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# Reading the british didactic novel (1778-1814) : a corpus and reception study

Juliette Misset

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**Juliette Misset**

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**Reading the British Didactic Novel (1778-1814) :  
A Corpus and Reception Study**

**THÈSE DIRIGÉE PAR :**

**Mme Bandry-Scubbi Anne** Professeure des Universités, Université de Strasbourg

**RAPPORTEURS :**

**Mme Rouhette Anne** Maîtresse de conférences HDR, Université Clermont-Auvergne

**M. Viviès Jean** Professeur des Universités, Aix-Marseille Université

---

**AUTRES MEMBRES DU JURY :**

**M. Kerhervé Alain** Professeur des Universités, Université de Bretagne Occidentale

**M. McInnes Andrew** Reader in Romanticisms, Edge Hill University

*À mes grands-pères.*

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All online appendices may be found here: <https://seafire.unistra.fr/d/96fda80c31904d62943a/>

All other appendices have been compiled in a separate volume.

## General Introduction

The great author of the drama of life has not finished his piece; but the author must finish his; and vice must be punished and virtue rewarded in the compass of a few volumes; and it is a fault in *his* composition if every circumstance does not answer the reasonable expectations of the reader. (Barbauld 55-56, author's emphasis)

In the introductory essay to her seminal anthology of British novels, Anna Laetitia Barbauld underlines the importance, and even the necessity, of novels having a clear moral framework in the late eighteenth century. Aside from stressing the centrality of moral import to works of narrative fiction, Barbauld points to the complex power dynamics between author and reader, which was of growing concern at a time when the book market and the professionalization of the author had replaced the earlier model based on aristocratic patronage (Gomille 144). Barbauld explicitly compares the author to God at the beginning of the quotation, acknowledging the difference between conceiving life on Earth and on the page, but also implying a common creative omnipotence. However, this claim to power is immediately mitigated by the assertion that the author is in effect beholden to the reader's expectations, stripping away his or her supremacy. Unnamed readers are here granted the ability to declare a piece of writing faulty if it does not meet with their "reasonable expectations," which induces a need for the author to meet these, including in moral terms. In this comment, Barbauld underscores the importance of morality and reception in the discourse around narrative fiction in the period, two concepts which largely inform the work presented in this dissertation.

### I. Defining Moral Didacticism

Moral didacticism refers in essence to "the fact of having instruction or teaching as a primary or ulterior purpose" centered on morality.<sup>1</sup> This apparently straightforward definition must however be refined with independent discussions of the terms "moral" and "didactic," before they may be combined and placed in the context of late-eighteenth-century British fiction.

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<sup>1</sup> "didacticism, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2021, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/52345](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/52345). Accessed 17 January 2022.

## 1. Definitions

The *OED* defines morality as "moral virtue; behavior conforming to moral law or accepted moral standards, esp. in relation to sexual matters; personal qualities judged to be good," "moral discourse or instruction; a moral lesson or exhortation. Also: the action or an act of moralizing," as well as "the branch of knowledge concerned with right and wrong conduct, duty, responsibility, etc.; moral philosophy, ethics."<sup>2</sup> These definitions highlight the dual nature of the term morality, concerned both with actions that follow a prescriptive set of norms or values and with reflections on what that prescriptive set of norms or values should be. The noun "moral" is defined as "a moral maxim or practical lesson to be drawn from a story, event, etc." or "an exposition of the moral teaching or practical lesson contained in a literary work; that part of a work which expounds or contains the moral meaning."<sup>3</sup> Finally, the definitions of the adjective "moral" include "of or relating to human character or behaviour considered as good or bad; of or relating to the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions, desires, or character of responsible human beings; ethical" and "of a literary work, an artistic or dramatic representation, etc.: dealing with the rightness and wrongness of conduct; intended to teach morality or convey a moral; (hence also) having a beneficial moral effect, edifying."<sup>4</sup> All of these definitions include examples from texts published at the turn of the nineteenth century, establishing the relevance of the definitions in the context of my work. Indeed, in his *Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson links morality to virtue and ethics, defining "moral, adj." as "1. Relating to the practice of men towards each other, as it may be virtuous or criminal; good or bad," and "morality" as "1. The doctrine of the duties of life; ethicks."<sup>5</sup> He also mentions the link with

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2 "morality, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122093](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122093). Accessed 12 March 2020.

3 "moral, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122085](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122085). Accessed 12 March 2020.

4 "moral, adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122086](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122086). Accessed 12 March 2020.

5 "moral, adj." *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson*. Edited by Brandi Besalke. Last modified: June 14, 2017. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/moral>. Accessed 12 March 2020.

"morality, n. f." *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson*. Edited by Brandi Besalke. Last modified: June 14, 2017. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/morality>. Accessed 12 March 2020.

fiction in "moral, n. f.," defined as "2. The doctrine inculcated by a fiction," showing the importance of the concept in eighteenth-century thought.<sup>6</sup>

The terms "morality," "virtue," and "ethics" remain entwined today, and the extent to which they overlap is a matter of scholarly debate. "Virtue" has been defined as "a trait of character that is to be admired: one rendering its possessor better, either morally, or intellectually, or in the conduct of specific affairs," suggesting that what is virtuous does not necessarily have to do with what is specifically moral (Blackburn 383). It is pointed out in the same work that although one's morality and one's ethics "amount to the same thing," the former is traditionally associated with systems "such as that of Kant's, based on notions such as duty, obligation, and principles of conduct," while the latter tends to refer to "the more Aristotelian approach to practical reasoning, based on the notion of virtue" (241). "Ethics" is in turn defined as "the study of the concepts involved in practical reasoning; good, right, duty, obligation, virtue, freedom, rationality, choice" (121). The distinction between the two notions is not obvious, and remains contentious (241). Nevertheless, the notion of "system" connected to morality as a philosophical concept underlines its prescriptive component, from which "ethics" appears farther removed.

The concept of morality is inherently linked to that of didacticism, as seen in one of the definitions of "moral, n.": "a moral maxim or practical *lesson* to be drawn from a story" (my emphasis).<sup>7</sup> And much like morality, the notions of teaching and learning bear interrogating. As Gert Biesta points out, the "learning paradox" goes back to Plato and Socrates, with the idea that learning is akin to a recollection, and the teacher's role is to bring out what is already there, as opposed to conveying new information from an outside source (452). The question of what it means to teach and how to do it is central to educational

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6 "moral, n. f." *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson*. Edited by Brandi Besalke. Last modified: June 14, 2017. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/moral>. Accessed 12 March 2020. Johnson's *Rambler* 4, where he famously discusses the importance of works of fiction emphasizing and encouraging virtue, is discussed in the following section.

According to Trevor Ross, craft, innovation, and morality were the main criteria for literary greatness for Johnson. Indeed, Ross claims that "literature had a moral value for Johnson, and ideally a moral intentionality as well" (280), which is reflected in the reviews and the novels of both the didactic and the reference corpus in my study. In *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, Jane Spencer also reminds us that "the moral utility of literature was an all-pervasive concern of eighteenth-century critics," including for male novelists (77).

7 "moral, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2021, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/122085](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122085). Accessed 18 January 2022.

philosophy and research, and is a matter of great debate. Biesta contends that the experience of being taught should be transformative for learners, not merely an exercise in adding new information "within their own circle of understanding, within their own construction," but being shown or made to realize something that was previously completely external to one's being, providing "insights about ourselves and our ways of doing and being; insights that we were not aware of or rather did not want to be aware of" (457).

The *OED* definitions of "didactic" do not seem to imply such transformative experience—though neither do they negate the possibility. When qualifying a teaching method, "didactic" describes "convey[ing] knowledge or information by formal means such as lectures and textbooks, rote learning, etc." While specific teaching methods such as lectures and rote learning are not intrinsically positive or negative "in terms of potential impact on learning," methods associated with "teacher-centered" techniques "have come to mean all that is *didactic*, boring, self-serving and neglectful of the interests of learners" (Cross 9, my emphasis). It is significant that Sue Cross uses the term "didactic" so unsympathetically, exemplifying the comment that the term is "frequently contrasted (often unfavourably) with teaching methods encouraging greater involvement or creativity on the part of those being taught" (*OED*). Yet definition B. 1. b., where this note follows the meaning given, is the only one that is not neutral.

A similar tension therefore exists in the terms "moral" and "didactic": both may refer quite impartially to the philosophical notions of right and wrong on the one hand and teaching on the other, or deprecatingly denote some of the austere and hard-line real-life applications of each. Given the proximity of the terms, "morally didactic" and simply "didactic" will be used interchangeably in this dissertation for readability. It is now necessary to contextualize the notion within the eighteenth-century literary landscape.

## ***2. Moral Didacticism and Eighteenth-Century British Fiction***

The concern with defining and prescribing right and wrong actions in the Georgian era is reflected in the way published reading material was judged, which more often than not included comments on its perceived moral value. This was particularly true when it came to novels, which were famously associated with potential immorality, at a time when they were

not yet established as a literary and artistic form.<sup>8</sup> For instance, in his *Sermons for Young Women* (1766), James Fordyce writes off "the general run of Novels as utterly unfit for you [women]. Instruction they convey none. They paint scenes of pleasure and passion altogether improper for you to behold, even with the mind's eye" (Volume 1: 114). The reference to impropriety suggests that the kind of instruction lacking in "the general run of Novels" is of a moral sort, concerned with right and wrong. In contrast, if a novel was read for "moral and pedagogical uses" in the late eighteenth century, then it was considered of value to the reader, thus strongly linking the concepts of morality and instruction (Warner 8).

Sound moral instruction as paramount to the quality of novels is also central to Samuel Johnson's fourth essay from *The Rambler* (1750). For Johnson, novels "are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions to life" (21). Such works must therefore be held to the highest moral standard, given the influence they are likely to have on impressionable minds, in addition to being judged aesthetically on writers' ability to be "just copiers of human manners" (16). Johnson cites Horace in his essay, and of course his principle is reminiscent of the classical doctrine of *dulce et utile*. Sixty years after the publication of Johnson's essay, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, who significantly claimed that "the unpardonable sin of a novel is dullness," still considers that entertainment or pleasing composition alone is insufficient to rate the quality of a work as the introductory quote of this dissertation highlights; a moral assessment remains necessary (48).

As Simon Blackburn states, virtues are culture specific, and "the humility, charity, patience, and chastity of Christianity would have been unintelligible as ethical virtues to classical Greeks" (383). In the context of eighteenth-century Britain, the Protestant Christian ethos is central, and the virtues mentioned by Blackburn permeate the works I study to varying degrees. For Fordyce, "the practice of Piety" makes for an "easy and delightful" exercise of virtue in women (Volume 2: 28); and Samuel Richardson, who is regularly cited as the forefather of English didactic novels, wrote of *Clarissa* that he intended her to be "a truly *Christian Heroine*," just as Sir Charles Grandison was meant to be "A Man of Religion and

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8 William Warner situates the complete aestheticization of the novel form as late as the mid-nineteenth century (36).

Virtue" (iv, vi, author's emphasis).<sup>9</sup> Richardson's novels have been said to be "in the direct line of descent" from explicitly didactic literature such as conduct books (Hornbeak 8). Katharine Hornbeak insists on the link between conduct literature and Scripture, citing that "one of the Puritan taboos which is stated over and over in the domestic handbook and which Richardson upholds consistently is that against the reading of romances [as opposed to novels]" (24).<sup>10</sup>

In the recently published *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing, 1790-1820*, Hilary Havens also links didactic novels and conduct literature, stressing the "close kinship between the conduct manual and the didactic novel," especially visible in Richardson's mid-century novels (7).<sup>11</sup> For Havens, didactic novels "were allowed imaginative elements," but "instruction had to remain the primary focus," instruction which she defines as moral in nature (5, 8). Half a century after the publication of Richardson's novels, the centrality of the Christian ethos is particularly visible in the Evangelical novels of the 1800s and 1810s, their most famous representative being Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1806). According to Anthony Mandal, Evangelicalism in the last third of the eighteenth century was based on "an anxiety that many Anglicans had slipped into a 'nominal' Christianity, observing the practices and ordinances of the church while ignoring living faith in their daily lives" (2014: xix). In the early years of the nineteenth century, Evangelical didacticism consequently permeated novels such as *Cœlebs* with the aim to proselytize; here again, moral—and Christian—instruction was dispensed through fiction, superseding the importance of plot (xxi).

The concern with instruction visible in the proliferation of conduct literature in the eighteenth century may be related to the subject's importance within the works of Enlightenment philosophers, who according to Mathilde Lerenard and Pauline Pujot "gave

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9 These comments both appear in Richardson's preface to *Sir Charles Grandison*.

10 The very term "novel" was a matter of dispute as the time, and the line of contention drawn by Hornbeak between Richardson's didactic fiction and romances provides a first argument in favor of calling the works I study in this dissertation "novels." This debate on terminology is discussed further in the section pertaining to the corpora in this Introduction (section II); in the meantime, I use "novel" and "works of fiction" interchangeably.

11 Havens suggests that Richardson built on the tradition initiated by earlier novelists who included "didactic elements," such as Penelope Aubin (5-6).

educational theory and practice historical significance" (7, my translation).<sup>12</sup> John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) was particularly influential, with late-eighteenth-century theorists and novelists such as Maria Edgeworth and Mary Wollstonecraft directly alluding to it in their own educational writings.<sup>13</sup> Locke's delineation of an educational system aimed at "produc[ing] virtuous, useful, and able men in their distinct callings" is specifically geared at "gentlemen," but became an essential point of reference for authors concerned with the education of men and women alike (lxiii). Edgeworth also references Jean-Jacques Rousseau's opinions on education, for example in relation to girls playing with dolls, illustrating the impact of his 1762 *Émile ou de l'éducation* (3).

Given the elevation of the novel to an art form in the nineteenth century, followed by the advent of the doctrine of Art for Art's sake, literary critics of the past hundred years have often derided many eighteenth-century novels which read as morally didactic, and thus inartistic, to modern audiences. Paul Hunter argues in 1990 that in the middle decades of the twentieth century, "the eighteenth century was then the embarrassment of the English curriculum, the black sheep that no one would talk about" (xiii). Hunter attributes this explicitly to the morally didactic nature of the literature of the period (xiii). However, the last fifty years have seen a renewed interest in the fiction of the time, with the eighteenth century becoming "the locus for many of the feminist, new historicist, and cultural studies" (xiv).

Moral didacticism in narrative fiction has been a recent topic of study among scholars of the late eighteenth century and the Victorian period, arguing that this element in novels should no longer be obviated as an "embarrassment" of English literature. Jesse Rosenthal claims in his work on the Victorian novel that "the moral dimensions of Victorian thought still remain a bit of an embarrassment for critics: a sort of stuffy, stiff-necked rectitude that can obscure more meaningful scientific or aesthetic insights" (2). He then proceeds to argue that "Victorian formalism was inextricably tied to moral thought," thereby granting moralism an artistic dimension and elevating its concerns to the level of philosophy

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12 Here is the original quote: "les Lumières, mouvement pédagogique, ont fait des idéaux et des pratiques éducatifs un enjeu historique."

13 See Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Children* (1787, 11) and Edgeworth's *Practical Education* (1798, 95). Novels by both authors feature in the corpora studied in this dissertation, presented in section II below.



rather than rigid behavioral prescription (2). A similar approach is taken in the collective work *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing, 1790-1820*, whose time frame of study overlaps with mine. In the introduction, Hilary Havens states that

it is undeniable that the single-minded didacticism of these works can, at times, be grating on modern ears; while the primary purpose of this collection is not an aesthetic defence of these novels, the recuperative work done by many of the essays emphasizes the ideological *and* literary contributions women made during this period. (13, author's emphasis)

The title of the work suggests a feminist approach, or at least one that is attentive to gender. Indeed, over half of the fictional output of the period was penned by women, which earlier scholars have used to dismiss this large body of work (Mandal 2007: 13, 27).<sup>14</sup> Havens explicitly connects the writing of didactic novels to female authorship, explaining that "these novelists gain authority from their positions as wives, mothers, but above all, educators" (13). The relationship between the reception of moral didacticism in fiction over time and the evolving conceptions of art and taste undergird much of my work.

The title of Havens' book also points to the question of the appellation *didactic novel*. Indeed, other scholars who have worked on some of these novels, such as Eleanor Ty, may describe works as "didactic" without going as far as suggesting the level of generic unity encompassed in the fully formed didactic novel (1998: 9). Similarly, Lisa Wood focuses on the kind of "didacticism" found among conservative writers; the nominal form here is quite far removed from the combination of adjective and noun that make up a generic category, such as *didactic novel*. Conversely, Hilary Havens claims that "few didactic novels are as celebrated as their sentimental, Gothic, or domestic counterparts," imbuing the generic category of "didactic novel" with legitimacy by carving a place for it next to more established novel types (13).

It is useful here to interrogate the notion of genre. According to Alastair Fowler, literary genres are characterized by content as well as external structure (55). External structure depends on what Fowler calls "historical genre" or "kind," such as the sonnet, which

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<sup>14</sup> Ian Watt famously remarks in his seminal work *The Rise of the Novel* that "the majority of eighteenth-century novels were actually written by women, but this had long remained a purely quantitative assertion of dominance" before Jane Austen "completed the work that Fanny Burney had begun, and challenged masculine prerogative in a much more important manner" (310).

implies a specific structure though it may vary according to historical context (57). "Division into chapters" is an example of external structure which we find in several kinds, including novels (61). Fowler concedes that clearly defining the boundaries of different kinds is no simple matter, especially given that individual texts may combine features of several kinds (57). However, as he pragmatically states, "without distinguishing some such categories of genre, criticism must sink into incoherent confusion" (55). From kinds, Fowler develops the concept of "subgenre": "in subgenre we find the same external characteristics with the corresponding kind, together with additional specification of content" (56). Hence, the Gothic novel, the sentimental novel, or indeed the didactic novel may constitute subgenres of the novel kind, insofar as they are defined as novels engaging with more specific topics than the general kind, since subgenre is determined by content or subject matter (112).

In contrast, mode "is a selection or abstraction from kind. It has few if any external rules, but evokes a historical kind through samples of its internal repertoire" (56). Modes "never imply a complete external form" and "have always an incomplete repertoire, a selection only of the corresponding kind's features, and one from which overall external structure is absent" (60, 107). Modal terms therefore tend to be adjectival rather than nominal in form, such as "comic" deriving from "comedy." Elements such as "a characteristic motif," "a formula," or "a rhetorical proportion or quality" may signal the presence of a particular mode, and present themselves either locally or more widely within a work (107). In her discussion of didactic novels, Lisa Wood points to recurring elements of language, such as the presence of embedded statements and digressive pauses to comment on specific moral values to "indicate the appropriate readerly response" (66). These features make up a rhetorical quality, which indicates that in this case didacticism is conceived of as a mode. However, Wood also underlines the pervasiveness of the marriage plot that proves the heroine's "moral fitness," and the use of the sister plot, contrasting a dysphoric and a euphoric trajectory to promote a moral lesson (68, 70). These elements pertain to subject matter and, to a lesser extent, form, characteristic of subgenres, complicating the classification.

From a corpus linguistics standpoint, Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad similarly define genres in terms of recognizable features, format, and rhetorical organization that

make up the complete text (16). In addition, they posit that analyzing texts from the perspective of register implies looking at pervasive linguistic characteristics that serve important communicative functions, which we might easily apply to the expression of moral instruction in the case of didactic fiction (16). They distinguish genre and register from style analysis, the latter of which focuses exclusively on linguistic choices made because "they are aesthetically valued" (16). Biber and Conrad differ from Fowler in positioning topic as an element of register rather than genre, but otherwise their concepts of genre and register largely mirror Fowler's kind and mode (37). The main kind that I work with in my research is the novel. However, the difficulty lies in determining whether the didactic component of the novels is a register or mode that may come and go within the narrative and is identifiable by linguistic markers, or whether through certain formal elements and topics found to structure the texts, the didactic novel may be considered a subgenre in Fowler's sense (112).

This question is important, since generic categories have a more stable descriptive power than modes or registers, which may appear in varying intensities in any type of text. A novel may be didactic in mode, just as a poem or a play may be; the term *didactic* here does not describe a cohesive body of work, given that the formal structure may be so different. If *didactic* is used to refer to a subgenre of fiction, however, as Havens does, this defines a specific group of novels on the basis of their recognizably didactic content. Thus, naming a subgenre may confer legitimacy to a previously uncategorized or unrecognized type of writing, which may in turn help claim a place for it within the literary canon, or at least within the evolving generic hierarchy (Fowler 221). This is part of Havens' design; in discussing a variety of works grouped under the heading "didactic novels," the contributors to the collection of essays assert the value of female didactic novels as a subgenre in "this important historical moment in the steady development of women's political voice" (13).

The question of defining didacticism as either a subgenre of narrative fiction or a mode is central to my work, and the corpora of novels, described in the following section, were designed with this line of inquiry in mind. The question remains unanswered through the first several chapters of this dissertation, and the terms "didacticism" and "moral didacticism" are used interchangeably before the issue is settled in chapter 7.

## II. The Corpora

The studies focusing on didactic fiction of the eighteenth century tend to delimit their corpus of texts based on the scholars' own perception of moral didacticism. Lisa Wood examines the writing of conservative female novelists from the post-revolutionary period, and justifies her gendered focus with the observation that "propagandistic purpose" was found mostly in women writers (11). She then chooses to home in on conservative authors, as a subgroup of women writing didactic fiction—indeed, as she and Hilary Havens note, didacticism was found in the fiction of women of various political affiliations, including radicals such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays (Wood 62, Havens 11). Havens draws the line between didactic and non-didactic novels through the notions of explicit authorial intent (as with Richardson, who makes his didactic intentions explicit in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*) and perceived subversive content (Burney's *Evelina* is "disqualified from inclusion in the burgeoning didactic convention because of its pervasive satire") (6, 8).

