce carried one clause of the slave bill. Lord! hasten the time when true liberty, light, and knowledge shall be diffused over the whole earth" (*Memoirs* 450). Her voice was not limited to her diaries and private conversations with her close friends. Rather, it extended to seeking to have a direct influence on decisions made by explicit political institutions.

While these discussions were kept in her private correspondence, More believed that her poetry could have an influence on people of weight and distinction in the political scene.[26] In a letter to her sister, More expressed her apprehension about the timing of her poem's publication, because if "it does not come out at the particular moment when the discussion comes on in Parliament, it will not be worth a straw" (*Memoirs* 282). More's eagerness to publish her poem on time demonstrates her sincere efforts to make a change in the political realm for the good of

[26] More befriended William Wilberforce, a member of the Parliament and a leader in abolitionist movements. Unlike Johnson, who opposed More's anti-slavery views, Wilberforce shared with More interests relevant to abolition campaigns and social reformation, a commonality that eventually evolved their relationship into a close friendship and activism. Like More, who took responsibility to reform her society, Wilberforce believed that "God has set before[him] as my object the reformation of [his country's] manners" (Jones 103). Together, More and Wilberforce saw themselves as responsible for the reformation of their society. In support of anti-slavery trade campaigns, More was asked to write a poem that condemned slavery: "In January of 1788, abolitionists asked her to scribble a short poem to influence parliamentarians weighing Wilberforce's resolutions on the slave trade" (Ford 85).

the public on behalf of those excluded from the sphere. Repeatedly, More expressed her dissatisfaction for writing the poem in haste and not having the chance to refine it because in this particular case “time is every thing” (282). More did not see her participation in this manner and about this public and political topic as a transgression from feminine propriety. Having connections with people of authority permitted More to engage in larger political conversations. Explicitly and deliberately, More intervened in the masculine political realm with a recognition of her writings’ influence on the prevailing discourse and on the political public opinion, and more specifically, on decision makers.

The resulting poem, written in support of William Wilberforce’s anti-slavery campaign, appealed to her readers’ Christian virtues, British values, and sense of humanity. More actively reminded her audience that acts of slavery oppose Christian teachings. More’s standpoint against slavery stemmed from her Christian beliefs of virtue and liberty of all human beings (Ford 85). More openly excluded slave-traders from being Christian or followers of the Christian faith: “Savage! thy venial error I deplore, / They are not Christians who infest thy shore” (lines 187-88). This line illustrates that the exclusion of slave-owners from Christianity was due to their unmerciful actions. In the late eighteenth century, “savage” was a word applied to Africans broadly and which justified their capture and sale into slavery. Patrick Brantlinger contends that eighteenth-century abolitionists often drew on the image of the savage: "Abolitionist portrayals of Africans as perhaps noble but also innocent or ‘simple’ savages were patronizing and unintentionally derogatory. Nevertheless, the portrayals of Africans between 1800 and the 1830s were often both positive and open-minded than those of later years” (170). Thus, even though More uses the term “savage” to describe enslaved people, she strips the enslaved from any agency by focusing in the poem on the religious status of white slave traders and the actions they

would need to take in order to receive redemption. More defended the humanity of the enslaved individuals; however, she depicted them as "unproblematized, unvoiced, unthinking, unnamed, victims at the mercy of unchristian British cut-throats" (Ferguson 4). Although More may have seen slavery as a moral evil, she did not believe in racial equality. More's attention was solely given to the white slave-traders. The lines continue to illuminate that slave-owners did not adhere to true Christian teachings, "For he has learned to dread the Christian's trust; / To him what mercy can that God display, / Whose servants murder, and whose sons betray?" (lines 184-86). Moreover, the speaker poses a rhetorical question: how can a Black person trust Christianity and view it as a religion of liberty and mercy if Christians continue to commit atrocities?

In appealing to the readers' true "British feelings," the speaker suggests that those who truly embrace the British values cannot condone slavery. More criticized the double standards of British slave-owners who simultaneously advocated for slave-trade and individuals' freedom. The speaker asks rhetorically whether Britain should commit a moral evil that the country itself condemns: "Shall Britain, where the soul of Freedom reigns, / Forge chains for others she herself disdains?" (lines 251-52). This was a cautious criticism of the dominant public by showing that "true" Britishness would not commit such atrocities. For More, the dominant public in this case failed to live up to British moral standards and therefore she could criticize it.

Also, the poem drew attention to the brutality of slavery by depicting the harsh lives of the enslaved. This poem was addressed to More's pro-slavery readers in an attempt to elicit sympathy and make her audience reconsider their position towards slavery. More employed harsh language criticizing the inhumane treatment of enslaved individuals and their families. Further, the poem has an interesting reference to Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko; or, A Royal Slave*. While *Oroonoko* was largely founded on class morality, More's argument is based on religion

and shared humanity. Although More did not emphasize class morality, she frequently echoed Behn's depictions of the enslaved Africans emphasizing their humanness to eliminate otherness and decrease the gap between the humanity of the slave-owners and the enslaved. More drew parallels between all slaves and Oroonoko writing, "For millions feel what Oroonoko felt," and arguing that they were not enslaved in war circumstances or under legitimate reasons, but instead they were, like Oroonoko, "Fired by no single wrongs" as they were "dragg'd from Afric's coast" (lines 54-58). In demonstrating the dark side and the inhumanity of the slavery institution, the speaker described the miserable situation of slavery against groups of people who "weep together or together die."

The poem contended that Africans' humanity was not inferior to that of Europeans, nor the depth of their patriotic feelings. When addressing the British people's love for their land, More argued that the African people obtain similar patriotic emotions: "As dear his land to him as yours to you." More condemned the British intolerance of others and the narrow mentality of the "illiberal thought" and "the proud philosophy" that derided and humiliated "the sable race." The poem repeatedly renounced enslavement that is based on skin color as skin color should not be a determining factor of one's humanity. "What! does the immortal principle within / Change with the casual colour of a skin?" (lines 64-65). For More, it is one's human essence and not the color of complexion that determines their humanness. The poem also questioned why the British have a joyful life and live in "full blaze of light" while the sad African lies "quenched in total night?" More heavily relied on using the language of shared humanity through comparing the Africans' lives to those of the British, that is, to argue that racial differences do not entail hierarchical order. Besides having the same bodily features and emotions, Africans have similar mental abilities and family bonds:

they have heads to think, and hearts to feel,
And souls to act, with firm, though erring zeal;
For they have keen affections, soft desires,
Love strong as death, and active patriot fires:
All the rude energy, the fervid flame
Of high-souled passion, and ingenuous shame:
Strong, but luxuriant virtues, boldly shoot
From the wild vigour of a savage root.
Nor weak their sense of honour's proud control (lines 67-75)

More scantily incorporated the language of rights and equality that was frequently used in the writings of radical authors such as Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. The poem was entirely based on discussing Christian virtues, British values, and on depicting shared humanity with the enslaved Africans. However, the term "right" was mentioned only one time in the entire 295 lines poem. In glorifying abolition, the speaker wondered when the enslaved individuals' rights would be retrieved: "What page of human annals can record? / A deed so bright as human rights restor'd?" More employed her language to appeal to her audience's passion more than reason. Robert Hole attributes More's avoidance of the language of rights to her attempts to dissociate herself from Jacobin writers: More sought to "define the human rights to liberty in such a way that distinguished the anti-slavery movement from the Jacobin demands for the rights of the poor and dispossessed in Britain... [More] made an immediate emotional appeal to the hearts of her readers and kept her distance from abstract, theoretical argument" (620). Although in her discussion of slavery More embodied a liberal and progressive attitude, she relied on a language of passion to call for the freedom and liberty without directly siding with Jacobin authors. By relying on the language of passion more than the language of reason, More moderately challenged the dominant public without radically opposing it.

In publishing this poem, More explicitly violated the boundaries she set for other women to follow. Not only did she publish it under her own name, but she also hoped to influence

political decision-makers by doing so, demonstrating that the gendered boundaries surrounding the world of letters could be manipulated when she believed necessary. Proudly informing her sister about publishing the poem, More wrote that this poem would come out in an "open, honourable manner, with my name staring in the front" (*Memoirs* 281). Certainly, More was not embodying the model of a domestic woman writer. Instead, More used gendered boundaries in the world of letters as rhetorical limits that could be manipulated when needed. While More was mortified when she responded to Paine, she was proud of engaging in other forms of politics where she merged humanity with politics to justify her intervention. Explicitly and deliberately, More intervened in the masculine political realm with full recognition of her writings' influence on the political public opinion, and more specifically, on people of weight and distinction.