In my investigation of moral didacticism in British novels of the end of the eighteenth century, I made the decision to build my corpus based on early reception, in order to determine what may have constituted a possible didactic novel subgenre at the time the works were first published and read. Building on Ty and Wood's claims that the high standard of expectations from critics and the reading public in terms of morality in part explains the prevalence of didactic novels in the period, I used available reviews published in the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* in order to determine the body of works that I would investigate (Ty 1998: 7, Wood 12).

I also made my decision to settle on the term "novel" to describe the books included in my study based on early reception. The terminology was subject to debate at the time, and I use *novel* over *romance* due to the prevalence of works from my two corpora that include the term in their title and the overwhelming use of *novel* to describe them in the reviews from the *Monthly* and the *Critical*. This choice also reflects Clara Reeve's distinction between the two: "The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things.—The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written" (111). Reeve's late-eighteenth-century definition of the genre fits particularly well, given that one of

the criteria for inclusion in the corpora that I study was that the novels should be set in the same time period as when they were written, as is detailed below.

### 1. *The Didactic Corpus*

Consisting of eighteen novels published between 1778 and 1814, the corpus outlined in Table 1 was primarily elaborated using reviewer comments of first editions, from either the *Critical Review* or the *Monthly Review*. These magazines were created in the middle of the eighteenth century to identify and assess the increasing amount of published prose fiction at the time, and the opinions found in these publications form a first attempt at defining a standard for literature in prose, and differentiate the good from the bad (Millet 342).<sup>15</sup> They were used for the purpose of creating the corpus because of their status as the preeminent literary reviews of the period (Donoghue 1996, Waters 2004, Christie 2018). Their cultural importance at the time also makes them accessible—reviews are at least partly reproduced in volume 1 of James Raven’s *The English Novel, 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles* (2000), which focuses on the period 1770-1799. For the period 1800-1829, full reviews from the *Monthly*, the *Critical*, and other magazines are fully accessible on Peter Garside’s *British Fiction, 1800–1829: A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception* (henceforth abbreviated as the *Database of British Fiction*, or simply *DBF*). Since Raven (2000) exclusively features reviews from the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, I only took into account reviews from the same magazines for the period 1800-1814 for the sake of consistency. Aside from Raven’s *The English Novel* and the *Database of British Fiction*, the catalog records of the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* on HathiTrust Digital Library were used to compile the reviews.

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<sup>15</sup> More information on the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, further supporting the choice of these magazines as primary material on early reception, is given in chapter 1.

1778	<i>Evelina</i>	Frances Burney
1778	<i>Munster Village</i>	Lady Mary Hamilton
1782	<i>Cecilia</i>	Frances Burney
1788	<i>Mary, A Fiction</i>	Mary Wollstonecraft
1790	<i>Julia, A Novel</i>	Helen Maria Williams
1796	<i>Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not</i>	Robert Bage
1796	<i>Memoirs of Emma Courtney</i>	Mary Hays
1798	<i>Edgar: or, The Phantom of the Castle</i>	Richard Sicklemore
1798	<i>Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman</i>	Mary Wollstonecraft
1801	<i>Belinda</i>	Maria Edgeworth
1801	<i>The Father and Daughter</i>	Amelia Opie
1805	<i>The Nobility of the Heart</i>	Elizabeth Spence
1808	<i>Cælebs in Search of a Wife</i>	Hannah More
1810	<i>Romance Readers and Romance Writers</i>	Sarah Green
1811	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	Jane Austen
1811	<i>Self-Control</i>	Mary Brunton
1813	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen
1814	<i>Patronage</i>	Maria Edgeworth

Table 1. The Didactic Corpus

Although the quality of many of the novels from this list has not been judged consistently over time, all of them garnered positive reviews upon first publication. Two main elements had to appear in at least one review in order for a novel to be included: the perceived presence of moral instruction and the ability to amuse or entertain the reader, in compliance with the Horacian tradition of *dulce et utile* visible in Johnson and Barbauld's theoretical discussions of the emerging novel form. Moreover, only novels set primarily in Britain in the same time period as that of their conception were selected, setting aside historical novels as well as travel narratives—in accordance with Reeve's definition of the novel genre. Gothic novels have not been excluded on principle, although only Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar; or The Phantom of the Castle* clearly falls into that category.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the selection was made on the basis of the novels' availability in electronic format, in order to

<sup>16</sup> It is unclear when *Edgar* is set. It was included because the unspecified setting means that no terms related to a former time period will interfere with the statistical analysis of vocabulary use, one of the methods used in this research. The number of Gothic novels is necessarily small due to the high proportion of novels in the genre set outside of the British Isles and/or in earlier time periods. See for instance Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) or Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796).

conduct computer-aided analysis as a way to investigate possible generic features of this didactic corpus (Jockers 28, Rastier 227). Methodological approaches to the study, including corpus stylistics, are detailed in section III below.

The earliest novel from my corpus is Frances Burney's *Evelina*. It was chosen as a starting point chronologically because of its canonical status today and its success upon publication, as the comparison to Samuel Richardson by the *Critical Review* in terms of "moral and literary light" attests (*CR* 1778, vol. 46: 202). The inclusion of *Evelina* illustrates my approach of taking early reception as a starting point, given that early reviews clearly identified a didactic effect, which more recent scholars have tended to downplay in favor of the novel's "pervasive satire," as quoted earlier (Havens 8).<sup>17</sup> I originally intended my corpus to end with Maria Edgeworth's *Helen* (1834), the last novel of another main literary figure of the female novel at the time. However, since the *Database of British Fiction*, which provides a fairly exhaustive inventory of reviews on early-nineteenth-century fiction, ends in 1829, I shortened my period of study in order to build a corpus based on uniform criteria.

The criterion of electronic availability necessarily narrows down the corpus tremendously, as many rather obscure novels exist only in print in specialized libraries such as Chawton House Library. More novels written by women than novels written by men fit the criteria before digital availability was taken into account: 45 novels were described in early reviews as morally instructive and entertaining in addition to being primarily set within the British Isles contemporary to the time of first publication, including four written by men.<sup>18</sup> Two novels written by men remain in the selection of digitized novels, which does not materially affect the original ratio. The striking disproportion in my corpus of male and female authors points to the importance of the question of gender in the early reception of moral didacticism.

Furthermore, the availability of the novels in electronic format raises the question of the literary canon. Some novels were taken from Chawton House's Novels Online collection (e.g. Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers*), which specializes in women's writing and aims to make "freely accessible full-text transcripts of some of the rarest works in

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<sup>17</sup> The early reviews from the *Monthly* and the *Critical* are analyzed in detail in chapter 1.

<sup>18</sup> The titles of the 27 novels which could not be included in the corpus because of an absence of digitization are provided in Appendix Intro.

the Chawton House library collection."<sup>19</sup> Others, such as Helen Maria William's *Julia*, were found on *Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)*, a more general database which "includes *significant* English-language and foreign-language titles printed in the United Kingdom during the 18th century, along with thousands of *important* works from the Americas" (my emphasis).<sup>20</sup> Finally, a number come from Project Gutenberg (e.g. Frances Burney's *Evelina*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*), which tends not to have more obscure works. The corpus therefore comprises novels with greatly varying degrees of canonicity, allowing for a detailed exploration of the concept of literary canon in chapter 8.

This corpus also includes novels that were extremely popular upon their publication, such as Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, which went into six editions within a year of publication, and novels which were only ever published once, like Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* (DBF 1808A081, 1805A067). Looking at novels which garnered similar reviews but were treated very differently by the reading public in terms of sales allows for the possibility of interrogating taste, and the gap between the literary authority that critics represent and the reading public. Finally, the authors whose works are included in the corpus illustrate a variety of political standpoints, from conservative Hannah More to radical Mary Wollstonecraft, which needs to be considered given that they received similar reviews upon publication, at least in terms of the perceived presence of moral didacticism. It is worth noting that More and Wollstonecraft, along with Maria Edgeworth, Sarah Green, and Mary Hays, also published non-fictional educational writing. This illustrates the link between didactic novels and conduct literature discussed earlier, though only for five out of fifteen authors.

In spite of these differences, several formal elements may be said to give unity to the corpus: aside from the predominantly female authorship of the novels, 77% are heterodiegetic narratives, and 83% feature a female protagonist or set of protagonists (such as the Dashwood sisters in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* or Mary and Marianne in Green's

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19 'Novels Online.' *Chawton House*. <https://chawtonhouse.org/the-library/womens-writing-in-english-2/novels-online/>. Accessed 19 January 2022.

20 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) TCP' *Text Creation Partnership*. <https://textcreationpartnership.org/tcp-texts/ecco-tcp-eighteenth-century-collections-online/>. Accessed 19 January 2022.



*Romance Readers and Romance Writers*). Here and elsewhere, percentages are given to facilitate comparison, with the understanding that they are applied to small numbers.

Although several generic subcategories may be applied to some of the novels, such as satirical, Gothic, Jacobin, or Anti-Jacobin, almost all may be described as "based upon a plot of courtship that makes explicit some of the text's central lessons," Wood's definition for the domestic novel (69).<sup>21</sup> This definition begs the question of whether a didactic subgenre, different from the domestic, may be a pertinent descriptor for novels of the period. In order to provide an answer, I built a reference corpus of equal size and several similar characteristics, defined and explained below.

## **2. The Reference Corpus**

According to Michaela Mahlberg, "corpus work is essentially comparative: a text or text extract is compared to an appropriate reference corpus providing a relative norm" (2013: 24). I consequently built a reference corpus to provide a representative sample of fiction to which my didactic corpus could be compared, also using early reviews from the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, presented in Table 2. Two novels included in the reference corpus did not receive a review upon first publication: Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812) and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). They were kept in so as to ensure an acceptable balance of novels published in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, as well as to avoid one author dominating the corpus (for instance, other novels by Thomas Holcroft and William Godwin are available in digital format). These two novels are necessarily treated apart from the others when I discuss reviews specifically, but since the reference corpus was built on an absence of explicit early didactic reception, their presence in the reference corpus was not deemed problematic.

In order for the two corpora to be comparable, they include the same number of novels, published over the same time span and with similar characteristics (Bandry-Scubbi 2015: 4). The reference corpus comprises eighteen novels from the period 1778-1814, with nine published up to 1799 and nine from 1800 onward, mirroring its didactic counterpart, and also

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<sup>21</sup> The only real counterexample is Sicklemore's *Edgar*, which does end on a wedding, but whose romantic plot is very peripheral. In the other novels, courtship is central to the plot, even if the outcome is not always favorable.

excludes historical novels and travel narratives.<sup>22</sup> Novels set in Ireland that were published following the Act of Union of 1801 were included, in spite of the controversial nature of that union (J. Kelly 140). I used Gary Kelly's list of novels in his *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* and James Raven's *The English Novel, 1770-1829* to complete and adapt the list of novels from Anne Bandry-Scubbi's reference corpus found in her article 'Chawton Novels Online, Women's Writing 1751-1834 and Computer-Aided Textual Analysis.' The texts in digital format come in majority from the *Project Gutenberg* and *ECCO* databases.

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<sup>22</sup> Over half of George Walker's *The Vagabond* takes place in North America after the American Revolution, but it starts and ends on British soil, and as such has been included.

1778	<i>Learning at a Loss</i>	Gregory Lewis Way
1788	<i>Emmeline; or, The Orphan of the Castle</i>	Charlotte Smith
1791	<i>A Simple Story</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
1792	<i>Anna St. Ives</i>	Thomas Holcroft
1794	<i>Caleb Williams</i>	William Godwin
1795	<i>Henry</i>	Richard Cumberland
1796	<i>Nature and Art</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
1798	<i>Rosamund Gray</i>	Charles Lamb
1799	<i>The Vagabond</i>	George Walker
1804	<i>Adeline Mowbray</i>	Amelia Opie
1805	<i>Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling</i>	William Godwin
1806	<i>Leonora</i>	Maria Edgeworth
1806	<i>The Wild Irish Girl</i>	Sydney Owenson
1812	<i>The Son of a Genius</i>	Barbara Hofland
1813	<i>The Heroine</i>	Eaton Stannard Barrett
1814	<i>Mansfield Park</i>	Jane Austen
1814	<i>Discipline</i>	Mary Brunton
1814	<i>The Wanderer</i>	Frances Burney

Table 2. The Reference Corpus

None of the novels in the reference corpus overlap with those of the didactic corpus, but a number of authors appear in both, namely Amelia Opie, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Mary Brunton and Frances Burney. This seems to suggest that the reception of didacticism was novel-specific, and did not necessarily carry over to an author's whole body of work. This changes over time, as authors' reputations stabilize to an extent and individual novelists come to be associated with particular qualities, such as didacticism (see chapter 8). It may also be inferred that while most novels received as didactic were penned by women, female novelists were not necessarily associated with moral didacticism.

Elizabeth Inchbald and Godwin William appear twice in the reference corpus; this is also the case for Austen, Burney, Edgeworth, and Wollstonecraft in the didactic corpus, and I tried as much as possible to maintain a comparable variety of authors in both corpora, so no one novelist would skew the study one particular way. Again like the didactic corpus, the reference corpus features texts from writers of varying political affiliations, although the latter leans slightly more noticeably toward the radical end of the spectrum. Based on

information found in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the novels written by William Godwin, Elizabeth Inchbald, Thomas Holcroft, Charles Lamb, Sydney Owenson, Amelia Opie, and Charlotte Smith may be classed broadly as politically radical, which amounts to nine works in the reference corpus. In contrast, only six novels from the didactic corpus were penned by radical authors Robert Bage, Mary Hays, Amelia Opie, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Finally, the reference corpus also shows a range of commercial and critical success as evidenced by the novels' publication history up to 1850 provided by Raven and the *Database of British Fiction*.

On the other hand, the reference corpus includes ten novels written by women, and eight written by men. This is the main difference between the two corpora, added to the fact that the reference corpus was chosen for the absence of perceived didacticism in the novels' early reception. This relative balance in terms of the authors' respective genders represents the reality of the literary marketplace of the period, with its near evenness of male and female output, although the final years of my period of study are slightly more female-dominated (Mandal 2007: 13, 27). Moreover, the difference in gender division in the two corpora enables me to study the role that gender might play in the reception and linguistic manifestations of moral didacticism.

It is predictably more difficult to find a generic subcategory that would give a sense of narrative unity to the reference corpus, given that these novels were chosen on the basis of how they were *not* received, rather than for a perceived common trait. This reference corpus was designed to enable comparison with the didactic corpus, in order to bring to light the specificities of the latter when studied against the backdrop of a representative sample of writing of the period—similar enough that comparison is possible and different in the key aspects which are of interest in my study.

### **III. Research Questions and Methodological Approach**

In fact, the two corpora seem at first glance to be strikingly similar in many respects. The range of political inclination is by no means surprising in the reference corpus, given that the late-eighteenth-century literary landscape was marked by debates surrounding the ideals and effects of the French Revolution, and that this corpus aims to provide a fairly

representative sample of the novels primarily set in contemporary Britain published in the period (Grenby 4). However, the presence of writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft or her fellow radicals Mary Hays and Helen Maria Williams alongside conservative and/or Evangelical authors like Hannah More and Mary Brunton in the didactic corpus is somewhat puzzling. Moral didacticism appears by essence linked to conservative politics, insofar as didactic fiction "perpetuated strict moral codes" (Havens 8). Yet, as Havens argues, some radical authors were able to "appropriate the didactic genre to their own advantage." It should also be noted that although Wollstonecraft and More were portrayed as polar opposites in contemporary discourse, perhaps most famously by Richard Polwhele in *The Unsex'd Females* (1798), some of their views were in fact very similar, illustrating the "surprising consensus [that] emerged among otherwise divergent women" on the question of women's education in the 1790s (Stott 218-219).<sup>23</sup> Still, the presence of Wollstonecraft in one corpus and her husband Godwin in the other gives pause, and raises questions as to how early reviewers seem to have defined morally didactic fiction.

Aside from the presence in both corpora of spouses with a number of shared political views, the fact that as many as five authors appear in the two sets of novels is particularly striking. Jane Austen, Frances Burney, Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth and Amelia Opie reflect the variety of political affiliation found in the corpus, from Opie's link with radical circles to Brunton's active Scottish Presbyterian faith likened to Evangelicalism (*ODNB*, Mandal 2014: xx). Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth, three of the most important female novelists of the period, may be defined as moderates, each at times subversive yet supportive of the established social order in other ways.<sup>24</sup> The novels from these authors do not materially differ from one another in terms of genre: Austen's, Burney's and Brunton's works all center on a young female protagonist (or two, in the case of *Sense and Sensibility*) and end with her impending marriage to a worthy man. Edgeworth's works feature the trials of genteel young (though not necessarily unmarried) people and their moral implications,

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23 In his poem, Richard Polwhele, an Anglican clergyman and contributor to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, pits women writers he approved of against those he terms "unsex'd," "dividing them into sheep and goats" (Stafford 2010: 2). Hannah More and Frances Burney may be found among the former group, whereas Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, all linked to radical circles, are some of the ones he deems improper (2-3).

24 Audrey Bilger emphasizes the subversive power of their comedy in spite of a lack of "direct feminist polemics" in their works (11).

and Opie's stories are cautionary tales relating the misguided premarital sexual promiscuity of young women. In terms of plot, all these novels appear to fall within the realm of domestic fiction, within which morality is central, and one wonders why some were deemed didactic and others not (Mandal 2007: 23, Wood 69).

It may seem particularly surprising to see *Mansfield Park*, considered to be the most morally serious of Austen's novels, in the reference corpus (Mandal 2007: 91). As indicated above, this novel and Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812) were overlooked by reviewers when they were published; their early reception is unknown. This does not indicate that they were not thought important or good enough to be reviewed, since the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* aimed to survey all fictional output. However, as James Raven notes, the surge in novel production starting from the 1780s meant that by the 1800s, this aim had become unachievable and not even half of all novels published were reviewed (Volume 2, 16). Both novels enjoyed some commercial success: *Mansfield Park* went through six editions between 1814 and 1850, and *The Son of a Genius* went through as many as seventeen (DBF 1814A011).<sup>25</sup> Their lack of early reviews does not affect the textual comparison of the corpora, and they provide a valuable counterpoint against which to examine the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the reviews.

### 1. *Research Questions*

This brief overview of the corpora leads to the following research questions: how may moral didacticism in fiction be defined in terms of its early reception? Additionally, may a discernible didactic novel subgenre be said to exist? If so, what are its specific characteristics? These queries relate to the concepts of kind and mode, or genre and register, delineated previously. The uncertainty lies in the variety of implied meanings ascribed to the descriptor *didactic* in literary scholarship. The term is sometimes used disparagingly, as when Mary Waldron suggests that Austen's "not straightforwardly didactic" depiction of children and family dynamics is "more recognizable and believable," and thus better, than conduct book portrayals (2010: 51, 52-3). It is sometimes applied more neutrally, but an ambivalence

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<sup>25</sup> The editions of *The Son of a Genius* were counted using the British Library catalogue. Anthony Mandal calls Hannah More's *Cælebs*, which went through fourteen editions over the same period, a "bestseller," showing just how successful Hofland's novel was (2014: xxi).

remains regarding the ways by which it is enacted in language, whether indicative of external formal features or pervasive linguistic markers, as discussed in section I.

Starting with early reception consequently draws attention to the evolution of the term's use in literary criticism. This dissertation also considers the extent to which early reception differs from later critical assessments, and the implications for the inclusion—or lack thereof—of novels from either corpus in the literary canon. This supposes a study in literary history, which highlights the dynamic process of determining categories of texts.

## ***2. Methodology and Outline***

The main theoretical framework informing my study is reception, defined by Wolfgang Iser as the study of "existing readers, whose reactions testify to certain historically conditioned experiences of literature" (x). As James Machor and Philip Goldstein put it, "because it recognizes that the traditional canon embodies the 'changing interests and beliefs' of authoritative readers or critics, reception study examines the socio-historical contexts of interpretive practice" (xii). This approach assumes a sort of "death of the author," in reference to Barthes' 1967 essay, or at least a sidestepping of the author as the focus of inquiry. Nevertheless, we may consider along with Marilyn Butler that the so-called death of the author is as historically constructed a notion as authorial intention, and that the latter cannot be ignored in a study on eighteenth-century writing, which was incredibly partisan (1987: xvi).<sup>26</sup> The different chapters in Part I of this dissertation reflect the complex relationship between author, text, and reader, especially in the context of a study of moral didacticism. Indeed, going back to educational philosophy, "whether someone will be taught by what the teacher teaches lies beyond the control and power of the teacher" (Biesta 457). If we consider that the reception of moral didacticism in fiction invites us to view a book, and possibly by extension its author, as the teacher, and readers as students, both perspectives must be taken into consideration.

Starting with the reactions of the novels' first reviewers makes it possible to draw conclusions about the ways in which a part of the cultural elite defined and viewed moral didacticism in fiction. The *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* were created in the middle

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<sup>26</sup> More in-depth theoretical contextualization, including but not limited to reception, is provided in the introductory section of each chapter.

of the eighteenth century to report on the growing amount of books published, but they "aimed not at selling the individual book (for on the whole there was little direct 'puffing'), but at creating and developing an audience for 'literary intelligence'" (Butler 1993: 123). Close analysis of these reviews therefore serves to delineate the culturally widespread discourse around moral didacticism, given the importance that the reviews quickly gained in the book market (Forster 2001: 171-172). In order to acquire valuable insights into the presence and use of moral didacticism in these novels and identify the importance of a possible didactic novel subgenre within literary history, early reception is studied in light of linguistic elements from the texts and compared to later reception. My outline matches these steps.

Part 1 of this dissertation investigates the discourse around morality and instruction found in the early reviews. The chapters explore initial reception (chapter 1) along with the reviewers' construction of the figure of the reader (chapter 2). Part 2 delves into textual analysis of the novels through a comparison of the corpora, starting with a study of prefatory material, in order to examine authorial intention in relation to the framing of the reader (chapter 3). The narratives are then explored using corpus stylistics, so as to investigate the components of language which may be associated with didactic novels as they were received by early reviewers. Douglas Biber defines corpus stylistics as a research approach derived from corpus linguistics that "focus[es] on the distribution of words to identify textual features that are especially characteristic of an author, a particular text, or even a single character within a play or novel" (16). In my study, the reference corpus provides the necessary "relative norm" in contrast to which the didactic corpus is analyzed (Mahlberg 24), in order to examine the corpora's respective uses of vocabulary related to morality and instruction (chapter 4), and for more general comparison of textual features (chapter 5).

In her corpus stylistics study on Dickens' fiction, Michaela Mahlberg explicitly argues in favor of investigating a corpus of texts both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to identify and analyze "textual patterns and local textual function" (175). This implies going back and forth between systematic linguistic description and close analysis of elements highlighted by the quantitative study. Part 3 uses the conclusions drawn from the quantitative corpus study to analyze specific aspects of the corpora and arrive at a functional definition of the didactic novel (chapters 6 and 7). This approach sheds light on certain



underlying assumptions within the early reviews, anchoring the entire study in reception theory.

To round off the investigation of the reception of moral didacticism in the fiction of the period, Part 4 looks at the evolution in the novels' reception, again comparing the two corpora (chapter 8). It also includes a case study of actual readers' responses to extracts from three novels of the didactic corpus (chapter 9). The two chapters inform each other to comment on the development of the fraught relationship between moral didacticism in fiction and the literary canon, and further contextualizes the conclusions drawn regarding the early definition and reception of the didactic novel.

The whole dissertation therefore combines various research methods in order to investigate the manifestation and reception of moral didacticism in novels from different angles. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are used in conjunction at various stages of the study, following the assumption that mixing methods of inquiry "provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone" (Creswell and Creswell 42).

# Part 1. The Early Reception of Moral Didacticism

The starting point of this dissertation being early reception, the first two chapters analyze in detail the contributions from the *Monthly* and the *Critical* relating to the novels of both corpora. Chapter 1 interrogates the fine line between overall "moral tendency" and moral instruction, contextualizing the perception of didacticism within the larger discourse surrounding morality found in the reviews. It also delineates a spectrum of attitudes toward the kind of moral didacticism which the critics identify, striving to establish the criteria underlying the distinction between successful, merely adequate, and failed didacticism. Chapter 2 analyzes the critics' construction of the readers by whom they posit the novels would and/or should be read, highlighting the centrality of the novel genre's growing cultural importance within the book market. The critic-reader relationship is shown to be much more ambivalent than the straightforward verticality central to the traditional conception of the teacher-learner dynamic.

# Chapter 1. Moral Tendency, Moral Instruction: Early Reception of Didacticism

## Introduction.

Just as literature as a defined entity is "a notably unstable affair" (Eagleton 11), so too what constitutes taste—correct taste—has been a topic of debate. For Immanuel Kant, judgments of taste are bound to subjective conditions of empirical judgment that are assumed to be universal in human nature, according to Kantian scholar and translator Werner Pluhar (lx). However, if we adhere to the idea that human beings do not exist in a vacuum but are necessarily shaped by their cultural and historical background, then it becomes clear that standards of taste are similarly culturally and historically situated, and are largely political. Indeed, Terry Eagleton stresses the importance of literature in eighteenth-century England in unifying the emerging middle class with the ruling aristocracy by diffusing "polite social manners, habits of 'correct' taste and common cultural standards" (15).

Arbiters of taste became necessary in an age of increasing literacy and literary production, and new institutions linked to the book market emerged in that period, such as reviewers' magazines (Abrams 145). In their reviews of novels, which were still undergoing a process of legitimization as a form, critics from the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* act as the first large-scale judges of fiction when they pronounce themselves on the projected immortal fame of a novel, or lack thereof for another (Millet 93).<sup>27</sup> The *Monthly* and the *Critical* were established respectively in 1749 and 1756, and were the first of their kind to focus on books in order to help polite readers with little or no knowledge of the literary field to navigate it (Butler 1993: 125-127). Importantly, Marilyn Butler argues that book reviewing in the late eighteenth century "was plainly aimed not at selling the individual book [...] but at creating and developing an audience for 'literary intelligence'" (123). Reviews were thus

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<sup>27</sup> See for example the *Monthly* review of Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814, reference corpus), which states that the work is "more adapted, we suspect, for permanence than for immediate popularity" (*DBF* 1814A017). This assertion turns out to be rather misguided, as shown in chapter 8 on the novels' relationship to the literary canon.

intimately bound with the notion of developing taste, whether or not their views were in fact followed by the readership.<sup>28</sup>

Before the creation of the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review*, Addison and Steele's widely read *Spectator* mentioned taste extensively, and their uses of the term can give a foundation for the way the notion was understood and taken up by reviewers later in the century. Among the many instances (230) of the word "taste" in the three volumes of the *Spectator*, what is striking is the link made between taste, virtue, and nationhood.<sup>29</sup> This is clear in Addison's assertion that "As the great and only End of these my Speculations is to banish Vice and Ignorance out of the Territories of *Great-Britain*, I shall endeavour as much as possible to establish among us a Taste of polite Writing" (No. 58, author's italicized proper nouns). This statement of intent, which primarily links good taste with notions of morality and national pride, also implies that taste is trainable, and therefore neither completely innate nor universal. Indeed, if vice or ignorance can lead to coarse taste, then good taste depends on a common definition and standard of virtue, one that needs to be explicitly stated, taught, and trained. Moreover, taste is culture dependent for Addison, and art is to adapt itself to the taste of particular nations (No. 29). This corroborates Eagleton's argument regarding the importance of literature in creating and reinforcing a sense of nationhood in eighteenth-century England (15). The link between the early reception of moral didacticism and nationhood is explored in detail in chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation; my concern in this chapter centers on the discourse around moral virtue and instruction found in the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*.

Later in the century, the critics of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* evidently positioned themselves in the tradition of Addison and Steele, and "projected themselves as sole arbiters of literary production" (Donoghue 3). This is recognized by authors such as Frances Burney, who in her preface to *Evelina* (1778) calls the authors of the *Monthly* and *Critical* "those who publicly profess themselves Inspectors of all literary performances" (5). Although the *Monthly* can be roughly linked to dissenting ideology and the *Critical* to conservative politics,

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28 Indeed, Gary Kelly claims that "most readers were influenced little if at all" by the discussions on the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic value of individual publications in reviews, which the discrepancy that one often notes between reviewer comments and sales tends to support (2018: 197).

29 A basic word search was done on the periodical available online: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12030/12030-h/12030-h.htm>, accessed 20 May 2022.

both journals as they coexisted aimed to distinguish good writing from bad in an effort to respectively "discriminate among reading practices, creating hierarchies among its audience by assessing the habits and tastes of different kinds of readers" and "correcting or civilizing the tastes of the reading public" (Donoghue 25, 26, 28).<sup>30</sup>

As we will see in this chapter, the reception of moral didacticism in the early reviews demonstrates an attempt to define and uphold correct taste, in ways which are inextricably bound to the critics' ideals of female and male gentility. Looking closely at the reviews of the novels of both corpora, a spectrum emerges along which it is possible to rank didacticism's early reception, from successful to failed, painting a picture of the various elements which make up the best novels according to the reviewers. These include specific moral values attributed to female and male characters as well as seamless introduction of didactic elements within the narrative.

## I. Moral Didacticism, the Mark of Any Good Novel?

As seen in the general introduction, the notion that novels should be embedded with a moral point aiming at elevating readers was prevalent in eighteenth-century criticism of literature, which extends to the developing genre of narrative prose fiction. In everyday language, "didactic" tends to be connoted negatively, referring to dry and repetitive prescriptive instruction (see General Introduction I, 1). The same tends to come to mind when talking of didactic literature. For instance, Mary Waldron opposes Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) to Jane Austen's novels in her discussion of the authors' (sometimes sparse) narrative representations of children, calling More's "didactic" as it "deliberately constructs a pattern family in which parental authority succeeds in producing paragons who gracefully demonstrate all the ideal of the conduct books" (2010: 50-51). In contrast, she claims that in Austen's works "the lesson is not straightforwardly didactic," leaving the reader to "make a choice" (52-53). This last comment suggests that educational purpose has not necessarily been given up by Austen, but simply that it is framed less directly.

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<sup>30</sup> This is another reason why these reviews were chosen to assess the early reception of moral didacticism over other periodicals of the period, such as the *British Review* or the *Analytical Review*, which were established with much more overt political agendas (Stafford 2010: 5).

Indeed, while many twentieth-century commentators consider didacticism as a fault in composition, often inimical to any serious and valuable aesthetic design and effect, we will see in this chapter that in the period 1778-1814, critics valued and even expected morally didactic intent and effect in works of narrative fiction, in a way that cannot quite be separated from a novel's aesthetic achievement.<sup>31</sup> Though the novels of the reference corpus were not noted for their ability to actively teach their projected readership, this was not for lack of a moral stance in the ones that received positive reviews. A perceived moral tenor is thus not enough for a novel to be classified as instructive. In this chapter, we will see how reception contemporary to the first publication of the novels of both corpora uses moral stance and aesthetic prowess as central criteria for the evaluation of the works' merit. Before studying the reviews closely, it is necessary to contextualize the cultural importance of the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, linked to important developments in the literary marketplace.

### *i. The Monthly Review and the Critical Review*

Although, as the *Database of British Fiction* illustrates, the amount of magazines featuring literary reviews grew and became more specialized from the beginning of the nineteenth century onward, the *Monthly* and the *Critical* were the most important of their kind in the period 1778-1814 (Christie 281). As Frank Donoghue argues in *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers*, "from 1750 onward, literary careers were chiefly described, and indeed made possible, by reviewers," granting them a considerable amount of cultural power (3). The *Monthly* and the *Critical* were established within a few years of each other (1749 and 1756 respectively) and acted as a kind of aesthetic mediator and arbiter of fame as patronage gradually lost importance and "the book trade increasingly transformed readers into the social group capable of conferring fame upon authors" (Donoghue 1). As Donoghue states, "[t]he pages of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* were an important battleground on which the war to determine refined taste in a consumer society was waged," which may explain the harsh tone often employed, in the name of fighting literary mediocrity (Donoghue 4, Christie 285). Donoghue insists on the tripartite

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<sup>31</sup> As Shelley King states, modern critics generally tend to suggest that successful didactic authors "succeed in spite of rather than because of the lessons their fictions might teach" (197). The evolution of the reception of moral didacticism in fiction will be developed at length in Part 4.

relationship between authors, readers, and reviewers in the end of the eighteenth century, when "[a]uthors sought to redefine their practice as a profession rather than a trade; readers, an expanding consumer market, indirectly exerted considerable influence on the shape of the literary commerce; and reviewers sought to police both the production and consumption of literature" (Donoghue 17). This makes the *Monthly* and the *Critical* prime material to study early reception, as a forum where standards of literary value were being debated and shaped, before exploring further the relationship between text, reviewer and reader in chapter 3.

Although the *Monthly* and the *Critical* had similar objectives—assessing all contemporary literary output—their origins differ in their religious and political anchoring, which has an effect on the turn that their reviews tended to take. The *Monthly* was first founded by Ralph Griffiths, a Presbyterian bookseller who initially aimed solely to give summaries of books, and only became more opinionated when the *Critical* became a competitor (Donoghue 23-24). Conversely, the *Critical* was founded by Tobias Smollett "as a kind of institutional community of the cultural elite," with Smollett aiming "to police the boundaries between classes" (Donoghue 25). However, although a general link can be made between dissenting ideology and the *Monthly* on the one hand and conservative ideology and the *Critical* on the other, Donoghue warns that "because of the sheer number of voices contributing to both Reviews, it is difficult to make a compelling case for the firmness of the[se] ideological differences" (26). Moreover, although the ideological distinctions between the two periodicals remained and the *Monthly* "continued to express more liberal views on religion and especially politics," by the time the novels from my corpora were published, "the two journals increasingly managed the difficult triangular relationship between themselves, authors, and readers in the same way" (Donoghue 29).

As such, both periodicals became concerned with questions of taste and the relationship between writing, reading, and social mores. Indeed, according to Donoghue, "slipping into many of their reviews are the new assumptions that bad writing is an aspect of more widespread social ills, and that it is the [Monthly] Review's duty to resist this decline by, in effect, telling its audience what it should and should not read" (27). Similarly, the *Critical* led a "general campaign against luxury and the corruption of taste," fighting against what it perceived as "wayward reading practices" (Donoghue 40). In the mid-eighteenth

century, this translated into an overall negative view of novel readers (Donoghue 42). Such anti-novel bias started to wane at the turn of the nineteenth century, which is visible in the reviews of the novels of my corpora (Warner 14). Indeed, while they include phrases such as "this work ranks greatly above the whole mass of publications which bear the name of novels," derogatory to the novel genre by singling out a good novel as an exception,<sup>32</sup> the *Critical* reviewer of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801, didactic corpus) takes issue with Edgeworth's refusal to call her work a novel, preferring to name it a "moral tale" (*Belinda* 3):

Is it at all necessary to discard the title of novel from its own rank and place, because many bad novels are in existence? or would it not be deemed silly in Dr. Moore and Mr. Coxe to have rejected the appellation of travels for their publications, because sir John Mandeville's travels were filled with lies and extravagances? (*DBF* 1801A026)

Although the anti-novel rhetoric is not as fierce in the reviews of the novels from my corpora than it was a few decades earlier, the *Monthly* and the *Critical* show themselves to be continually concerned with the interrelation of writing, reading, and morality. As we are about to see, reviewers from the *Monthly* and the *Critical* based their assessments of literary value on narrative artistry as well as moral tendency. Following this observation, it will be necessary to further investigate what the novels perceived as actively instructive do differently from the ones which were merely considered moral (see parts 2 and 3).

## *ii. Morality: A Ubiquitous Concern in the Monthly and the Critical*

In the reviews of the novels from the didactic corpus, the terms "moral(s)" or "morality" appear 32 times across discussions of fourteen out of the eighteen works. In the reviews for novels of the didactic corpus where neither term appears, specific virtues are named, such as frankness and generosity in the *Monthly* review of Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796) or prudence in the *Critical* review of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) (Raven 664, *DBF* 1813A007). The *Critical* review of Helen Maria William's *Julia* (1790) features a more general mention of the "exemplary" nature of the titular heroine's "character and conduct," still referring in essence to morality (Raven 519). In the reviews of the novels from the reference corpus, the terms appear fifteen times, in relation to eight works. While this suggests that the didactic novels are more concerned with

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<sup>32</sup> *Critical* review of William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794, reference corpus) featured in Raven (611).



matters of morality than the reference novels—an intuitive hypothesis—when we look closer at the reviews, particularly those pertaining to the reference corpus, we find that they all reference the question in one way or another, in conjunction with comments on style and narrative composition.<sup>33</sup>

Positive reviews of novels of the reference corpus may include a direct comment on the commendable moral tendency of the works, such as in those of Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788). The reviews from the *Monthly* and the *Critical* both focus on the composition of the novel; the former opines that "the whole is conducted with a considerable degree of art" and the latter stresses the "great beauty" with which the scenes are often drawn (Raven 449, *CR* 1788, vol. 66: 531). Both also praise "the moral" of the work, with the one calling it "forcible and just" and the other "excellent," mentioning moral tendency yet stopping short of ascribing an instructive component to the novel. The *Monthly* review of Charles Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* (1798) likewise features a blend of appreciation for the story's writing, calling it "pathetic and interesting," and "affording great pleasure to the imagination," and for its "rational and moral sentiment" (Raven 749).

In addition, novels that go against the values held by the reviewer are condemned for their vicious tendencies, suggesting that composition and moral content play complementary roles in critics' assessments of a work's value. Three instances of this are evident in the reference corpus. In the tersely hostile *Monthly* review of Gregory Lewis Way's *Learning at a Loss* (1778), the critic deems the work "An illiberal attack upon the learned; the Author of which seems to have mistaken *vulgarity* for ease;—*fun* for humor, and *pertness* for wit" (Raven 273, author's emphasis). The italicized terms of vulgarity, fun, and pertness all relate to both composition and morals. An action as well as a turn of phrase may be judged as exhibiting vulgarity, which the *OED* defines as "the quality of being vulgar, unrefined, or coarse."<sup>34</sup> Pertness is defined as "forwardness or audacity in behavior or speech," which may

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33 "Style" here is understood as aesthetic linguistic choice on the part of novelists and perception on the side of reviewers. Narrative composition refers to the construction of the stories, also from the perspective of aesthetic value. In contrast, perception of moral didacticism implies a communicative function beyond that of "telling a story of events which have occurred in the past," common to most novels (see Biber and Conrad 16, 230).

34 "vulgarity, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/224857](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/224857). Accessed 10 March 2020.

also apply to questions of moral behavior or of narrative composition.<sup>35</sup> In the context of the eighteenth century, pertness, especially in young people—and the protagonists in *Learning at a Loss* are young adults—is a particularly damning offense, going against the virtues of modesty, delicacy, and filial obedience.<sup>36</sup> Encased between such nouns as vulgarity and pertness, fun, generally defined as "light-hearted pleasure, enjoyment, or amusement; boisterous joviality or merrymaking," takes a sinister turn only hinted at in the *OED* definition by the reference to boisterousness.<sup>37</sup> This definition stresses the link between fun and behavior, to which the *MR* reviewer adds the question of composition through the term humor, which may equally apply to one's conduct and speech.<sup>38</sup> This short critique inextricably blends composition and morality in its condemnation, which reflects the general tendency of these reviews to invoke both questions in their assessments.

In a similar vein, Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792, reference corpus) is condemned by its *Critical* reviewer on the grounds of both composition and morals. According to James Raven, the reviewer "reports with disgust that here 'a philosophic leveller becomes the hero of a novel' and thinks the story 'absurd, often insipid, and unreasonably extended' and its doctrines demanding 'the severest reprehension'" (566). Absurdity, insipidity, and length largely pertain to the realm of narrative composition, while the "disgust" at the philosophical views of the hero and the condemnation of the "doctrines" considered to be upheld by the story have to do with moral tendency. The *Critical* reviewer of Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795, reference corpus) follows a similar pattern, starting with an assessment of composition—in this case less damning than for *Anna St. Ives*—and ending with a condemnation of the morals expressed in the work: "Upon the whole, it would be unjust not to allow that this novel is enriched with humour, variety, and character, though

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35 "pertness, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/141611](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/141611). Accessed 10 March 2020.

36 This is particularly true for expectations of female behavior. Hester Chapone states that gentleness, meekness, and patience are woman's "peculiar distinctions," and also stresses the importance of modesty, delicacy, and simplicity when conversing with young men (103, 152-153). Discussing the education of girls and boys, Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth argue that instilling early in children filial obedience on rational grounds prevents the "spirit of contradiction" to arise, and leads to young people "disposed from habit, from gratitude, and yet more from prudence, to consult their parents in all the material actions of their lives" (180).

37 "fun, n. and adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/75467](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/75467). Accessed 10 March 2020.

38 See the *OED* definition, "a sense of what is amusing or ludicrous." "What" may be a situation, a behavior, or a phrase.

in many parts tedious; and that the story of Lady Crowbery excites interest: but in point of morals we are obliged to pronounce it very blameable" (Raven 637). The reviewer's judgment on the narrative merits of the work is positive on the whole, but the praise is given reluctantly, as the expression "it would be unjust not to allow" makes clear. The conclusion, with "*but* in point of morals we are obliged to pronounce it very blameable" (my emphasis), seems to give prevalence to moral assessment over matters of composition—although in that too the author seems to be unwilling, writing "we are *obliged* to pronounce it very blameable" (my emphasis). The tension between stylistic and moral merit is evident in this review, as the independent evaluation of the two criteria do not always align in a single work.

Interestingly, the *Monthly* review of *Henry* is positive overall, for the same reasons that the *Critical* review is negative in the end, possibly reflecting the *Monthly's* generally more progressive politics. *Henry's Monthly* reviewer, though finding fault with several aspects of the work's composition, ultimately praises the work for its moral tendency and aim: "We are well convinced that the author is really a lover of mankind, and has a sincere desire of promoting good morality, but it is somewhat astonishing to us that he should have so mistaken the means..." (Raven 637).<sup>39</sup> The last available sentence of the review states that "On [defects] we dwell most, invidious as it may appear, because, in order that any fault should be corrected, it must necessarily be specified: while, with respect to [merits], a general but sincere acknowledgment may afford the author sufficient encouragement to attempt more unalloyed excellence" (Raven 637).<sup>40</sup> This sentence reinforces the importance of the praise given to the work, "general" as it may be, and suggests that the author whose novel is being reviewed is capable of "unalloyed excellence." Faults in composition here appear to be redeemable, which may not be the case for moral condemnation, as the *Critical* review for the same novel shows.

The *Monthly* review of *Anna St. Ives* only dwells on matters of composition, however. The ultimate judgment is negative, much like the review from the *Critical*, with

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39 For instance, the reviewer notes that "appropriate language, in which each character speaks not only in the tone of the passion that he feels, but in the idiom that is characteristic of his habits, manners, and rank in life, is one of the most captivating charms of good writing. To this, we think, Mr C. has not been sufficiently attentive" (Raven 637).

40 This comment exemplifies William Christie's claim that reviewers were often overly critical and harsh in tone in the name of fighting literary mediocrity (285).

improbability, triteness, and "circumstances of distress and horror [...] too minutely detailed" given as justification, in spite of some praise of character delineation (Raven 566). It may be surmised that the author had nothing negative to say about the moral tendency of the work, and saying something positive about it would have made the review more ambivalent, undermining its main point. This review again illustrates the *Monthly's* generally liberal views on religion and politics; it included radical contributors such as Thomas Holcroft himself, who incidentally authored the review of *Henry* discussed above (Raven 637).<sup>41</sup>

In addition, all the positive reviews of novels from the reference corpus which do not explicitly mention morality at the very least hint at it, confirming the apparent necessity of sound morals and composition to fully warrant critical acclaim. The *Critical* reviewer of George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799), an Anti-Jacobin satire, "approve[s] Mr. Walker's views" and his aim of "exhibit[ing] the dangers of the new philosophy," although the "perversions" shown are judged to be too extreme (Raven 805). What the reviewer and the author consider to be perverse views of the "new philosophy" form the basis for principles of action—and "principles" is repeated twice in the review—which as such are linked to moral questions of behavior. Similarly, the *Monthly* reviewer of Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813, reference corpus) discusses the author's aim of displaying "the pernicious effects of indiscriminate novel-reading," leading to filial cruelty and folly (*DBF* 1813A009). The critic surmises that "if Cherubina's reading had been limited to *respectable* works of fiction, or if these had made the chief impression on her mind and memory, she would not have fallen into the follies which she commits" (my emphasis).<sup>42</sup> The term *respectable* links individual conduct with social norms, as the *OED* definition "of character, behavior, circumstances,

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<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the generally more liberal politics of the *Monthly* do not always coincide with a positive review for radical writers in terms of moral tendency, as the review for Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) attests. The *Monthly* critic claims that "we cannot admire its moral tendency," while the *Critical* reviewer for the same novel claims that it is "a tale of interest and intellect, leading to important lessons in life" (Raven 764-765). This shows that composition alone is not enough to warrant unalloyed praise from reviewers, just as much as it underlines the variable nature of what is understood as "unexceptionable" moral, to quote a recurring adjective in the reviews of the period.