According to More, the institution of slavery was an evil and manmade system of oppression. Slavery was constructed and therefore could be changed; on the other hand, gender and class were natural, and therefore, should not be subject to question or criticism or change. More was a conservative writer when it came to gender and class. She saw the social system that marginalized women and the poor as natural and ordained, therefore, her reformation plans sought to protect that social order. On the contrary, enslavement is an action taken against people of a particular race based on supposed superiority without natural or divine grounds. This distinction between the issue of slavery against that of gender and class reveals the unusual liberating tendency in More's writing. For More, the concept of slavery was a form of unjust hierarchy and therefore she entirely condemned it and fought against it.

Publicly embodying this careful attitude renders More, and the Bluestockings in general, a form of a counterpublic that was unable to directly challenge the conservative convention of gender and class, and in fact ended up defending it. The Bluestockings community was a

counterpublic that benefited from its good relation with the dominant public and maintains this relation by proposing moderate changes to the status of women and the poor that still left them subordinated. In either of these situations, the Bluestockings community was a conservative counterpublic embodying the marginalized while supporting the powerful. Samuel Johnson's prediction that the Bluestockings "will never openly handle a weapon or in any way defy 'masculine tyranny'" proved itself true (Todd 125).

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The Habermasian public sphere was at its heart optimistic: the social discourse and free exchange of ideas and debate allowed its participants to arrive at rational consensus. Habermas's model of the public sphere "sought agreement and enlightenment through the rational –critical public debate of private persons with one another" (43). This model was influenced by the Kantian notion of Enlightenment that sought to "emancipate" individuals from their "self-incurred immaturity" by the development of reason. This is evidenced by the ability to discuss written works and debate or question the existing social order, and was aided by the rise of print culture that allowed people to read and reflect on themselves as unique subjects. The Bluestockings, as I have argued, participated in this rational public sphere, albeit as a counterpublic conscious of their position as subjects marginalized by gender.

Tracing the emergence and decline of the Bluestockings community in tandem with the French Revolution, which threatened the British political and social order, reveals the limitations of a conservative counterpublic: when the interests of the dominant public are existential, the conservative counterpublic (that is, one that seeks to effect moderate changes within the status quo) will ultimately argue for its own dissolution. The French Revolution incited fear within British society, compelling the aristocracy and cultural elites to imagine a replication of this revolution and a reordering of their own society. In this environment, the Bluestockings moderated their voices as a counterpublic, choosing to adhere to conservative views against new French philosophes and liberal tendencies of thought, rather than challenging the existing social order. Thus, in response to the French Revolution, the Bluestockings ceased questioning

traditional ways of thinking about gender hierarchy and instead began to reinforce and justify the status quo that marginalized women and the poor.

Hence, the threats of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror mark a shift in the Bluestockings' attitude, which can be understood through Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's concept of the Dialectic of Enlightenment. By this phrase they mean that reason can be a double-edged sword able to emancipate human beings as well as dominate them. Adorno and Horkheimer contend that the use of reason, that ideal of the Enlightenment, assumes that humans should enact their own thinking and judgment on the world around them. This emergence of human freedom contributes to the growth of the individual who is a rational being. Over time, however, reason can become what Horkheimer and Adorno term "instrumental," such that it is used to rationalize systems of oppression. Adorno and Horkheimer contend that "What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings" (2). In other words, rather than liberating society, reason becomes a means of domination.

This is analogous to the Bluestockings' reaction to the French Revolution. The Bluestockings relied on the technological advancement of print to distribute their reactionary agendas and ensure stability of the class and gender hierarchies. Through their active writings that support and justify the hierarchy of relations, the Bluestockings aimed to enforce hierarchical forms of domination. As I have shown in Chapter Six, Hannah More published *Strictures* and *The Tracts*, which advocated for existing, hierarchical social structures; the Bluestockings helped in distributing them to keep the poor in their subordinate status. Thus, the Bluestockings aimed to rationalize hierarchical forms of domination. By following that pattern, the Bluestockings "instead of entering into a truly human condition, [sank] into a new kind of

barbarism" (Adorno and Horkheimer xiv). That is to say, the Bluestockings utilized their intellectual powers to ensure the stability of the status quo. More employed instrumental reason so that different forms of domination (e.g., patriarchal, class, racial) appear rational and natural, and therefore eternal. This helped More to justify excluding women and the poor from larger political and social conversations. Thus, the Bluestockings' use of rationality in light of the French Revolution served to perpetuate forms of power to manipulate and subjugate subaltern groups.