<sup>42</sup> Cherubina is the heroine's chosen name for herself. The similarly misled Quixotic reader from Sarah Green's satirical novel *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810, didactic corpus) also changes her name to make it sound more like that of a heroine from a novel, changing her prosaic Margaret and its even commoner nickname Peggy for Margaritta (22).

institutions, etc.: characteristic of or associated with people of good standing or character; socially acceptable" makes clear.<sup>43</sup>

Also in the same vein, although the *Monthly* critic overall evaluates composition more than moral stance in their review of Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814, reference corpus), they start with a statement linking novels to moral improvement: "the allurements of a novel may win its way where graver efforts would be less successful; and, in the hour that was destined solely for amusement, the most salutary reflections and the most important convictions may arise" (*DBF* 1814A014). The reviewer goes on to say that this appears to be the author's aim, but does not dwell on the topic and proceeds to comment on elements of narration, such as "the highly finished family-picture" with which the novel opens. Ending the review with a reference to "the pious and noble sentiments with which [the] composition abounds" after praising the author's "superior" powers in regional descriptions of Scotland and in the use of pathos, the reviewer never completely moves away from considerations of a moral nature in favor of discussing only narrative composition and style.

Reviewing Mary Brunton's *Discipline*, a novel which opens on the autodiegetic narrator's claim of writing her memoirs "that the perusal of it may be profitable to others," perhaps makes it difficult to evade questions of morality and to focus instead solely on matters of style (63). This novel's review exemplifies the disconnect that we find between the explicit presence of didactic intent and the early reception that sidelined this element, especially since *Self-Control*, the author's first novel, was received as morally instructive by its *Monthly* reviewer.<sup>44</sup>

Even the reviews of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791, reference corpus) and *Nature and Art* (1796, reference corpus), which overwhelmingly focus on style and composition, still hint at the question. The full *Critical* review of *A Simple Story* is over a thousand words long, not including long stretches of quotes from the novel. It is full of praise, stressing the novelty of the plot, its success in unifying the two consecutive stories that make up the novel, and "clear and unaffected" writing despite a few grammar mistakes

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43 "respectable, adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/163783](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/163783). Accessed 10 March 2020.

44 *Self-Control* actually numbers among the novels of the didactic corpus which received contending reviews; this is discussed in section II, iii of this chapter.

(208). The review ends with the claim that "to those who delight in tracing the struggles and the bursts of passion, we announce a degree of pleasure, which seems to be the greater because the power of communicating it is uncommon" (213). And yet, in this review which almost exclusively invokes elements of narrative composition as the basis of its praise, one of the numerous merits of the work according to the reviewer is that "the most delicate feelings are continually excited" (207). There is no development of this statement, which makes it difficult to ascertain what is meant by "delicate feelings." However, delicacy was a key virtue in the period, establishing a connection with morality (Van Sant 3); it is mentioned regularly in both corpora (297 and 237 occurrences in the didactic corpus and the reference corpus respectively). In this light, I argue that the general reference to delicate feelings, with no further development of the topic, does not indicate a lack of concern with morality on the part of the reviewer, but rather an implicit moral assent with the values understood to be upheld by the author through her novel.<sup>45</sup>

The reviews to Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) from both the *Monthly* and the *Critical* follow a similar pattern, with a particular focus on the author's skill as a novelist, and solitary offhand references to its moral tendency, that serve to highlight the reviewers' endorsement of the values presented in the novel. Indeed, the *Critical* reviewer makes a general claim that "in literature it may be laid down as an axiom, that where a large portion of applause and success attends a writer, there must be something either of the useful or the pleasing to attract public attention" (Raven 681). Further down in the review, the critic claims that "The pathos is touched by Mrs. Inchbald with a masterly hand; nor is her skill inferior in delicate and pointed sarcasm" (Raven 681). The heart of this comment is narrative composition, yet, again, the word "delicate" appears, linking the success of the novelist's artistry with the virtue of delicacy. The *Monthly* reviewer also focuses on Inchbald's narrative and stylistic skill, stating that "the incidents are highly interesting; the language, if not splendid and highly polished, is at least pure and easy; the sentiments are just; and the satire is keen and pointed without descending to personality" (Raven 681). Amid praise of plot,

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45 Indeed, Samuel Johnson's definition of "delicate" includes "Fine; not coarse," "Nice; pleasing to the taste," and "Choice; select; excellent" (<https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/deletion?zoom=1600>, accessed 30 May 2022). Sensibility and delicacy, two interrelated virtues, were thought to be grounds for "superior moral life" by philosopher Hugh Blair (Van Sant 5). Further discussion of the concept of delicacy is included in section I, 3, ii of this chapter.

composition, and satire, the critic mentions that "the sentiments are just." Mentioning, but not justifying, in what way the sentiments expressed in the novel are "just" suggests that "moral tendency" need only be stressed when there is either something in particular that is striking and worth noting or when it is faulty.<sup>46</sup>

The *Monthly* and *Critical* reviews of Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814, reference corpus) similarly focus mainly on the merits and faults of the novel in terms of composition, yet both reviewers digress on morals and social codes of behavior, in comments that may appear disconnected from the otherwise pointed assessments of narrative composition supported by quotes from the novel. The *Monthly* reviewer discusses the societal changes that have taken place between the time when the novel is set (the French Revolutionary period) and the moment when the book was published, some twenty years later, and states:

The different classes of society and of character intermingle less: rank has extended its intrenchments: if there has been a loss of ease and cordiality, there is no doubt some gain of precision and propriety; and, if taste was inspiring a more attractive, religious feeling is teaching a severer, virtue. (*DBF 1814A017*)

This comment serves to explain the nostalgic pleasure the reviewer experienced in reading *The Wanderer*:

we are glad to see depicted again such society as our matrons remember; and to escape occasionally from the smooth insipidity of modern polish, by reverting to the more various singularities and broader humour of an age of social tolerance and comparative indiscipline. (*DBF 1814A017*)

Paradoxically, the reviewer uses the claim that the society in which they live has grown more proper and virtuous to brush off the need to scrutinize the moral tendency of the work, even though it is set in an age of "comparative indiscipline."

The *Critical* review of *The Wanderer* expresses anxiety over the fate of the novel: "The era of the novel, as distinguished in common language from the romance, like that of legitimate comedy, is rapidly passing away" (*DBF 1814A017*). Given the cultural importance of

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46 This is the case in the *Critical* review of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813, didactic corpus): "The sentiments, which are dispersed over the work, do great credit to the *sense* and *sensibility* of the authoress. The line she draws between the prudent and the mercenary in matrimonial concerns, may be useful to our fair readers" (*DBF 1811A017*, author's emphasis). The reviewers' concern with the moral fate of young and/or fair readers is the topic of chapter 3. The notion of what I will call "failed didacticism" is explored in section II, c of this chapter.

narrative fiction today, this comment is likely to be surprising to twenty-first-century readers (Warner 4). Interestingly, the reviewer, after having discussed at length the plot and style of the novel, proposes a didactic turn to save what they believe to be a dying mode of composition:

We are conscious of the tædium and want of interest in the purely didactic in most hands, but yet are inclined to wish, that if Madame d'Arblay favours the world again, it may be in some way that will afford an opportunity for the display of the thoughts and accuracy of her generalizing powers. Like the Rambler, such a work might not reap an immediate harvest of fame, but in the words of the Rambler, it would hold no mean rank among the productions which give 'ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth.' We are the more anxious on this score, on account of the opinions we have already given, that the field which has supplied so many laurels will furnish no more. (*DBF* 1814A017)

The argument here follows the Horacian idea, echoed by Samuel Johnson in *Rambler 4*, that a great piece of narrative fiction should be a combination of great writing and great sentiments, and implies that the authors most likely to be effective in morally elevating their readership are the ones who have the best artistry, which is what the rest of the review discusses. It should be noted that the critic includes the only instance of the exact term "didactic" in these reviews. It is juxtaposed with "purely," implying that the adjective on its own is neutral to describe narrative fiction, but has the potential of become derogatory, especially if the communicative purpose of moral instruction is not coupled with effective style. Through their discussion of morality disconnected from their assessment of *The Wanderer*, both the *Critical* and the *Monthly* reviews suggest that moral improvement is not central to the novel, in spite of its didactic potential. Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) is part of the reference corpus, while *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782) are in the didactic corpus, and the former's reviews suggest that the generation that separates Burney's first and last novels may have seen a change in the reception of moral didacticism, a possibility which must be investigated through comparison of the novels of the corpora themselves, as is done in parts 2 and 3.

I have discussed at length the reviews of novels from the reference corpus to show just how central the notion of morality is to the assessment of fiction in the period. All reviews deal with this question in some way, which diminishes the strength of the label



*didactic* as a means to distinguish the two corpora, since the reviewers never completely escape considerations of that nature. In fact, in both corpora, the most favorable reviews combine praise of composition and approval of moral tendency, suggesting that moral didacticism, when done right, is central to a novel's value.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, one wonders where the difference lies between novels perceived as morally sound and those seen as actively instructive.

### *iii. The Prevalence of Genteel Virtues in the Reviews of the Didactic Novels*

A comparison of the reviews of the two corpora highlights the similarities in terms of the moral values they celebrate; nevertheless, there tends to be a greater focus on virtues associated with female gentility in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus, which may constitute a discriminating criterion. According to G. E. Mingay, the gentry historically constitutes a distinct social group, which may be defined as:

a class whose superior incomes made possible a certain kind of education, a standard of comfort, and a degree of leisure and a common interest in ways of spending it, which marked them off from those whose incomes, perhaps as great or greater in money terms, could only be obtained by constant attention to some form of business. (2)

Mingay differentiates between types of gentry, from the typically poorer urban gentry, whose income often relied on some type of profession in the army, the law, or medicine, rather than from land, to the landed knights and baronets, who were titled, but not peers (3). Regardless of where one might fall within this social group, a common trait is "the elusive quality of gentility, a distinction acquired principally by birth, education, and the wealth and leisure to follow gentlemen's pursuits" (3). Samuel Johnson defined gentility as "1. Good extraction; dignity of birth. 2. Elegance of behaviour; gracefulness of mien; nicety of taste. 3. Gentry; the class of persons well born." He also defined genteel as "polite; elegant in behaviour; civil."<sup>48</sup> The concept of gentility is linked both to social class and conduct, and consequently to matters of morality. Sections 1 and 2 below showcase the reviewers' framing of morality within gendered ideals of gentility in relation to the novels of the didactic corpus; section 3

47 See for instance the reviews of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1811, didactic corpus) and Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788, reference corpus).

48 "Gentility, *n. f.*" Johnson, Samuel. *A Dictionary of the English Language*. London, W. Strahan, 1773. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/genius?zoom=1600>, accessed 20 May 2022. A more thorough discussion of the social classification pertaining to eighteenth-century Britain is provided in chapter 6.

highlights the less prominent link between virtue and gentility in the reviewers' discourse on the novels of the reference corpus.

### 1. The Proper Lady

In *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, Amanda Vickery shows that gentility is indeed inextricably tied to specific virtues, which in the case of the women studied include "love and duty, economy, propriety, fortitude, and resignation" (10). These come in addition to the traditional female ideals of chastity and obedience, and all necessitate self-control and an ability to reason (6, 8). These virtues are compatible with the notion of the Proper Lady as defined by Mary Poovey in relation to literary representations of the period—although Poovey does not explicitly mention gentility, the term "Lady" suggests elegant birth and good breeding.<sup>49</sup> The concept of the Proper Lady demands first and foremost "that women be decorous and domestic" (Stimpson vii). Poovey stresses the virtues of self-effacement, chastity, self-control, respect of parents' say in matters of matrimonial choice, as well as modesty and self-denial, to form the cultural ideal of woman as an "agent of salvation" which had taken hold by the end of the eighteenth century—in a reversal of the prevalent vision of woman as an "agent of damnation" in the seventeenth century (ix, 4, 6, 10, 14, 21). These virtues making up the genteel feminine ideal are particularly prevalent in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus, whose authors and protagonists are overwhelmingly female.

The critics often use such virtues to praise young women. For instance, the *Monthly* reviewer of *Self-Control* (1811) cites "the admirable lessons of cheerful endurance" and lauds "the examples of [Laura's] self-denial" (DBF 1811A026). Then unmarried Frances Burney's evident "purity" is admired by the *Monthly* reviewer of *Cecilia* (1782), mirroring the *Critical* reviewer of *The Father and Daughter* (1801) praising the way in which the novel shows "the misery consequent upon the illicit indulgence of the passions," referring to the seduction of the protagonist Agnes (Raven 313, DBF 1801A056). The *Monthly* reviewer of Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* (1805) also implies that the virtues of modesty and fortitude form part of the instruction to be found in the protagonist's experience, who after

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49 Samuel Johnson's definition of "lady, *n. f.*" also includes both the question of class ("1. A woman of high rank") and praiseworthy social conduct ("2. An illustrious or eminent woman"). <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/ladder?zoom=1600>, accessed 20 May 2022.

losing her inheritance and her station as an Earl's daughter exhibits the moral quality of "nobility in adversity" as the path to regain her status (*DBF* 1805A067). This belief in the importance of self-denial echoes John Locke's sentiment that "the great Principle and Foundation of all Virtue and Worth is plac'd in this: That a Man is able to *deny himself* his own Desires, cross his own Inclinations, and purely follow what Reason directs as best, tho' the Appetite lean the other Way" (21, author's emphasis).

The virtues of genteel femininity are also used to delineate the ideal wife, and condemn the women who do not live up to it. Conjugal affection and filial duty in women are held as important virtues by the *Critical* reviewers of *Patronage* (1814) and *Self-Control* (1811), with a positive endorsement of the characters of Mrs. Percy and her daughter Caroline "who constitute a model of conjugal affection and filial duty" in the former (*DBF* 1814A020), and a negative judgment of Laura's "contemptuous" attitude towards her mother and refusal to comply with her father's wish to marry Hargrave in the latter (*DBF* 1811A026). Both the *Monthly* and *Critical* reviewers of *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) likewise support the female ideal upheld by the novel through the characters of Lucilla and Mrs. Carlton. Lucilla's "piety and humility, [...] cultivated yet unostentatious mind, [...] domestic and benevolent habits, and [...] pure morality connected with strict notions of religion" make her the perfect candidate to become the male protagonist's wife (*Monthly*, *DBF* 1808A081). Mrs. Carlton's "meek and quiet spirit" is described as "the acme of female excellence" best suited to lead to "domestic tranquility" (*Critical*, *DBF* 1808A081).

A similar view of the ideal wife is put forward in the *Critical* review of *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), with the eldest daughter Mary described as "a pretty sensible girl, brought up a good housewife and a useful member of society, which she adorns by her sweet and cheerful disposition" (*DBF* 1810A046). Both *Cœleb's* Mrs. Carlton and *Romance's* Mary function as "agents of salvation" for their straying husbands through their meekness of spirit. In contrast, Laura Montreville, who refuses to marry her rakish admirer in *Self-Control*, is blamed by the *Critical* reviewer for not being this salvific figure for Hargrave, showing how important this quality is to the domestic ideal: "How much more noble would it have been, if, instead of rummaging the Bible for texts of Scripture to garnish her pious prudery, she had, in the character of a virtuous wife, reclaimed the man whom she loved, and

brought him back to the paths of virtue, respectability, and usefulness" (DBF 1811A026). The implication here is that Laura does not exhibit enough fortitude or resignation, letting her religious fervor dictate her conduct; thus, it is suggested that the protagonist is shown to be subjugated by her beliefs, and is actually a bad embodiment of self-control, contradicting the *Monthly* reviewer.

Other moral virtues are extolled by the reviewers beyond those of the Proper Lady, which nonetheless work to support that ideal. For example, the *Monthly* reviewer of *Patronage* praises Edgeworth for "deter[ing] her female readers from artifice" just as the *Monthly* reviewer of *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* denounces what they perceive as "affectation of humility" in the character of Lucilla (DBF 1814A020, 1808A081). This is tied to the notion of honesty, which was debated at the time as the possible basis of a sound moral life and brought forward as something that should be actively taught to children (Hays 1798: 205, Fordyce 1754: 64, Edgeworth *Practical Education*, vol. 1: chapter 8).

In a similar vein, several reviews point to the importance of a rational mind in women, adequately balanced by a proper share of sensibility, echoing the views which Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth and Mary Hays express in their educational writings (Wollstonecraft 1787: 51, Edgeworth 1798, vol. 1: 266, Hays 1793: 91). Wollstonecraft's *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) is described by its *Critical* reviewer as drawing "the picture of a strong, but ill-regulated mind," the conjunction "but" showing such lack of regulation as a fault (Raven 451). The *Critical* reviewer of Hay's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) makes a similar point, writing that "strong sensibilities require more than ordinary management: the passions, the source of personal enjoyment and of public utility, may easily become our own tormentors, and the spring of injustice to others" (Raven 678).

Such concern evokes what Anne Mellor defines as feminine romanticism, which she traces to Wollstonecraft's call for a revolution in female manners (33). The four dimensions of the kind of "revolutionary feminine Romanticism" advocated for instance by Wollstonecraft are "the education of the rational woman, rational love and the politics of domestic responsibility, woman's relation to nature, and the feminine construction of subjectivity" (39). Mellor argues that many female writers present in the didactic corpus, such as Edgeworth, Williams, Hays, Brunton, and Austen "all wrote novels designed to

advocate the revolutionary idea that women must think as well as feel, that they must act with prudence, avoid the pitfalls of sexual desire, and learn from their mistakes" (40). A study of the reviews of these authors' novels underlines that such developments in the views around proper femininity extended beyond the works of fiction themselves, permeating wider cultural discourse in the form of these reviews. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the question of what constitutes the right balance of feeling and reason is not a settled matter, as illustrated by the disagreement between Wollstonecraft, who describes her heroine Mary as "a woman, who has thinking powers," and the *Critical* reviewer who opines that her character lacks regulation of mind (*Mary* 4).

The form that rational management of the mind takes in the stories, left unsaid in the reviews of *Mary* and *Emma Courtney*, is made clear in others, such as the one addressing Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801). The *Critical* reviewer of *Belinda* first of all comments on the "useful" moral intended to be conveyed by the novel that "there is little happiness to be expected from wedlock, without prudence before marriage in the choice of the object; and firmness of mind afterwards, to fulfil [*sic*] with energy and tenderness the various duties arising out of that state," stressing the importance of a reasonable mind (*DBF* 1801A026). Yet, this is not to say that reason should overtake passion in all things. Indeed, both the *Critical* and the *Monthly* reviewers regret the overbearing prevalence of reason in the character of *Belinda* when it comes to her choosing a husband. The *Monthly* reviewer goes so far as to say that such lack of passion in love is both unnatural and un-Christian, stating that "love with enthusiasm is the will of God and nature. [...] divest [the tender female] of this enthusiasm, and bid her look on marriage with the eye of *reason* only, and she will see sexual intercourse as its immediate consequence. Will this, or will it not, decrease her delicacy?" (*DBF* 1801A026, author's emphasis). Ann Jessie Van Sant stresses the importance in eighteenth-century thought of emotional sensibility to attain superior moral life, where "appeals to emotion for ethical purposes were reinforced" (49). Thus, the question of balance appears fundamental to the late-eighteenth-century feminine ideal, with its parameters a matter of debate.

The right proportion of reason and emotion appears fundamental to the character's "delicacy" for the reviewer, echoing Mary Wollstonecraft's view from *A Vindication of the*

*Rights of Woman*, where she exclaims "modesty! Sacred offshoot of sensibility and reason! True delicacy of mind!" (151). Samuel Johnson's definition of the term clearly ties it to both femininity and gentility: it may for example refer to "Softness; feminine beauty" or "Politeness; gentleness of manners."<sup>50</sup> Although Wollstonecraft does not gender the notion, fellow revolutionary Mary Hays associates it particularly to womanhood, and the term appears in several conduct books addressed to genteel ladies in the period (32).<sup>51</sup>

The concern with the correct proportions of reason and emotion in the female mind is also clear in the *Critical* review of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811):

The characters of Ellen [*sic*] and Marianne are very nicely contrasted; the former possessing great good sense; with a *proper quantity of sensibility*, the latter an equal share of the sense which renders her sister so estimable, but blending it at the same time with an *immoderate* degree of sensibility which renders her unhappy on every trifling occasion, and annoys every one around her. (*DBF* 1811A017, author's emphasis)

Not directly stated in the review, Marianne's excess of sensibility endangers her sexual virtue by making her a potential prey to rakish gentlemen, providing a link between the theoretical interest in the balance between rationality and emotion and the Proper Lady, whose chastity was paramount to her identity (Poovey 6). Although Willoughby is not quite a rake, at least not with Marianne, the prevalence of heroines seduced by rakes in other novels of the period—such as Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) or Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801) in the didactic corpus—makes the sense of underlying danger quite real in the review. Importantly, the *Critical* review of *Sense and Sensibility* also praises the novel as "genteel," providing an explicit link between the feminine ideal of the Proper Lady and gentility.

## 2. The True Gentleman

The early critics do not only paint the picture of the Proper Lady however, but also hint at the ideal gentleman. The question of the qualities that a gentleman should acquire are pervasive in eighteenth-century discourse, from John Locke hoping in his dedication to

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<sup>50</sup> "Delicacy, *n. f.*" Johnson, Samuel. *A Dictionary of the English Language*. London, W. Strahan, 1773. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/deletion?zoom=1600>, accessed 20 May 2022.

<sup>51</sup> See for example Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Lady* (1773), p. 129, or Sarah Green's *Mental Improvement for a Young Lady, on her Entrance into the World; Addressed to a Favourite Niece* (1793), p. 38.

contribute with *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) to the theory around the education of "our *English Gentry*" to Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman* (1774) (lxiii, author's emphasis). These two texts embody the tension between the moral ideal of the gentleman seeped in Christianity and the secular ideal of the gentleman in the fashionable world (Doody 246). In fiction, Samuel Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison may be said to constitute the seminal model for the former iteration of this masculine ideal, embodying the Christian virtues of the "true gentleman"—"magnanimity, generosity, self-control, humility, sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others" (Doody 246).<sup>52</sup> Given that the novels of the didactic corpus are overwhelmingly written by women and predominantly feature female protagonists, the fact that there are fewer references to lessons aimed at men in the reviews is not surprising. Yet some do appear, and are worth mentioning as they participate in the connection that emerges between early reception of moral didacticism and gentility.

The two novels of the didactic corpus written by men and featuring male protagonists, Robert Bage's *HermSprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796), and Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798), are both said to offer models of genteel masculinity for readers. The *Monthly* reviewer of *HermSprong* states that "the elevated soul of HermSprong is a prominent and fine delineation of the accomplished, firm, frank, and generous man, worthy to be impressed as a model for imitation" (Raven 664). Aside from generosity, "accomplished" suggests gentility, while "firm" and "frank" indicate integrity, a trait considered as central to the morally good temper for David Fordyce, and particularly linked to male virtues at the time (Fordyce 44, Rogers 38). The importance of honesty and integrity in order to triumph over vice are also underlined by the *CR* reviewer of *Edgar*, who claims that the moral of the novel is "that the efforts of an honest mind, though poor and unprotected, will ultimately rise superior to the deep-laid machinations of vice, though armed with wealth and power" (Raven 760).

Three other novels are noted for their valuable moral teachings to gentlemen, showing that the gendered divide is not absolute in the early reception of the novels. Maria

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<sup>52</sup> In the preface to *Sir Charles Grandison*, Richardson claims to depict through his titular character "the Character and Actions of a Man of TRUE HONOUR," whose actions are "regulated by one steady Principle: A Man of Religion and Virtue" (v-vi).

Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814), which stages a genteel country family with two daughters and three sons, is said by its *Monthly* reviewer to deter young men "from abject dependence" and by its *Critical* reviewer to "inculcate the value of personal and political independence" (*DBF* 1814A020). While the notion of political independence relates first of all to the professional world, it is also connected to the moral virtue of integrity as the ability to stay firm and not morally depend on others.<sup>53</sup> The same reviewer lauds the depiction of Lord Olborough's "manifestation of real feeling, through the forms of politeness and the dignity of station," connecting earnest sensibility and high birth. The *Monthly* review of Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) also stresses the importance of integrity, as the proper manifestation of "virtuous principle": "in [Monckton's] disappointment we have a fine lesson, to teach us the insecurity of that wisdom which is not connected with a virtuous principle, and manifested by simplicity and integrity of conduct: the one its firmest support, and the other its loveliest ornament" (*MR* 1782, vol. 67: 455). Here, wisdom, which may refer to sound judgment or erudition (*OED*), loses its value if it is not coupled with virtuous principle and manifested in integrity of conduct, mirroring the feminine balance of reason and passion.

Finally, the *Critical* reviewer of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) also points to the lessons to be learned by "young men who make a point of playing with a young woman's affections" as the novel "shows in strong colours the folly and criminality of sporting with the feelings of those whom their conduct tends to wound and render miserable" through the character of Willoughby (*DBF* 1811A017). Again, the underlying virtues here are honesty and integrity, since the reviewer points to Willoughby's giving Marianne reason to believe when he leaves that he will return and marry her—when in fact he marries someone else to ease his financial difficulties—as the problematic aspect of his conduct. Willoughby is portrayed as the antithesis of the true gentleman, especially lacking in self-control and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others (Doody 246).<sup>54</sup>

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53 Samuel Johnson defines integrity as "honesty; uncorrupt mind, purity of manners; uncorruptedness."

54 It should be noted that Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), though featuring a male protagonist, did not incur in reviews comments on its portrayal of proper masculinity. The critics focus on the depiction of his love interest Lucilla as a moral ideal of femininity, with very little attention paid to the characterization of Charles/Cœlebs. The *Monthly* reviewer merely mentions that he is shown to be "a truly prudent man," and the statement that he "endeavours to make all his pleasures emanate from his exercise of the christian duties," though reminiscent of the Richardsonian gentleman, is framed rather neutrally, as evidence of his "high-toned morality" and "sublime views which Christianity inspires" leading to his dissatisfaction with "those amusements which are generally considered harmless," not as an ideal to



The point can therefore be made that moral didacticism in the reviews of the novels from the didactic corpus hinges on gendered moral virtues to paint the picture of the ideal gentlewoman and gentleman in terms of morality, supporting claims regarding the links between the growing cultural importance of the novel form, morality and the cultural solidification of a sense of national identity at the turn of the nineteenth century in Britain centering in large part on the opposition with France (Havens 143, Warner 20). This is evident in the *Critical* review of Edgeworth's *Patronage*, which laments Caroline's marriage to a foreigner, saying that the practice "deprive[s] us of our most enlightened countrywomen" (DBF 1814A020).

The importance of social hierarchy, apparent in the reviews through the focus on gentility in moral assessments, may consequently be linked to the emphasis on national stability in that period, particularly in the post-revolutionary period and during the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>55</sup> This is illustrated in the positive view of the narrative trajectory of the Earl's daughter deprived of her inheritance in the *Monthly* review of Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* who "at length emerges into her *proper* sphere" (DBF 1805A067, my emphasis), and in Margaret's "fancied attachment to one of her uncle's labourers, Philim O'Gurphy, who she believes to be a great duke in disguise" described as particularly "ludicrous" in the *Critical* review of Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (DBF 1810A046). This may also explain why, while the *Critical* tends to be linked to conservative politics and the *Monthly* to Dissenting ideology, in this corpus the reviews appear to agree on the proper moral values which they either see or wished they saw represented.

Overall, the reviews from both journals of the novels deemed didactic paint a similar picture of the moral virtues of the ideal lady and gentleman. Although some virtues are common to both the Proper Lady and True Gentleman, such as self-control, there is a clear gendered divide in the virtues discussed in the reviews, which renders men and women similarly morally accountable, though held to somewhat different standards. This may be related to Mellor's concept of feminine Romanticism, whose insistence upon "the

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emulate (DBF 1808A081).

55 The relationship between the early reception of moral didacticism and the narrative foregrounding of genteel Englishness as a national ideal is explored in depth in chapters 6 and 7.

fundamental equality between women and men" did not translate into a call for a revolution in gendered social mores, but rather the promotion of "a politics of gradual rather than violent social change, a social politics that extends the values of domesticity into the public realm" (3).

### 3. Framing Virtues in the Reference Corpus

The reviews of the reference novels champion similar virtues, though these are not always comparably framed within the gendered ideal of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman, especially in the case of the latter. The *Monthly* reviewer of Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, or The Orphan in the Castle* (1788) lauds the heroine for being "femininely beautiful and chaste" (Raven 449), and the *Critical* reviewer of Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813) praises the protagonist's "good sense and great propriety of conduct and decorum of manners" which lead her to feel "her modesty wounded, and herself insulted" when a male suitor improperly "catches the lady under the chin, and gives her a kiss on the lips" (DBF 1813A009). Delicacy is stressed in a complimentary way as a feature of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796) in the *Critical* and the *Monthly* respectively (Raven 535, 681). Likewise, the importance of good sense as a way to safeguard domestic virtue and "the good old cause" of marriage is evident in both reviews of Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806) which praise the titular character for her "discrimination and good sense" and the author for showing

the bad tendency of some of the principles of the modern school; and particularly those which relate to the conduct of the ladies. Excess of sensibility; a greater attention to *rights* than *duties*; the calling matrimony *a barbarous institution*, —prudence, *coldness*, fortitude, *insensibility*, —and modesty, *hypocrisy*; a preference of the graces to the virtues; and the forfeiture of innocence and reputation glossed over as an emancipation from the tyranny of custom. (DBF 1806A026, author's emphasis)

These examples, particularly this long quote from the *Monthly* review of *Leonora*, confirm the importance of the Proper Lady as a moral ideal in the journals' discourse.

Similarly, several critics stress industry as a central male virtue, also echoing the ideal of the True Gentleman found in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus. The *Critical* review of *Fleetwood* suggests industry to be a central virtue for men, as the protagonist's

growing idleness at Oxford is termed a "degeneration" (DBF 1805A032). The *Monthly* review of Barbara Hofland's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) similarly upholds industry as crucial to male social success, illustrating at once prevalent anti-Irish prejudice and the growing importance of the capitalist market in the British economy:

All things considered, the Irish peasantry are in a very unfortunate situation: but we would particularly wish to hear *industry* powerfully pressed on them by those who with commendable benevolence befriend them. Industry gradually brings wealth; and when a man has money in his pocket, he begins to think of and examine matters which formerly excited no reflection and admitted of no doubts. (DBF 1806A053, author's emphasis)

Nevertheless, the virtue of industry is here explicitly linked to accruing capital, emphasizing a middle-class ethos over gentility, traditionally characterized by inherited and landed wealth.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to a less obvious focus on specifically genteel values, especially in the case of male protagonists, the gendered difference between the virtues ascribed to women and men is not quite as clear in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus. The *Critical* reviewer of Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) states that "The evils which surround woman when thrown early out of the natural protection of family and friends, are to be surmounted like all other evils, by prudence and firmness" (DBF 1814A017). The two qualities are depicted as necessary to face any moral problem (*all* other evils), suggesting that they are neither gendered nor specifically attached to a social class—although the heroine Juliet Granville is a woman of gentle birth.

Piety is also shown to be an expected virtue in both men and women—which does not contradict the ideals of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman, but stresses the similarities rather than differences in the moral standards to which both are held. The "pious and noble sentiments" found in Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814), centering on a genteel woman, are praised, just as religious piety is shown to be important in such novels focusing on male protagonists as William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *Fleetwood* (1805) (DBF 1814A014,

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<sup>56</sup> Industry is not stressed as a virtue taught in the novels of the didactic corpus, though the overall approval of the novel's point against patronage does suggest that personal industry is the preferred mode of action. In fact, the *Critical* reviewer opines that Edgeworth goes too far in her condemnation of all forms of patronage, illustrating an "abstract love of independence [...] that leaves everything *practical* behind it" (DBF 1814A020, author's emphasis).

Raven 611-612, *DBF* 1805A032). Importantly, the titular protagonist *Caleb Williams* is a servant, illustrating the more generalizable comments on morality found in the early reception of these novels.

Perhaps more strikingly, the reviews of *Fleetwood* and *Leonora* respectively stress innocence, goodness, and propriety of conduct in marital life as male virtues. The *Monthly* reviewer of *Fleetwood* states that "however vice may assume the attire of enjoyment, and the dissipation of the world may mislead us, innocence is the soul of pleasure, and goodness the corner stone of true excellence," and the *Monthly* reviewer of *Leonora* refers to the titular character's husband's "impropriety" of conduct, briefly leaving his wife and taking their former guest as a mistress before recognizing his error and going back to *Leonora*, who has been patiently waiting for him (*DBF* 1805A032, 1806A026). This implies that chastity and fidelity are not exclusively female virtues for these critics—even though sexual misconduct in a female character was likely to be much more severely condemned, as the comment quoted earlier on the seduction plot in Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* suggests (1810, didactic corpus).

In the reviews of the novels of both corpora, the critics therefore clearly position themselves as arbiters of morality, which is consequently established as fundamental to literary value. This study shows that in spite of the different political affiliations of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* and differences in the individual readings of the various reviewers, the general tenets of moral virtue for both men and women were not particularly contentious at the time, which is corroborated for example by the discussion of modesty for both sexes in the Mary Wollstonecraft's revolutionary *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (151-153).<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, a difference regarding the scope of moral commentary emerges between the two corpora. The discussions around proper morality in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus appear more clearly gendered and focused on gentility, while the virtues championed in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus are framed less restrictively.

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<sup>57</sup> Presenting long excerpts from various eighteenth-century conduct books, including a passage from Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1788), Vivien Jones illustrates "the common ground that frequently exists between moral instruction, educational literature and 'feminist' texts" (14).

In order to delineate more clearly what constitutes proper moral instruction in narrative fiction for early reviewers, the next section investigates the range of perceptions of the novels of the didactic corpus in terms of didacticism, in comparison with the ways in which the novels of the reference corpus are praised or criticized.

## II. Perceptions of Moral Didacticism: Successes and Failures

As seen in the first section of this chapter, morality is a central concern for the early critics, including in their appraisals of novels not received explicitly as didactic. The study of the reviews so far underlines the importance of moral soundness as a criterion for literary value, and the reviews of the novels perceived as didactic tend to uphold specifically genteel and gendered values. Nonetheless, not all the novels of the didactic corpus received equal praise, with some viewed as completely successful, while others may be classified as merely adequate or failed attempts. The spectrum of reception is represented in Figure 1.

An investigation into the qualities which make up successful didactic novels as opposed to the faults which undergird the merely adequate and failed attempts for the early reviewers suggests that sound moral instruction and effective narrative composition must go together to produce the best novels. As will be made clear, the vast majority of criticism leveled at the novels of the didactic corpus pertains to issues in narrative composition and style. The emergence of the novel as an artistic literary genre by the early nineteenth century is thus highlighted, along with the role that critics may have played in this development, as they clearly positioned themselves as arbiters of both proper morality and aesthetic taste.

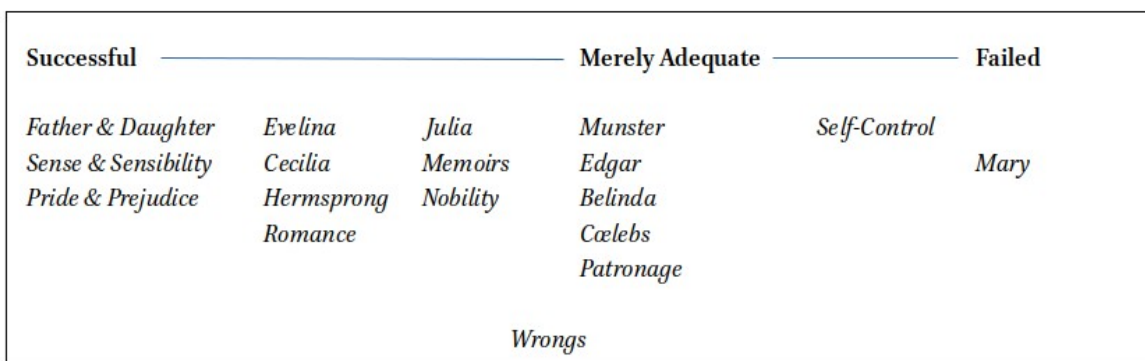


Figure 1. Spectrum of Early Reception of Didactic Corpus<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Wrongs of Woman* is the most difficult novel to place visually, as the *Critical* review places it in the successful category, while the *Monthly* reviewer rules it as a failure.

### *i. Successful Didacticism*

Only three novels of the didactic corpus received unalloyed praise upon their first publication: Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801), Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). About *The Father and Daughter*, the *Critical* reviewer wrote that

Seldom have we met with any combination of incidents, real or imaginary, which possessed more of the deeply pathetic. The moral inculcated by this tale is seriously impressive. It exhibits in the most affecting point of view the misery consequent upon the illicit indulgence of the passions; and the effect of the awful lesson which it teaches is not impaired by any intermixture of levity of dialogue or pruriency of description. (*DBF* 1801A056)

The *Monthly* reviewer offers a similar commendation of both the "moral tendency" and composition of the novel, calling the interspersed pieces of poetry "pleasing" work by "the ingenious authoress." *Sense and Sensibility*, which was only reviewed by the *Critical* when it was first published, received praise on similar grounds:

We are no enemies to novels or novel writers, but we regret that in the multiplicity of them there are so few worthy of any particular commendation. A genteel, well-written novel is as agreeable a lounge as a genteel comedy, from which both amusement and instruction may be derived. 'Sense and Sensibility' is one amongst the few, which can claim this fair praise. It is well written; the characters are in genteel life, naturally drawn, and judiciously supported. The incidents are probable, and highly pleasing and interesting; the conclusion such as the reader must wish it should be, and the whole is just long enough to interest without fatiguing. It reflects honour on the writer, who displays much knowledge of character, and very happily blends a great deal of good sense with the lighter matter of the piece. (*DBF* 1811A017)

While this may seem like relatively tepid praise in light of the "hypercanonical" status of Austen today, the novel is clearly positioned as superior to its contemporaries and includes nothing but commendation, both in terms of moral tendency and narrative composition.<sup>59</sup> The comment on the suitability of the ending with regards to reader expectations echoes Anna Laetitia Barbauld's own inclusion of reader satisfaction in her theoretical essay on the novel, provided as the inaugurating quote of this dissertation.

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<sup>59</sup> J. D. Porter defines "hypercanonical" authors as those who "are widely read and widely written about" (6). The literary canon as a construct is interrogated in chapter 8.

*Pride and Prejudice*, which was also only reviewed by the *Critical*, garnered an even more laudatory assessment, based at once on the "excellent lesson [which] may be learned from the elopement of Lydia," the usefulness of the "line she draws between the prudent and the mercenary in matrimonial concerns," and the excellence of its narrative composition:

We cannot conclude, without repeating our approbation of this performance, which rises very superior to any novel we have lately met with in the delineation of domestic scenes. Nor is there one character which appears flat, or obtrudes itself upon the notice of the reader with troublesome impertinence. There is not one person in the drama with whom we could readily dispense;—they have all their proper places; and fill their several stations, with great credit to themselves, and much satisfaction to the reader. (*DBF* 1813A007)

The reviews of Austen's first two published novels show that, although Austen was at first merely "a moderately successful author" in comparison to our own contemporary times, her early reception was exceptionally positive (Mandal 2007: 29). The reviews of these three novels moreover blend praise of moral tendency and narrative composition, without one of which the praise would not be as decided.

Indeed, apart from Opie's *The Father and Daughter* and Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, all of the other novels of the didactic corpus received praise mixed with various degrees of criticism from at least one reviewer, reinforcing the significance of the former three "ris[ing] very superior" to other publications. Several of these may still be considered as having been received as successful novels, with only small aspects being censured, explaining their presence in this section, though further to the right.

Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) is compared favorably by its *Critical* reviewer to Richardson, and is said to deserve "no common praise, whether we consider it in a moral or literary light" (Raven 269). While the *Monthly* reviewer does not mention the moral tendency of the novel, the only exception to the other very warm praise of the novel as "one of the most sprightly, entertaining, and agreeable productions of this kind, which has of late fallen under our notice" is the characterization of the Captain, which the critic finds more evocative of "a rough uneducated country 'squire" than of "a genuine sea-captain" (Raven 270). Similarly, after a lengthy commendation of Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) in points of style, amusement, interest, and instruction, the *Critical* reviewer points the "few blemishes

and defects" found in the novel, among which is "its extraordinary length" and sequences of dialogue which could have been shortened (*CR* 1782, vol. 54: 420). The *Monthly* reviewer likewise claims that "the Novel is protracted to too great a length; and some parts of it are uninteresting" (*MR* 1782, vol. 67: 457). However, the critic also states that all parts of a novel need not be "brilliant," and begins the review with the intimation that they are "at a loss, whether to give the preference to the design or the execution: or which to admire most, the purity of the Writer's heart, or the force and extent of her understanding" before comparing Burney to Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. In both cases, the criticisms put forward neither substantially tarnish the overall praise nor affect the purported didactic effect of the novels.

Another novel may be grouped with *Evelina* and *Cecilia* in terms of the reception of its success as a didactic novel. Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796) was deemed instructive by its *Monthly* reviewer, while its *Critical* reviewer praised how "the author displays an intimate acquaintance with human nature, and delineates it with the pen of a master" (Raven 664). The *Monthly* review is laudatory, but in relative rather than absolute terms, with the critic feeling

disposed to ascribe a higher rank of excellence to this than the [author's] former novel: it wanders less from its main purpose; there are equal beauties of detail; and the elevated soul of *Hermesprong* is a prominent and fine delineation of the accomplished, firm, frank, and generous man, worthy to be impressed as a model for imitation. (Raven 664)

The comparative "less" suggests that the present novel may still "wander" from its purpose to a degree, although this does not materially hinder the general success of the novel in terms of composition and didacticism, as is evidenced by the concluding comment of the reviewer who hopes "for frequent entertainment from the pen of this amusing, instructive, and singular genius" (Raven 664). In these reviews, elements of narrative composition hinder the critic from being unequivocally laudatory, stressing the importance of artistry in the early reception of morally didactic novels.

In the same vein, Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) is commended by its only reviewer for having "much merit, some novelty, and a really good lesson for young people. [...] The construction of the tale is simple and natural; and the



incidents are interesting; but the chief merit lies in the delineations of character" (*CR, DBF* 1810A046). The only caveat given is the presence of a seduction plot, which the critic opines "is not likely to aid in the improvement of morals." Here, a narrative element is cited as obstructing—though not actively undermining—the didactic effect. While the review is not as positive as the ones previously cited, with "some novelty" suggesting that the story could be more original, *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* was still received as a generally successful didactic novel, with the review ending on the acknowledgment that "a great deal of good sense, shrewd remark, knowledge of the world, and love of virtue, are displayed in the performance" (my emphasis).