Specifically, More justifies her support of the status quo by arguing that hierarchical relations grant "protection" to those who occupy lower statuses on the social ladder. For instance, during the French Revolution, when the Bluestockings viewed Kant's notion of self-release as a threat to British social order, the Bluestockings argued that confining women to domestic life protected them from being exposed to the dangers of political public life. Further, limited exposure to knowledge protects the poor from being plagued by "contagious" and "foreign" ideas coming from the French. Such use of reasoning is a method "of exploitation of the labor of others" because such social and intellectual confinement renders the less powerful manipulated and exploited (Adorno and Horkheimer 2). Hence, the last phase of the Bluestockings' literary activity demonstrates that the Bluestocking writers adopted a dark side of reason by reinforcing and justifying domination over subaltern groups, women and the poor in particular. Although the Bluestockings proposed plans to educate women and the poor, they were in fact manipulating their cultural authority as women writers to serve the established order by refusing to question masculine supremacy and class superiority. They embodied implicit contradictions within Enlightenment ideas of gender and class. What began as an attempt to revise gender roles became a full endorsement of the continuation of oppression.

Modern scholars who associate the Bluestockings solely with the Kantian and Habermasian ideas of Enlightenment run the risk of ignoring the highly politically conservative thrust to their writings during and after the French Revolution. For instance, Deborah Heller associates the Bluestockings with the progressive ideals of Enlightenment by describing them as "innovative agents" and "fashioners of Enlightenment" (154). Elizabeth Eger also contends that the Bluestockings' history "offers invaluable insight into the 'feminist' dimension of Enlightenment" as these women writers were able to participate and flourish in the world of letters (28). These associations hold truth to some extent, as I have shown in Chapters Four and Five, when the Bluestockings attempted to expand the options for women to participate in the literary public sphere. However, by the late stages of the Bluestockings' literary activity, they appear to have been arguing from within the boundaries of the status quo and against their own rights as subaltern subjects. In other words, they exerted their efforts and reasoning powers to naturalize and rationalize the inferiority of subaltern groups—including women—within society. The recent scholarship that presents the Bluestockings as an "apolitical" group of women who associated themselves with "womanhood" and the domestic sphere and distanced themselves from the political sphere ignores the choice they made to defend patriarchal ideals in the wake of the French Revolution. That is in itself a political decision.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Bluestockings have ironically become associated with even more radically progressive agendas. This association is intriguing given that the Bluestockings rejected political radicalism and stigmatized men and women who championed the French Revolution. Despite their conservatism, "Bluestocking" has become a moniker for feminist and progressive movements. For example, *The Japanese Bluestockings Society* was a twentieth-century magazine focused on writings by and about women and their

rights, and which led to a feminist movement in Japan. Likewise, the Bluestockings Bookstore in Manhattan, New York, primarily provides feminist, radical, and racialized books and materials that represent marginalized communities.

In addition to these print examples, the Bluestockings' influence has reached digital platforms. There are a number of podcast channels that use the term *Bluestocking* – such as "Bluestocking," "The Desi Bluestocking," and "The Bluestockings Circle Podcast" – that are organized by women and are interested in discussing contemporary literature, promoting self-education, and circulating discourse between podcast organizers and subscribers. This illustrates that the Bluestockings' identity as a conservative female counterpublic that chose to prioritize British national stability over their own progressive rights and agendas did not preclude them from being an influential community that established a new type of self-understanding among the marginalized.

Thus, the Bluestockings' activities as a counterpublic in the world of letters helped to show how marginalized subjects can use the little power they have to navigate their own subjugation within oppressive forms of power. Even if they had to react against their own emancipation in response to the Reign of Terror, their resonance remains transnational, helping marginalized individuals to recognize their position within hierarchal orders and navigate ways to expand the boundaries that place limits on them. The Bluestockings' presence in the eighteenth-century world of letters, along with their legacy for the generations to follow, renders their position more complicated than it appears on the surface. They were conservative women who moderately challenged the system that marginalized them and later defended that same system against the influence of the French Revolution.

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