Helen Maria William's *Julia, A Novel* (1790), Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), and Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* (1805) make up a transitional group of novels on the successful-failed didacticism spectrum, given that they each were praised by one reviewer and significantly found lacking in at least one respect by the other. The positive reviews are analyzed here, and the critical ones serve to introduce the discussions of merely adequate and failed didacticism below.

The *Critical* reviewer of *Julia* writes in a unequivocally positive tone that "the characters, the language, and the conduct of this novel are in no common style. The characters are well discriminated and supported; the story is probable and interesting; the language elegant and pleasing" (Raven 519). The suggestion that "perhaps the lady uses others [*sic*] words too frequently, and prefers them too often to her own" is softened by the fact that "the quotations are chiefly from Shakespeare, and we have been so frequently culprits the same way, that we dare not censure the error," and do not seem to get in the way of the representation of the "exemplary" character of Julia.

Likewise, the *Monthly* reviewer of *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* opines that "the fair writer aims at the solution of a moral problem which is eminently important" and "refrain[s] from minute criticism of plot, incident, or character, in a work which is marked by such uncommon features as those which characterise the present volumes" (Raven 678). The adjective "uncommon," similar to "no common" which is frequently used as a means of praise in the reviews—seen for example in "this performance deserves no common praise" at the

beginning of the *Critical* review of *Evelina*—indicates a favorable opinion of the novel's composition, untarnished by the "minute criticism" in which one might have engaged.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* is described in the *Critical* as "a tale of interest and intellect, leading to important lessons in life, because built on the realities of life, and embellished only where embellishment is necessary to catch the attention and gratify taste," finding in it "a vigorous display of fancy, and often a richness of imagery in portraying the passions, and especially the distress of certain situations, which convince us that Mrs. Godwin's particular *forte* was novel-writing" (Raven 764-5, author's emphasis). This unalloyed praise shows, just like all the other commending reviews, that composition is inextricably linked to the success of novels received as didactic, the latter of which appears to depend on the former. It is striking that *Julia*, *Emma Courtney*, and *Wrongs of Woman* were written by notably radical authors and all received one generally positive and one much more negative review, highlighting the connection between the warm reception of moral didacticism and conservative politics in the revolutionary period (Wood 12).<sup>60</sup>

Finally, the *Critical* review of *The Nobility of the Heart* illustrates the edge of the successful tier depicted in Figure 1. The critic writes: "To those who read all novels, we do not scruple to recommend the present, both for the entertainment and instruction which it affords; the incidents are well conducted, and the attention sufficiently kept alive to the conclusion" (DBF 1805A067). The mention of "those who read all novels" suggests indiscriminate rather than demanding taste, and the language used is positive but not hyperbolic, excluding the work from the first-rate category of publications. No particular objection is made on either moral or literary grounds—the "few typographical errors" found are in fact "laid to the charge of the editor," clearing the author of them—yet the readers' attention being merely "sufficiently kept alive to the conclusion" suggests that the story and/or its style in some way lack luster. This novel therefore bridges the gap between successful and average didacticism.

This section has shown that the reviews of the best didactic novels combine moral and aesthetic praise. In addition, frequent discussions of minor transgressions in terms of

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60 In line with the authors' radical politics, the three protagonists contravene important virtues of the Proper Lady, which is discussed in chapter 6, II, ii.

composition highlight the reviewers' role in policing literary taste for readers, just as it suggests a more uncompromising stance toward failings of a moral nature, as the following sections also make clear.

## *ii. Merely Adequate Didacticism*

As previously stated, *Julia, A Novel*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, *Maria*, or *The Wrongs of Woman*, and *The Nobility of the Heart* only received one positive review each. While the case of *Maria* will be discussed in the section iii to illustrate what I call failed didacticism, the negative reviews of the first three novels exemplify the range of merely adequate didacticism, as defined here. Adequate didacticism describes generally positive reception regarding the novels' didactic effect, but whose negative comments carry enough weight to significantly mitigate the praise. The reserves expressed by the early critics again most often pertain to issues of narrative composition, though some disapproval of a moral nature starts to appear as we move along the spectrum.

For instance, the *Monthly* review of *Julia* is rather ambivalent, with an implication that the novel lacks verisimilitude and artistry, followed nonetheless by a favorable statement: "We will not compliment the lady on an extensive and accurate knowledge of life; nor on having reached perfection in this species of writing; but we must give her praise of having framed a simple, instructive, and affecting story" (Raven 519). Similarly, after a short description of the novel's plot, the *Monthly* reviewer of *The Nobility of the Heart* states that "the scheme, the incidents, and the characters, are all as old as virtue and vice; and the composition is far from being polished: but the tale may amuse, and the inferences from it ought to instruct" (DBF 1805A067). The first part of the sentence implies that the novel lacks novelty, "as old as virtue and vice," and although this is not explicitly stated to be positive or negative, the fact that the statement is linked to a reproof on the composition with the coordinating conjunction "and" associates it to the negative comment. Moreover, the use of the modal auxiliaries "may" and "ought" places the novel's ability to amuse and instruct merely in the realm of possibility rather than certainty. In these two cases, the critics' reservations pertain to the compositional aspect of the novels, illustrating the importance of policing aesthetic taste in the readership's reception of the increasingly popular novel form (Donoghue 5).

Conversely, the nexus of the *Critical* reviewer's ambivalence regarding *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* is its moral tendency, reinforcing the importance of the dual presence of proper morality and good composition in a novel if it is to garner positive praise. The review does not include any direct criticism, yet the praise is fairly tepid, suggesting that the novel falls short of success in its execution:

The early part of this story is pleasing: in the subsequent periods, the principles and the characters must be examined with candour .... we do not hold up Emma Courtney as a character for general imitation, any more than, we presume, the authoress herself would .... Strong sensibilities require more than ordinary management: the passions, the source of personal enjoyment and of public utility, may easily become our own tormentors, and the spring of injustice to others. (Raven 678)

By stating that "the early part of this story is pleasing," the reviewer creates uncertainty as to the rest. Indeed, the fact that Emma Courtney is not "a character for general imitation" leads the critic to "presume" that the aim of the author was to write a cautionary tale (which in fact is her stated intention in the preface), leaving the door open for the possibility of other, less flattering conclusions in terms of the moral tendency of the story.<sup>61</sup> As a result, these three novels appear on the border of successful and average in the visual representation of the spectrum of early reception of didacticism, given that they garnered both enthusiastic and comparatively critical reviews.

In keeping with the image of the spectrum, five novels of the didactic corpus form the group firmly placed in the "merely adequate" section, halfway between the successful and the failed categories: Lady Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village* (1778), Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar, or The Phantom in the Castle* (1798), Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), and Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814). The *Critical* and *Monthly* reviewers of *Munster Village* agree that the novel is "agreeable," and "abounds with pertinent observations on life and manners" (*CR*) and "just reflections" (*MR*), but also suggest that the composition of the work is flawed (Raven 271). The *Critical* reviewer indeed states that "we have only to suggest, that this writer would pay a little more regard to correctness of composition, in any future work." While the *Monthly* reviewer claims—also rather reservedly

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<sup>61</sup> Eleanor Ty, who edited the print version of the novel used in this dissertation, notes that the text reproduced is the one originally published in 1796, indicating that the preface was included in the first edition reviewed in the *Monthly* and the *Critical* (xxxviii).

due to the double negation—that "the story is not uninteresting," for this critic "its chief value is, that it is the vehicle of much entertaining information, and of useful moral instruction." The narrative composition of the novel here appears as the determining factor between a didactic novel of average and great success, sound morals nonetheless warranting some approval.

Similarly, what checks the praise of the *Critical* reviewer of *Edgar* is its generic affiliation to the Gothic:

Although we cannot assign a very high rank to this production, we do not think it contemptible; and it will afford some entertainment to the *amateurs* of horror. It was written for a benevolent and useful purpose; and its moral is, that the efforts of an honest mind, though poor and unprotected, will ultimately rise superior to the deep-laid machinations of vice, though armed with wealth and power. (Raven 760, author's emphasis)

The second half of this review, on the "benevolent and useful purpose" of the novel, is unequivocally laudatory, which indicates that the only reason why the reviewer "cannot assign a very high rank to this production" is because it will appeal to "the *amateurs* of horror." Conversely, the didactic aim appears as the redeeming quality of the work, and the reason why the critic "do[es] not think it contemptible." The Gothic and successful moral didacticism seem to be at odds, and the position of the critic regarding the former suggests a generic hierarchy among the wider novel genre, implying that a Gothic novel is unlikely to ever be considered first rate. According to Maggie Kilgour, the rise of the Gothic subgenre in the eighteenth century "has been associated with a rebellion against a constraining neoclassical aesthetic ideal of order and unity, in order to recover a suppressed primitive and barbaric imaginative freedom" (3). Although early Gothic novels have been accused of being "moralising" by recent scholars, the definition offered above appears fundamentally opposed to the virtues of genteel propriety put forth by the reviews of the didactic corpus, as discussed in part I of this chapter, likely informing the initial reception of *Edgar* (5).

The major objection the *Monthly* and the *Critical* reviewers have to *Belinda*, *Patronage*, and *Cœlebs* also pertains to matters of composition, in this case relating to characterization and narrative construction. In spite of warm praise regarding *Belinda*'s "useful moral" (CR) and assertion that Edgeworth's already established literary "reputation" is

well-earned given "the spirit and vivacity" of the beginning of the novel (*MR*), both reviewers take issue with important aspects of the novel's composition, in addition to the concern which they express over the moral implications of Belinda's second attachment, which was discussed in the previous section. The characterization of Belinda is a particular point of contention, with the *Critical* reviewer finding her coldly passionless, merely "a satellite" to the story in which Lady Delacour is "the primary planet," and the *Monthly* critic declaring her of "so little interest, that she appears to have usurped the superior right of Lady Delacour to give the title to the work" (*DBF* 1801A026). The conclusions of both reviews are fairly negative, the *Critical* stating that "Miss Edgeworth's literary fame is not benefited by the appearance of *Belinda*" and the *Monthly* suggesting that they have no inclination to read the second edition of the novel to see which "corrections and improvements" have been made.<sup>62</sup>

The reviews of Edgeworth's later novel *Patronage* offer strikingly similarly ambivalent views, which are nevertheless generally more positive in tenor than those expressed in the reviews of *Belinda*. The *Critical* reviewer "congratulate[s] the public upon another effusion of genius from the elegant pen of Miss Edgeworth" yet claims that "the present Novel is not a great deal inferior to those which have preceded it," suggesting that it is indeed of lesser quality (*DBF* 1814A020). Given that the *Critical* review of *Belinda* was by no means panagetical, the second comment seems to invalidate the first. This illustrates the malleability of an author's fame and reputation, which is influenced but only partly made by the critics, and is also shaped by popular success or lack thereof, keeping in mind that the opinion of both critics and other readers may evolve over time (Donoghue 17). The *Critical* review indeed praises the novel for its "vivacity of description, and discriminative delineation of character," and commends the portraits of Mrs. Percy and her eldest daughter as "a model of conjugal affection and filial duty," as quoted previously. For the critic however, "the radical defect of the work before us, is, its want of combination," with various elements of plot lacking unity. The *Monthly* reviewer mirrors the *Critical's*, claiming that the novel "abounds with sensible observations and masterly strokes, and furnishes many excellent models for young people." In spite of these "masterly strokes" however, the critic bemoans that all of the—"perhaps" too numerous—characters are not made to speak, "because the

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62 *Belinda* went into a second edition in 1802, less than a year after its initial publication. The *Critical* and *Monthly* reviews appeared in February and April 1802 respectively.

dialogues are among the most striking and lively parts of the work." Several specific scenes are also decried, such as the legal and medical subplots which are respectively deemed "inaccurately conceived" and "trifling and improbable." For the reviewers of both titles, problems of characterization and plot construction are the reasons why they cannot be considered as fully successful didactic novels.

Finally, both reviewers of *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* commend the didactic intent of the work but criticize some of the ways in which it has been translated into narrative fiction by the author, in terms of plot construction but also of style. For the *Critical*, *Cælebs* abounds with "sensible remarks" and several character portrayals are praised as "interesting" and good representations of "feminine excellence" (DBF 1808A081). Yet the critic also quotes passages and objects to specific uses of language, such as:

In the above passage we object to the expression 'to consolidate a firm and regular system of character.' For if a character be consolidated, it must be firm, and if it be firm, firmness, as applied to character, supposes it to be regular and consistent. Instead, therefore, of saying that which tends to consolidate *a firm and regular system* of character, the author should have written 'that which tends to give solidity to the character.' (author's emphasis)

The reviewer further opines that "there are some occasions in which religious topics seem rather awkwardly thrust in, than naturally and inartificially introduced." This is merely a question of form, since the author adds "we have no objection to see religious topics gravely and seriously discussed; but as the true repository of all religion is the heart, we are apt to think that when religion makes the sole or principal subject of discussion, it is apt to degenerate into a mere jargon of words."

The *Monthly* reviewer of *Cælebs* also approves of the intent of the author while taking issue with aspects of narration. Indeed, for the reviewer,

it is the commendable object of the writer of these volumes to counteract the poison of novels by something which assumes the form of a novel; to read a lecture to the fair sex on 'their being, end, and aim;' to repel the tyranny of fashion and the fascination of example; to shew them what they ought to pursue, in order to qualify themselves for wives; and to inculcate those religious and moral principles by which they ought to be governed.

However, the way the character of Lucilla is constructed is clearly shown to hamper the laudable aim of the novel:

such a portrait as that of Lucilla is not drawn according to the truth of nature; and if the writer should observe that the delineation was intended to shew rather what women should be than what they actually are, we must still reply that the inculcation of an almost impracticable degree of excellence is more likely to discourage than to excite reformation.

A similar point is made at the end of the review, where the equal praise given to "the motive of the writer" and "the skill, the determination, and the general taste with which the whole is executed" is offset with the remark that the reviewer "cannot, however, avoid the conjecture that, had less been attempted in the way of female reformation, more would probably have been accomplished."

The crucial importance of sound composition is made particularly obvious in these ambivalent reviews, where most criticism stems from some perceived problem in the narrative form rather than the moral content, though some elements of moral tendency are also found to be flawed. Novels received as generally morally sound may still be praised on that ground as didactic, in spite of their aesthetic deficiencies, yet the latter are clearly shown to be paramount in their own right. Early critics' high standards in that regard may as such be said to aid in the legitimization of novels as an art form (Millet 332).<sup>63</sup>

### *iii. Failed didacticism*

Three works from the didactic corpus may be grouped as examples of failed didactic novels, whose at least partly negative reviews highlight the interconnected nature of artistry and moral instruction in the early reception of moral didacticism in fiction. Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) occupies the liminal position that bridges the categories of average and failed didacticism, with its *Monthly* review placing it in the former group and its *Critical* review in the latter. The *Monthly* critic starts with a balanced assessment of the qualities and faults of the novel, characteristic of the category of average didacticism: "We must ascribe great merit to this novel, although it has many very apparent defects" (*DBF* 1811A026). "Vulgar

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<sup>63</sup> This may be related to the *Critical* review of Edgeworth's *Belinda*, who, as previously stated, takes issue with the author's wish not to call her work a "novel," thereby asserting the form's legitimacy within the literary landscape (*DBF* 1801A026).



dialogue" and "incorrect phraseology" are cited among the latter, along with "ill contrived" incidents and tiresome repetitions of "arguments and reflections" on the part of the author. As the critic states, "the excellence of this book, however, consists not so much in the story as in the sentiments," showing that the moral tendency of the book redeems its faults in composition, but only in part.

Conversely, the *Critical* review of *Self-Control* is wholly negative, with both the moral tendency of certain plot elements and the composition censured. Aside from Laura's contempt for and defiance of her parents' wishes, the reviewer takes issue with the inclusion of the rape of secondary character Jessy Wilson: "As parents, we would not wish our girls even to suppose that such monstrous characters [rapists] exists; much less should we wish them to take up a *religious* novel and read of *rapes*" (author's emphasis). This objection stands on the ground of genteel morality, since the scene is condemned on the score of the "*delicacy*" of the novelist (author's emphasis). Moreover, the characters of Lady Palham and Lady Bellamer are said to have been "painted [...] too coarsely," adding a dimension of composition to the disapproval. Indeed, the review ends with the wish that the author "had contented herself in that obscurity to which she says, in her dedication, that she was destined, rather than have attempted a work which, in this same dedication, professes so much, and yet in the execution, falls so terribly short of interest or of common probability as *Self Controul* [*sic*]," blasting the narrative composition of the novel.<sup>64</sup>

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) also garnered one positive and one negative review. The latter, found in the *Monthly*, is the only review of the only novel in the didactic corpus where unabashed criticism of moral tendency does not come with any censure of narrative composition. The reviewer states that "while [...] we would do ample justice to the abilities manifested in this fragment, we cannot admire its moral tendency" (Raven 764-5). The "abilities manifested," as gratifying to Wollstonecraft's readers as they may be according to the critic, do not counterbalance the nefarious "moral effect or utility" perceived in the unfinished novel. Whereas sound moral instruction is

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64 Austen famously echoes this sentiment in a letter, deeming the novel void of 'anything of nature or probability' (1995: 234).

usually enough to warrant at least a partly positive appraisal in spite of faults in composition, the same is not true for the opposite.

Wollstonecraft's *Mary* (1788) is the only novel that is placed exclusively in the failed category; the reviews it received exemplify the complexity of the expectations that the critics have when it comes to didactic novels, which appear to stem from the interconnection of artistry and active moral instruction. The work is praised by the *Monthly* and *Critical* reviewers for its composition, but both doubt the effectiveness of its design, suggesting its failure as a didactic novel. The *Monthly* critic claims that "this little tale certainly possesses the merit of being well written," although the character of Mary is pronounced to be unoriginal (Raven 452), and the *Critical* reviewer opines that it is a "pleasing tale," which includes "various observations" that "are not impertinently obtruded, but occur seemingly without design" (Raven 451). Such ambivalent appraisal of a novel's composition is by no means uncommon, as the discussion on average didacticism has shown.

However, the *Critical* review also points to a discrepancy between the purported intent of the author and its execution: "If [the tale] were designed to show that [women's] minds want sufficient force, our author has not acted very judiciously. Equally neglect in education, few men could have done so much" (*CR* 1788, vol. 66: 74). The *Monthly* reviewer offers a similar position, but with an interesting generalization on moral didacticism in fiction as a whole. The critic states that "this fiction is of the cast which is called moral; that is, good principles and a love of virtue are inculcated throughout," securing the novel a place in the didactic corpus (Raven 452). Nevertheless, this statement is complemented with the assertion that they

very much doubt whether these tender and pathetic moral tales ever do, in fact, contribute to promote virtue and morality in the world. They are too apt to enervate young minds; to cherish propensities which are better checked; to make them affect what they do not feel; to give them false and romantic notions of life; to teach them to expect characters and incidents which are rarely, if ever, to be found; to disgust and put them out of humour with such as actually occur.

This comment is the reason why I place *Mary* on the failed end of the spectrum relating to the degree of success of didacticism. It unexpectedly suggests that moral tales are in fact likely to be ineffective, in spite of the great concern with moral tendency which we see

pervading the reviews of both the didactic and reference corpora. The reviewer only discusses "tender and pathetic" moral tales here, implying that other kinds of moral tales may still be believed to have the desired effect on readers, yet the comment evinces a fundamental ambivalence toward the very concept of moral didacticism which in the context of this discussion appears strikingly paradoxical. Importantly, the relationship between moral instruction through fiction and narrative composition is once again put at the forefront here; the presence of pathos in the writing is cited as potentially dangerous to "young minds," and lack of verisimilitude in a narrative as posing the risk of warping readers' expectations in their own lives.<sup>65</sup>

To recapitulate: the study of the reviews of the novels from the didactic corpus through the question of the works' success or failure as didactic novels shows the reviewers to be at least as concerned with questions of narrative composition—what we might perhaps today call 'literariness'—as with that of moral tendency as deciding factors in the positive or negative reception of a novel considered as instructive (Eagleton 7-8). The reviews also shed light on some of the debates surrounding the specific features which affected the reception of works of narrative fiction, aside from their moral tendency. For instance, novelty is seen positively, as evidenced in the comment on the "novelty and force" of the characterization of Clarence Harvey in Edgeworth's *Belinda* (DBF 1801A026). The fact that Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* has "some novelty" is likewise part of the *Critical* reviewer's praise of the novel (DBF 1810A046). In a similar vein, originality is praised in Burney's *Evelina*, and its absence in the titular character of Wollstonecraft's *Mary* is framed as a defect for its *Monthly* reviewer (CR 1778, vol. 46: 203, Raven 452).

A more contentious question among reviewers is that of realism. Indeed, the *Critical* review of Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman* praises the novel for being "built on the realities of life," just like Lord Orville's rivals in *Evelina* are commended for being "painted from nature" (Raven 764, CR 1778, vol. 46: 203). The adjective and adverb "natural" and "naturally" are also unfailingly used in a positive way, as in the *Monthly* reviews of *Evelina* and Edgeworth's *Patronage* (Raven 270, DBF 1814A020), and in the *Critical* reviews of Hamilton's

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65 This echoes Samuel Johnson's concern for "the young, the ignorant, and the idle" who read novels, as their minds are "not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account" (16).

*Munster Village*, Frances Burney's *Cecilia*, Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers*, and Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (Raven 271, CR 1782, vol. 54: 414, DBF 1810A046, DBF 1811A017). Conversely, the adjective "unnatural" always denotes a fault in composition, as in the *Monthly* reviewer's opinion of the characterization of Mr. Briggs in *Cecilia* and the *Critical* reviewer's perception of Laura in Brunton's *Self-Control* (MR 1782, vol. 67: 457, DBF 1811A026). In addition, the *Monthly* reviewer of More's *Cælebs* opines that "Lucilla is not drawn according to the truth of nature," thereby hindering the didactic effect of the character (DBF 1808A081).

Still, realism may be carried too far, at the expense of originality or delicacy. The *Monthly* reviewer of *Mary* indeed finds fault with the characterization of the heroine as "too much like the crowd, to resemble an individual; and toward this side chiefly, the author has deviated from originality" (Raven 452). The realism of the protagonist paradoxically seems at once excessive and insufficient, since her being too much like everyone makes her like no one specific. Another example is the *Critical* reviewer's objection to the inclusion of Jessy Wilson's rape in *Self-Control* on the grounds that young female readers should be shielded from the reality of such "horrid" events, making for a better tale in terms of delicacy (DBF 1811A026). In the *Monthly* review of the same novel, the critic states that "it is a pardonable fault if a character, which is offered as a model, transcends those for whose emulation it is intended," in direct opposition to the critic who reviewed *Cælebs* for the same magazine. While the novelty of elements in a novel is considered as unequivocally positive by the reviewers, realism may affect the reception of both aesthetic and ideological aspects of a work positively or negatively. In any case however, the critics' views on novelty and realism show composition and moral tendency to be intrinsically linked in the assessment of a didactic work of fiction's success.

Moreover, the reviews also suggest that overt didacticism, where explicit moral instruction encroaches on style, was not seen particularly favorably by early critics, as the following statement concerning *Self-Control* in the *Monthly* illustrates: "The fair author *encores* herself, if we may be allowed the expression, and sometimes repeats her arguments and reflections till we grow tired of assenting to them" (DBF 1811A026, author's emphasis). The prevalence of discussions on matters of composition shows that as valuable as moral

didacticism was considered to be, it was not to come at the expense of style. Indeed, authors such as Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth, and Hannah More who are noted for their obvious didacticism nowadays are in fact in the average group (Wood 118, ÓGallchoir 117), while Jane Austen and Frances Burney, the most canonical writers from the didactic corpus today and overwhelmingly recognized for their artistry and their propensity for indirection and subversion in their engagement with questions of morality, are in the successful group (Lanser 62, Havens 8). This not only indicates a shift in cultural values regarding the level of emphasis put on moral tendency since the early reception of the works of these authors and our own contemporary reception of them, but also suggests that purely in terms of composition, standards of critical reception may not have changed that much.

According to Susan Lanser, it may be because these novelists are women that their works were more praised in their early reception with their comparatively subdued authorial stance (78).<sup>66</sup> A comparison with the types of elements which received praise or condemnation from reviewers in the reference novels should be helpful to determine if this argument is supported by my study, given that the reference corpus includes significantly more male authors than the didactic corpus.

#### *iv. Success and Failure in the Reference Corpus*

It is not pertinent to frame the study of the received success and failure of the novels of the reference corpus in terms of didactic intent, given that these novels were chosen on the basis of their *not* having been perceived as explicitly instructive by early critics. However, looking at the criteria for the complete or average success of a novel or its failure for the reviewers allows us to contextualize the conclusions drawn from the same study of the didactic corpus. And indeed, as will be made clear, composition and moral tendency are proportionally important to a similar degree in the reviews of the novels of both corpora, further highlighting how intertwined artistry and morals are for the early critics of these novels, recalling Horace's *dulce et utile*.

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66 The notion that didactic novels should include pervasive elements of language constitutive of an explicit authorial stance is explored in chapters 3 and 4. Lanser's theory of narrative authority, which frames the analysis, is presented in the introduction to chapter 3.

None of the novels of the reference corpus received unalloyed praise upon first publication, unlike some from the didactic corpus, and the overwhelming majority of the criticism leveled at the novels has to do with composition. Strikingly, the three novels which were decried by at least one reviewer on the basis of their wrong moral tendency are all also criticized on the grounds of narrative composition and style. These are Gregory Lewis Way's *Learning at a Loss, or The Amours of Mr. Pedant and Miss Hartley* (1778), Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792), and Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795), whose reviews are discussed section I, ii or this chapter.

Furthermore, several reviews lament errors in composition and problems in the fictionalization of otherwise sound moral principles, relegating the novels to merely average or positively failed attempts. This is the case of Charles Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* (1798), Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1805), William Godwin's *Fleetwood, or The New Man of Feeling* (1805), and Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), all of which may be grouped as merely adequate attempts since the reviews are generally favorable. While the *Monthly* review of *Rosamund Gray* is positive on all accounts, the *Critical* reviewer comments that "the story is perhaps too simple," even though "it abounds with passages which the reader will wish to remember, and which he will be the better for remembering" (Raven 749).<sup>67</sup> Likewise, "a few inaccuracies in Mrs. Opie's style" are noted by the *Critical* reviewer of *Adeline Mowbray* as well as by the *Monthly* critic, who notes that "her work would be improved by a more strict attention to the propriety of some of her expressions, which at times are affected, and at others inelegant" (DBF 1805A058). The *Critical* also points to an aspect of plot which does not support and therefore undermines the declared moral of the author, namely "the fascinating colours thrown over the erroneous virtues of Adeline and Glenmurray" who live in a free union until the latter's death.

Although the *Critical* praises both the moral tendency and the execution of *The Heroine*, the *Monthly* reviewer finds fault with the author "for not confining his ridicule to allowable subjects" and for the heroine's "cruelty towards her father [which] indisposes the

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<sup>67</sup> This last comment could suggest a morally didactic effect on the reader, but the language was thought too vague for the novel to be included in the didactic corpus. The review otherwise focuses on its composition, making it unclear as to the reason why readers may want to remember certain passages, given that it is the way the story is written that invites rereading: "it is so related as to invite a frequent perusal" (Raven 749).

reader for being interested in her subsequent fate" (DBF 1813A009), undermining the tale. The reviews of *Fleetwood* are also positive overall, in spite of the "levity" with which the subject of religion is sometimes treated, as has already been mentioned (DBF 1805A032). In fact, a lack of interest in the plot is the *Critical* reviewer's main qualm with the novel: "although upon perusal, our fears of what might be the nature of its principles were totally removed, we confess our curiosity was little gratified by the common incidents of the life of Fleetwood." The *Monthly* critic expresses a similar point of view, finding the character of Fleetwood lacking in interest and many of the concluding events short of natural. In addition, the reviewer questions the efficacy of cautionary tales, opining that the fictional rendition of "passion and madness will despise the lessons of reason," recalling the position found in the same magazine with regards to Wollstonecraft's *Mary* (1788) from the didactic corpus.<sup>68</sup>

In the same vein, Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795), George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799), and Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814) all received at least one decidedly negative review on the grounds that the authors' commendable moral and political aims are badly supported by the narration. While the *Critical* reviewer of *Henry* is censorious of the novel both on the score of composition and morality, the *Monthly* reviewer is "well convinced that the author is really a lover of mankind, and has a sincere desire of promoting good morality," but finds it "astonishing [...] that he should have so mistaken the means," as previously quoted (Raven 637). The critic notes "appropriate language, in which each character speaks not only in the tone of the passion that he feels, but in the idiom that is characteristic of his habits, manners, and rank in life" as something to which "Mr. C. has not been sufficiently attentive," thereby frustrating his supposed moral aim. The *Critical* reviewer of *The Vagabond* expresses a similar point in the staunchly critical assertion that "to push principles to an extent beyond the intention of their author, is an attempt to prove too much, which always

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68 In a similar vein, the *Critical* reviewer of Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806) claims that "there is now less glory in the enterprize [of "moral writers" hunting down "the professors of modern philosophy"], but the attempt is in itself always meritorious" (DBF 1806A026). Given the general prevalence of the concern with moral tendency in the reviews of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* for the novels of both corpora, these comments appear more as jabs to the readers than to the authors of morally inclined novels, confirming the Reviews' aim of "civilizing the tastes of the reading public" and "discriminat[ing] among reading practices, creating hierarchies among its audience by assessing the habits and tastes of different kinds of readers" (Donoghue 25, 28). The construction of different kinds of readers in the reviews is the subject of chapter 2.

fails" and in this case is manifest in the "extravagance" and "absurdity" of the "highly improbable" story (*CR* 1799, vol. 26: 237).

Finally, the *Monthly* reviewer supposes that Mary Brunton hoped that "the allurements of a novel may win its way where graver efforts would be less successful; and, in the hour that was destined solely for amusement, the most salutary reflections and the most important convictions may arise" (*DBF* 1814A014), stressing the didactic aim of the novel expressed in both the preface and the first chapter through the voice of the autodiegetic narrator (59, 63).<sup>69</sup> The end is not attained for the critic, although the moral sentiments are rightly "pious and noble," because of defects in composition. The character of Mr. Maitland, the heroine Ellen's eventual husband, is feared to "not excite interest, although he may command approbation" and is put through an "unnatural transmutation" into a "lively and intrepid Highland chieftain" at the end of the novel, which "involves the author in explanations which are awkward in their progress [*sic*], and unsatisfactory in proportion to their needless improbability."

Through these reviews, we see a comparable concern pertaining to the novels of both corpora with aspects of composition, showing the same standards of novelty, originality, stylistic propriety, probability and interest, as well as sound morality. The other reviews of the reference novels, which primarily discuss issues of composition, also exhibit these standards. The laudatory review of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) published in the *Monthly* illustrates the importance of balancing originality and probability in engaging ways, judging that "the fable abounds with incidents, all following in a regular train, like effects springing from their causes; and yet expectation is kept alive, and, though probability is not violated, surprise is constantly awakened" (Raven 535-6).

The *Monthly* review of Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795) also makes the centrality of the notion of propriety in novel writing clear: "appropriate language, in which each character speaks not only in the tone of the passion that he feels, but in the idiom that is characteristic of his habits, manners, and rank in life, is one of the most captivating charms of good writing" (Raven 637). This statement is followed by an assertion that *Henry* is lacking in such propriety of language. The use of the term "proper" to define aspects of composition

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69 Analysis of prefatory material is provided in chapter 3.



only appears in some of the most positive reviews across the two corpora, namely in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782), illustrating the importance of the notion for the critics. While the *Critical* reviewer of *Cecilia* objects to certain elements in the novel, namely "its extraordinary length" and the lack of more severe punishment for the extreme pride of old Mr. Delvile (*CR* 1782, vol. 54: 420), the critic praises Burney for her success in "the invention and proper colouring of new characters," and deems this "one of the most difficult tasks which a novel-writer has to perform" (*CR* 1782, vol. 54: 416). The conclusion of the *Critical's* exclusively positive review of *Pride and Prejudice* similarly shows propriety in composition to equal great praise: "There is not one person in the drama with whom we could readily dispense;—they have all their *proper* places; and fill their several stations, with great credit to themselves, and much satisfaction to the reader" (*DBF* 1813A007, my emphasis).

Importantly, the study of these reviews shows no significant difference in the application of these standards to male and female novelists. This comes in contrast to what Frank Donoghue has claimed regarding reviews starting in the mid-eighteenth century, and may attest to the growing legitimization of novels written by women over the period (6). Moreover, no specific indication is given as to the type of stance condemned by reviewers regarding the reference novels, making it difficult to confirm or deny Susan Lanser's claim that female novelists tended to be decried when expressing views explicitly (78). The process of legitimizing narrative fiction as art is considered to end in the years leading up to Walter Scott making novel-writing an appropriate activity for men, promptly leading to a shift in the male to female output ratio in the 1820s and "anticipating the male-dominated Victorian market" (Mandal 2007: 29). In addition, the opposed political heritages of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* do not appear clearly in these reviews, with the notable exception of those focusing on Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795, reference corpus). The *Critical* reviewer condemns it for its morals while the *Monthly* reviewer believes in the author's "sincere desire of promoting good morality," mirroring the generally more conservative politics of the *Critical* and the *Monthly's* more liberal views (Raven 637, Waters 123). Overall, what the reviews of the novels of both corpora show is the interrelation of narrative composition, style, and morality as the main standards of literary merit brought forward by critics.

## Conclusion

The discourse found in the early reviews regarding moral tendency in general and didacticism in particular shows a hierarchy in the necessity of evincing both sound morals and effective composition in order to warrant the most laudatory review. Without the latter, a novel misses the artistic mark, while a lack of the former leads to a direct condemnation in spite of possible aesthetic qualities. In fact, most novels received as didactic garnered ambivalent reviews, illustrating the difficulty of striking the right balance between moral instruction and seamless narrative construction. The expectation of sustained interest through pleasing composition and that of keeping instruction as a primary focus may be difficult to reconcile, as the small number of novels exactly fitting the bill suggests.

Such sustained focus on matters of composition shows reviewers attempting to weigh in on the appraisal of novels as an emerging literary form. Though their widespread contemptuous tone illustrates the precarious position of the novel as a cultural artifact, the critics' high standards may also be viewed as participating in the novel's legitimization. Finding two of Austen and Burney's novels in the highest tier of didactic novels anticipates the later reception of these works and their authors—especially Austen—as some of the best English novels in the literary canon, which I analyze in detail in chapter 8.

This chapter also complicates previous assessments of the importance of gendered considerations in early criticism. The best novels of either corpus for the reviewers are female-authored, illustrating a high level of critical regard for women's fiction in this circumscribed period when the novel had lost much of its previous "aura of sexual scandal" and had not yet become dominated by male writers—provided the moral tendency of the works upholds the reviewers' conception of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman (Warner 4, Mandal 2007: 27). As such, the reviews suggest that moral didacticism polices the behavior of both young women and young men of the culturally dominant class, though the stories tend to focus more obviously on women through a prevalence of female protagonists. These elements are explored in more detail through textual analysis in parts 2 and 3.

The reviews themselves may be seen to act as arbiters of proper behavior, aiming to prescribe for authors the best way to combine moral instruction and aesthetic quality for the benefit of their readers. Chapter 2 explores the sometimes contentious relationship between

author and reviewer in their discourse surrounding the figure of the reader, an understanding of how the latter was conceived being paramount to the study of the early reception of moral didacticism.

## Chapter 2. Who Is Moral Didacticism For?

### Introduction

As shown in chapter 1, reviewers create a hierarchy of didactic performances based on perceived moral tendency and assessment of narrative composition in ways which enforce gendered ideals of genteel men and women's moral roles in society as paramount to the delineation of correct taste. The presence of moral didacticism implies an intended or actual recipient of the instruction provided in the shape of readers. Consequently, this chapter proposes to analyze the early reviewers' conception of the didactic novels' readership, using concordance lines generated by the textometry software TXM to trace the occurrences of the nouns "reader(s)" and "public."<sup>70</sup>

A comparison of the concordance lines from the reviews of both corpora illustrates the reviewers' fraught construction of their relationship with a wide variety of possible types of readers, given the latter's increasing number and consequently commercial and cultural power in the growing book market. As Antonia Forster notes,

in commercial literary enterprises the interests of readers naturally take precedence. It is readers who are paying to be told, despite the best deflecting efforts of authors' prefaces and booksellers' advertisements, whether a book or pamphlet is worth reading; they may also be paying to be entertained by the rudeness with which some authors or their works are disposed of or to be flattered by assumptions of common ground between readers and reviewers, with the generally used grand editorial 'we' of the review journal contributing to a sense of institutional authority in which the reading public is assumed to be on the same side. (182)

The possible intent to "flatter" readers for mercantile purposes is at odds with the reviews' purported aim to act as a judge of literary value for readers. Both postures imply very different authorial stances: the former involves relative equality and proximity with readers, while the latter suggests a hierarchical relationship. The reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus engage in greater proportion with the figure of the reader than those of the novels of the reference corpus, and we might hypothesize that critics in these reviews are particularly

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<sup>70</sup> The software TXM, developed in Lyon, France, generates concordance lines where the searched keyword appears alongside its left and right context, allowing for straightforward comparative study (Heiden 2).

likely to assume a position of literary and moral authority, mimicking the traditional teacher-learner relationship with the projected readership. However, this chapter highlights that the early reception of moral didacticism does not particularly translate into an assertive teacher-like posture on the part of the reviewers in relation to readers, underlining instead their difficulty in managing "the triangular relationship between themselves, authors and the readers" (Donoghue 29).

The figure of the reader was a subject of scholarly study throughout the twentieth century, when the opposition between the relative importance of reader and author in making sense of a literary work raged for several decades. As some theorists proclaimed the "death of the author" and the debunking of the "intentional fallacy," leading to a reappraisal of the reader's primacy in the very existence of a literary text (Barthes 65-66, Wimsatt and Beardsley 470-471), others pointed to the reader's importance in making the meaning of a text (Rosenblatt 1995: 24, Iser 21, Fish 3). This led to the development of a number of theoretical readers such as the model reader (Eco 7), the ideal reader (Culler 124), the good reader as opposed to the misreader (Sebeok 248), or the resisting reader (Fetterley xxii), while not necessarily doing away with the notion of authorial intention (Eco 7, Rabinowitz 23, Booth 20).

The vast array of theoretical readers that have been conceptualized over the years points to the problematic nature of discussing the reader as an entity, already visible in the *Monthly* and *Critical* reviews. As Louise Rosenblatt pointed out in the first part of the twentieth century, there is no generic reader: "there is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works" (1995, 24).<sup>71</sup> Theorization of the author-reader dynamic has also emerged from interest in the figure of the reader, leading Peter Rabinowitz to develop the concepts of authorial audience, constructed from "the assumptions about the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions" that the author makes when creating the book, and of actual audience, comprising the "flesh-and-blood people who read

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71 Roland Barthes's conception of the reader is almost diametrically opposed to Rosenblatt's, illustrating the wide array of theories on the topic. For Barthes, "le lecteur est un homme sans histoire, sans biographie, sans psychologie ; il est seulement ce *quelqu'un* qui tient rassemblées dans un même champ toutes les traces dont est constitué l'écrit," making the reader as a (male) empty recipient of writing, rather than a full-fledged and unique individual (67, author's emphasis).

the book" (20-1). This distinction is useful in the study of early reviewers' portrayals of readers, where we see these critics attempting to define the former while struggling to accommodate their perceptions of the latter.

Attempts at defining readership were already pervasive at the turn of the nineteenth century in both authors and critics of literature, illustrating an anxiety over the growing reading public which coincided with greater literacy rates and a rise in reading material on the book market (Warner 141). This concern was often gendered in nature, as the stereotype of the delusional female reader which permeated literary discourse at the time exemplifies (Bray 1, Towsey 23). Joe Bray nevertheless mitigates this observation in his study which includes discussions on the novels of Frances Burney, Charlotte Smith, Mary Hays, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Maria Edgeworth, arguing instead that the novel of the turn of the nineteenth century "frequently represents the female reader not as passive and impressionable, but rather as active and creative" (1). Similarly, although contemporary criticism of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century novel has been linked to a desire to police female reading practices, a study of the representations of readers in the reviews of the novels of the didactic and reference corpus and in the direct addresses to readers in the novels themselves complicates this picture while not invalidating these previous works (Day 125).

Mentions of "the reader" are common in the reviews of the novels of both corpora, and comparing the occurrences of the nouns "reader," "readers" and "public," and the ways in which the words are used in context allows us to analyze how the critics constructed their readership and to what effect.<sup>72</sup> The concordance lines with "reader|readers|publicNN" as keywords in the reviews of the novels of both corpora illustrate how the critics endeavored to negotiate their place as critics by attempting to define the readers that they considered the novels and their reviews to be addressing. Though the reviews of the didactic corpus unsurprisingly indicate a greater concern with reader reception—especially for ladies and young people of both sexes—than those of the reference corpus, in both cases the difficulty

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<sup>72</sup> For the sake of clarity in the discussion, I will be using the term "reader" to include all four keywords. In order to isolate the occurrences of the nominal form of the word "public," "NN" follows the term in the TXM query.

of establishing an authoritative stance over the public is evident, underscoring a delicate power dynamic between reviewers as arbiters of taste and readers as consumers.

Direct addresses to readers (DAR) are also a fixture of eighteenth-century prefatory materials and novels, explored in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. This practice has been described as a "generic" feature of the novel's emergence (Biber and Conrad 224-225, Stewart 7), which we might relate to the process of theorizing and legitimizing narrative fiction observable throughout early and mid-century novels, as detailed in Baudouin Millet's *"Ceci n'est pas un roman": l'évolution du statut de la fiction en Angleterre de 1652 à 1754*. This is likewise visible in the reviewers' construction of the figure of the reader.

Contributors to the *Critical* engage strikingly more often in such explicit attempts at constructing their readership than reviewers writing in the *Monthly*, suggesting a heightened concern with the figure of the reader in the former publication. Indeed, 65% of the references to readers in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus appear in the *Critical*. The discrepancy is all the more striking in the reviews of the novels from the didactic corpus, where 80% of such mentions are found in that magazine. This may be indicative of the *Critical* reviewers' tendency to be "more discriminating" than their *Monthly* counterpart, in line with its self-appointed task of "correcting or civilizing the tastes of the reading public," which may easily be connected with the perception of moral didacticism (Mayo 207, Donoghue 25). This chapter analyzes the different types of readers evoked by reviewers, starting with specific categories of readers (I). A comparison of the readers conceived as reviewers' ("our readers") or authors' ("her readers") is then proposed (II), before a closing discussion of the impersonal reader (III).

## I. Critics and Specific Readers

The concern with who readers are is significantly more visible in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus in comparison with those of the novels of the reference corpus, which illustrates the critics attempting to "police both the production and the consumption of literature," particularly when it comes to works that they believed may have an active moral impact on readers (Donoghue 17). Indeed, 55 occurrences of the nouns "reader(s)" or "public" can be found in the reviews of the didactic novels, as opposed to only 29

occurrences in the reviews of the reference novels, close to a 1 to 2 ratio. Nonetheless, at least one of the nouns "reader(s)" or "public" appears once or more in thirteen out of the eighteen reviews of the didactic novels, and in twelve out of sixteen reviews of the reference novels. The construction of the relationship between critic and reader appears far from straightforward, illustrating the general will of critics to legitimize their role as judges of literary merit while also demonstrating the difficulty of the enterprise.

This difference is all the more visible in the kinds of readers that are evoked in the reviews of the novels of the two corpora. Indeed, mentions of the reader in the reviews of the reference novels conjure a relatively generic reader, although specific kinds also appear: 68% of the occurrences evoke an unspecified reader, most often in the form of "the reader" or "the readers." 32% of the occurrences mention a specific kind of reader—"the readers of circulating libraries," "the reader, who has a mind capable of enjoying rational and moral sentiment," "fair readers," "fastidious readers," "the sentimental reader," "a candid public," and "an elegant audience" (see Tables 4 and 6).

The ratio of specific/generic in the evocation of a readership in the reviews of the didactic novels is similar to that found in the reviews of the reference novels, with 71% of unspecified "reader," "readers," or "public," and 29% of specific categories of readers, including "young novel readers," readers that "have a sympathetic taste for distress," "every reader of sense and piety," "critical," "gentle," "unwary," "fair," "juvenile" and "female" readers, and "a reading and a scientific public." However, there are twice as many references to the reader in these reviews as in those of the reference corpus, which translates into a more precise and varied categorization of several types of readerships. While the notion of gentility is present in the reviews of both corpora ("elegant audience" and "gentle reader" as well as "a reading and scientific public," which suggests a learned audience), the reviews of the didactic novels add to the categories of class, those of age ("young," "juvenile"), and a greater emphasis on gender ("fair," "female," and "those of the other sex," which in context refers to males). This implies the reception of didacticism by the critics to be heavily informed by an aim to reinforce existing social hierarchies in terms of class, age, and gender, often portraying the supposed beneficiary of moral didacticism as a young woman of genteel birth (see Tables 3 and 5).



Tables 3 and 4 show the concordance lines from the reviews of the didactic and the reference corpora respectively featuring references to specific types of readers. Table 3 is comprised of sixteen occurrences, which amount to 29% of all mentions of readers in the reviews of the didactic corpus. Table 4 shows nine occurrences, making up 32% of such references by critics of the reference novels. Both tables include mentions of particular groups of readers in ways which underline the critics' legitimacy in assessing taste by distancing themselves from certain readers while claiming a proximity with others.

1778evelina CR	with which <b>our young novel</b>	<b>readers</b>	are determined to sit down satisfied.
1782cecilia CR	But <b>the tender part of our</b>	<b>readers</b>	will, we imagine, be more pleased with the
1801belinda CR	turns the brain of <b>some young novel-</b>	<b>reader</b>	.
1801fatherdaughter CR	diminish the pleasure of such of <b>our</b>	<b>readers</b>	as may be induced to read the work itself; but,
1801fatherdaughter MR	<b>sympathetic taste for distress</b> ; and from	<b>readers</b>	<b>of this class</b> , the tale of woe now before us
1801fatherdaughter MR	heart of <b>the most callous of critical</b>	<b>readers</b>	. Our only consolation, under the first
1808coelebs CR	family is such as will interest every	<b>reader</b>	<b>of sense and piety</b> . Miss Lucilla is engaged to
1811self-control CR	But, <b>gentle</b>	<b>reader</b>	, our Laura is a very particular Laura; that is,
1811self-control MR	them the more useful to <b>unwary</b>	<b>readers</b>	, who take up the book merely for
1811sense CR	story may be thought trifling by the	<b>readers</b>	<b>of novels</b> , who are insatiable after something
1811sense CR	the subject of love, and then our <b>fair</b>	<b>readers</b>	will have a pretty good idea of what is
1813pride CR	concerns, may be useful to <b>our fair</b>	<b>readers</b>	—therefore we extract the part.
1814patronage CR	<b>A reading and a scientific</b>	<b>public</b>	, may be said to exist—
1814patronage CR	may be said to exist—a	<b>public</b>	, <b>with a taste for the finer productions of art</b> ,
1814patronage CR	<b>Juvenile</b>	<b>readers</b>	will be much surprised to find the important
1814patronage MR	with superior skill, deters her <b>female</b>	<b>readers</b>	from artifice, and those of the other sex from

*Table 3.* Specific Readers in the Reviews of the Didactic Corpus

1791simple story CR	To the	<b>readers</b>	<b>of circulating libraries</b> we need not recommend this
1798rosamund MR	interesting story, the	<b>reader</b>	, <b>who has a mind capable of enjoying rational and moral sentiment</b>
1805adeline CR	must move every	<b>reader</b>	to tears <b>who can melt at the recital of unmerited distress</b> ;
1805fleetwood CR	we hope, in a <b>candid</b>	<b>public</b>	, who will, in justice, welcome 'Fleetwood'
1805fleetwood CR	<b>a numerous class of</b>	<b>readers</b>	, and from the improved purity of the author's style.
1806irish girl CR	in the eye of her <b>fair</b>	<b>reader</b>	at the woes and virtues of the interesting heroine, it is
1806leonora MR	but the <b>sentimental</b>	<b>reader</b>	will be disposed to think that the portrait of Leonora is too
1814wanderer CR	put up with by <b>most</b>	<b>readers</b>	, when the accompaniments we have mentioned, spring
1814wanderer MR	critical, for <b>fastidious</b>	<b>readers</b>	. Without the recent opportunity of observing what constitutes

*Table 4.* Specific Readers in the Reviews of the Reference Corpus

Classifying some readers as young constitutes a distancing technique which is only visible in the reviews of the didactic corpus. It is perhaps the most unsurprising component

of the construction of readers of didactic novels, with critics addressing a young audience seamlessly positioning themselves as co-educators alongside—and often above—the novels they review. The three references to young readers in the reviews indeed suggest an unambiguously authoritative posture assumed by the reviewers in relation to these readers, which the critics use to position themselves as equally legitimate educators as the authors of the novels reviewed. The three references to young readers appear in the *Critical* reviews of Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) and Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and *Patronage* (1814), and each occurs in the midst of a criticism of an aspect of the novels. In the review to *Evelina*, the critic writes:

The title of Sir Charles Grandison, the fortune of Miss Byron, are the least with which our young novel readers are determined to sit down satisfied. What is the consequence? Their fates have perhaps destined them to be a petty attorney or a silversmith's daughter, a grocer's son or a clergyman's heiress; fortune *positively* refuses to realize any of their romantic dreams; and a quarter of an hour's perusal of an unnatural novel has embittered their lives. (*CR* 1778, vol. 46: 204, author's emphasis)

The tone here is undoubtedly assertive as the reviewer claims to know exactly the effects of novels set in high life on young middle-class readers, which is used as the basis of the criticism of the perceived common practice of novelists to focus on rich and titled protagonists.

Likewise, the *Critical* reviewer of *Belinda* claims to know exactly the effects of "that romantic folly of *first love* which daily turns the brain of some young novel-reader" to support the acknowledgment of the usefulness of authors "using every occasion, and trying every method" to check that folly (*DBF* 1801A026, author's emphasis). The tone is again unambiguously assertive, and serves as an introduction to the caveat brought to this claim, that "the matter should be handled with discretion" lest the heroine be brought to "look on marriage with the eye of *reason* only, and she will see sexual intercourse as its immediate consequence," endangering her delicacy (author's emphasis). In this and in the review of *Evelina*, the reviewers mention but do not directly address the youthful readers they claim to know so well. Instead, commenting on youthful readers enables the critics to condemn particular aspects of the novels using the framework of moral didacticism, who consequently assert power over authors and readers alike.

In the *Critical* review of *Patronage*, the reviewer anticipates the reactions of "juvenile readers" to support the objection of Caroline marrying a German Count and consequently leaving England for the sake of his diplomatic career:

Characters are introduced, which the authoress is often at a loss what to do with; and it is evident, that her final disposal of some of them, in no respect accords with her original intentions. Juvenile readers will be much surprised to find the important pair, whom *they* usually term the hero and heroine, in this very predicament. The adoption of the former by Miss Edgeworth has excited some wonder in ourselves; for, with no disrespect to sentimental Poles, and star-decorated Germans, they are real intruders, when their errand is to deprive us of our most enlightened countrywomen. (*DBF* 1814A020, author's emphasis)

The nationalist sentiment expressed by the reviewer is framed by a will to benefit young readers, whose presumed reception is used to censure aspects of narrative composition such as the perceived incoherence in the fate of major characters. The tone is as assertive as in the passages from the reviews of *Evelina* and *Belinda*, showing reviewers unabashedly assuming a position of authority over both young readers and authors.

The explicit references to gender in the reviews show the critics acting as benevolent mediators between the work and its readers, especially in the case of ageless "fair readers." In these instances, the critics embody the posture of the Lockean father, whose aim is to raise his child to become an "affectionate friend" once grown, through the habitual use of reason over absolute authority as a means to elicit obedience, as soon as the child may be reasoned with (Locke 26-27). The term "fair" to mean female includes the positive connotations of beauty and elegance (*OED*), which is reflected in the reviewers' use of it. The *Critical* reviewers of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) both mention "fair readers" coupled with a tone of respect for them and the author. In the review of *Sense and Sensibility*, the critic writes: "Such is the difference exhibited between Sense and Sensibility. We will make another extract on the subject of love, and then our fair readers will have a pretty good idea of what is wanting in the person and sentiments of a lover to please such a romantic enthusiast as Marianne Dashwood" (*DBF* 1811A017). This comes in the context of an overwhelmingly positive review, where the quoted passages serve to illustrate the reviewer's positive impression, as discussed in the previous chapter. The adjectives "fair"

and "pretty" in "pretty good idea" alleviate the otherwise assertive tone conveyed by the use of the modal auxiliary *will*, adding a measure of humility to the critic's statement.

The *Critical* reviewer of *Pride and Prejudice* similarly conveys a respectful attitude toward both the author of the work and her "fair readers": "The sentiments, which are dispersed over the work, do great credit to the *sense* and *sensibility* of the authoress. The line she draws between the prudent and the mercenary in matrimonial concerns, may be useful to our fair readers—therefore we extract the part" (*DBF* 1813A007, author's emphasis). The modal auxiliary *may* and the adjective "fair" combine to create a respectful stance on the part of the reviewer rather than doubt at the possible effectiveness of the instruction conveyed in the work, given the previous laudatory sentence. Moreover, in both of these examples, the critics use the personal pronoun "our" to introduce the "fair readers," which creates a personal bond with the readers invoked in support of the respectful stance. Although the reviewers—and most explicitly the *Pride and Prejudice* critic—are clearly concerned with the instruction found in the novels for their "fair readers," supporting the prevalent belief at the time that education of women was paramount to safeguarding national morality, this concern is not necessarily expressed in overtly authoritative terms (Poovey 33).

Perhaps more insidiously than an overtly authoritative stance, this posture reinforces the importance of educating readers in order to enforce the social status quo as naturally the most conducive to social stability in accordance to Burkean ideals, based on gendered norms as much as on class hierarchy.<sup>73</sup> The Burkean conception of the Law of the Father, as Eleanor Ty calls it, mirrors the Lockean father-educator; both emphasize the tie between the stability of the family and that of the state, and promote the figure of the "benevolent patriarch," whose authority is secured through affection (Ty 1993: 102, Kowaleski-Wallace 1991: 19).<sup>74</sup>

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73 See for example Burke's defense of "neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic" privilege of birth: "The power of perpetuating our property in our families is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it, and that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself. It makes our weakness subservient to our virtue; it grafts benevolence even upon avarice. The possessors of family wealth, and of the distinction which attends hereditary possession, (as most concerned in it,) are the natural securities for this transmission" (49).

74 I analyze the figure of the benevolent pedagogue, drawn from Ty and Kowaleski-Wallace's discussions of the Burkean and Lockean "benevolent patriarch," in my article "Entre modernité, tradition et conventions : La figure du/de la pédagogue chez Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, et Hannah More."

Though Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace stresses the importance of gender dynamics in the benevolent patriarch's exercise of power, both genders are considered as targets of instruction by reviewers. It may be inferred that moral didacticism was not then seen solely as a matter of policing female behavior, which the generic link often made between didactic novels and conduct books may suggest (Havens 4-5). The *Monthly* review of *Patronage*, which is discussed in chapter 1, I, 3, i-ii, implies that both men and women are equally successfully deterred by Edgeworth from negative behaviors. Nevertheless, the instruction is gendered rather than universal, with women being turned away from "artifice" and men from "abject dependence," and reflects a gendered vision of social behaviors: women's moral conduct is circumscribed to interpersonal relationships, while men's influences the political and professional world (DBF 1814A02).

Similarly, just as both genders are discussed by the *Critical* reviewer of *Evelina* following the mention of "our young novel readers," the same reviewer details what may be gained from the novel by each member of a family, whether parent, child, male, or female:

The father of a family, observing the knowledge of the work and the lessons of experience which it contains, will recommend it to his daughters; they will weep and (what is not so commonly the effect of novels) will laugh, grow wiser, as they read; the experienced mother will derive pleasure and happiness from being present at its reading; even the sons of the family will forego the diversions of the town or the field to pursue the entertainment of Evelina's acquaintance, who will imperceptibly lead them, as well as their fathers, to improvement and to virtue. (CR 1778, vol. 46: 202-3)

Strikingly, the "experienced mother" is the only member of the family not to explicitly profit morally from the reading of *Evelina*, only "deriv[ing] pleasure and happiness from being present at its reading." According to the critic, daughters and sons will benefit from both amusement and instruction, the former "imperceptibly" leading even fathers "to improvement and to virtue." The gendered dynamics are paradoxical here, since the father is positioned not only as the head of the family, being the one with the capability and authority to recommend a novel to his daughters, but also as one to be educated by that very reading material. On the one hand, the paternal figure is a model of the Burkean benevolent patriarch, rightfully using his authority for the good of his family. On the other hand, the mother is the only one "experienced" enough not to need any more moral instruction, which

positions her as the moral guardian within the family, anticipating the Victorian ideal of the Angel in the House.<sup>75</sup>

Moral instruction remains gendered in this passage, echoing the *Monthly* review of *Patronage*. While the daughters "will laugh, grow wiser, as they read," the critic claims that "even the sons of the family will forego the diversions of the town or the field to pursue the entertainment of Evelina's acquaintance, who will *imperceptibly* lead them [...] to improvement and to virtue" (my emphasis). The activity of novel reading leading to improved wisdom for daughters appears as a matter of course, whereas that same activity for sons is presented as an oddity, introduced by "even." For young men, "the diversions of the town or the field" are presented as their natural everyday pursuit, which again circumscribes women to the domestic sphere while men appear free to move in and out of it.

The generic family depicted in this passage also appears to be of a certain rank, with both women and men able to take time out of their day to read fiction, in addition to the reference to "diversions [...] of the field" which suggests landowning hunting men. This comes in contrast to the lessons of *Patronage* as presented by its *Monthly* reviewer which may apply to young men and women of the professional class as well as of the country-based gentility, although the protagonists themselves largely belong to the latter group. In positing the benefits of reading certain novels in gendered terms, the reviewers therefore evoke slightly different readerships based on social class, but similarly governed by gendered activities and anchored in comparable principles of virtue. The *Critical* reviewers show themselves more deeply attached to "poli[cing] the boundaries between classes" than the *Monthly*, which may also explain the generally respectful tone of the critics in addressing their "fair readers" in the reviews of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* (Donoghue 25). Indeed, the comment on the dangers for readers of lower social standing to read exclusively novels set in high life featured in the *Critical* review of *Evelina* suggests a deep-seated belief in the righteousness of the immutability of social class for both men and women, based on birth and money.

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<sup>75</sup> Audrey Bilger notes that "much of the criticism that explores conduct literature focuses on its production of the ideal domestic woman" made famous by Patmore Coventry's narrative poem *The Angel in the House* (1854) (85). Studying the *Monthly* and the *Critical* shows reviewers participating in this cultural discourse.

Finally, the figure of the genteel reader is once used as a way to disparage a novel through the assumption of shared values between the reader and the reviewer, further illustrating the will to particularly address readers of the social elite, especially in the *Critical*. In the hostile *Critical* review of Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811), the critic directly addresses a "gentle reader" in such a way as to create a bond between that reader and the critic, the latter of whom assumes the former will share in the opinions conveyed and understand the irony with which they are expressed. As Linda Hutcheon notes, "unlike metaphor or allegory, which demand similar supplementing of meaning, irony has an evaluative edge and manages to provoke emotional responses in those who 'get' it and those who don't, as well as in its targets and in what other people call its 'victims'" (2). An example of the irony of the critic comes early in the review:

Laura is a most wonderful child, and grows up a most wonderful woman, as may well be believed when we tell the reader that she is at a very early age made to read by the parson's wife, of the parish, where they live, the triumphant deaths of the first reformers, and nobly *wishes for persecution, that she may be a martyr*. (DBF 1811A026, author's emphasis)

The italics emphasize what the reviewer considers as an example of "methodistical *palavering*," and their clear objection to it (author's emphasis). The references to readers in this review consequently build on an assumed complicity between the reader and the critic to target the novel. The critic mentions "our readers" three times and "the reader" once, in all cases creating a bond with the latter. Indeed, the personal pronoun in "our readers" positions readers on the side of the critic as a favored audience, and "the reader" in the singular invites all readers to identify to a unique and homogeneous reader, leaving little room for varieties of opinions and therefore encouraging assent with the critic's views.

Then, the same reviewer addresses a "gentle reader" directly, in the only instance of second-person address found in the reviews of either corpus: "But, gentle reader, our Laura is *a very particular Laura*; that is, she has this anti-christian charity in her, that though she says by *word of mouth* she *forgives*, in her heart she *never forgets*" (author's emphasis). Here, the critic is no longer ironical, and clearly expresses their opinion with the notion of "anti-christian charity." The second-person address enshrines the direct bond between critic and reader, reinforced by the adjective "gentle," which not only implies high birth but also a

"meek" and "peaceable" disposition.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, "meekness" was associated with femininity in the period, suggesting that the reader addressed is a well born woman.<sup>77</sup> Here again, the reviewer uses gender and class to create a link with readers of genteel birth in a way that reinforces existing social hierarchies, illustrating the awkwardness of reconciling the aim "to speak to and for readers of taste" and an authoritative posture of educator in the context of reviews of novels deemed instructive (Donoghue 32).

The problem of reconciling addressing readers of the social elite and policing reading practices also appears in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus, showing that the question of construction of reviewers' attitudes toward readers extends beyond moral didacticism. In these reviews, the critics are assertive in the way they qualify certain kinds of readers only. For instance, the *Critical* reviewer of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) writes:

To the readers of circulating libraries we need not recommend this work; its being a novel is sufficient to command their attention: but to those who delight in tracing the struggles and the bursts of passion, we announce a degree of pleasure, which seems to be the greater because the power of communicating it is uncommon. (*CR* 1791, vol. 1: 313)

The "readers of circulating libraries" are conceived of as a homogeneous group characterized by thoughtlessness. Likewise, the *Monthly* reviewer of Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806) confidently asserts that "the sentimental reader will be disposed to think that the portrait of Leonora is too cold to be natural," after having praised the characters of the work for being "very ably supported" (*DBF* 1806A026). Here again, the "sentimental reader" is constructed as a unified entity, whose tastes are presented as both known to the critic and put at a distance for going against their judgment. These references to particular groups of reader echo the mentions of "the most callous of critical readers," "unwary readers" and "readers of novels, who are insatiable after something new," all found in the reviews of the didactic corpus and used to assert the critics' superiority of taste over projected types of readers (Table 2).

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76 See the definitions of "gentle" and "gentleness" in Johnson's *Dictionary* (1773), available online at <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/g?zoom=1600>. Accessed 22 March 2022.

77 In her conduct book, Hester Chapone asserts that gentleness, meekness, and patience are women's "peculiar distinctions" (89).



In contrast, other groups of readers are treated with much more respect by the critics, in some cases through a respectful reserve. An instance of this appears in the *Monthly* review of Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814), which mentions that Burney is "accustomed to convene and satisfy an elegant audience" (DBF 1814A017). By omitting further commentary on that audience and its potential reactions to the novel, the reviewer suggests that such readers already possess refined taste, that need not be policed through precise definition. Similar reserve appears in the assertive but concisely approving mention of "every reader of sense and piety" in the *Critical* review of *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* from the didactic corpus (DBF 1808A081).

Respect towards certain types of readers is also made clear through the expression of uncertainty. The *Critical* reviewer concludes their generally favorable appraisal of William Godwin's *Fleetwood* (1805) thus:

we think the present publication likely to add much to Mr. Godwin's literary character, from the entertainment its story will, we are confident, afford to a numerous class of readers, and from the improved purity of the author's style. Nor will there be wanting those, we hope, in a candid public, who will, in justice, welcome 'Fleetwood' the more warmly, as it is a perfectly harmless book, coming from the pen of an individual, upon whose more early writings that justice has pronounced the severest censure. (DBF 1805A032)

The critic here merely "hope[s]" for the existence of a "candid public" whose sense of "justice" in terms of literary merit equals their own, and does not qualify the readers likely to make up this group very precisely or confidently. The critic evinces a respectful stance towards such readers not through polite reserve, but rather by expressing personal doubt ("likely," "we hope") and supporting their claim in complex hypotactic sentences ("from the improved purity of the author's style," "as it is a perfectly harmless book, coming from the pen of an individual, upon whose more early writings that justice has pronounced the severest censure"). The mention of previous "censure" also takes away from the authority of this particular reviewer, who inscribes their assessment within a wider critical community, to whom the "candid public" is implied to belong as well.

Similar caution is visible in the *Monthly* review of *The Wanderer*, where the critic claims to have "occasionally been fearful, while perusing this truly varied, original, and

interesting novel, that some of the vulgar personages, such as young farmer Gooch, or Miss Pierson, (in the third volume,) appear before us too long, or too repeatedly, or in circumstances too critical, for fastidious readers" (*DBF* 1814A017). The statement simultaneously implies that the "fastidious readers" are genteel through their assumed lack of patience with recurring "vulgar personages" and that such responses should be taken seriously and not dismissed given that the reviewer worries about them ("We have occasionally been fearful").

Responses and reactions are not imposed authoritatively on either the candid or the elegant reading public, as opposed to other types of readers such as the sentimental or devoted circulating library subscriber. The reviews of both corpora illustrate an awareness on the part of the critics—especially those contributing to the *Critical*—of the existence of a multifarious audience, some of their biases concerning certain categories of readers, and the difficulty of balancing the need to address a polite audience with respect as well as the perceived necessity of educating certain readers' tastes, the latter being particularly evident in the reviews of the didactic corpus. In fact, the *Critical* reviewer of Edgeworth's *Patronage* directly points to the variety and as yet precariousness of a growing "reading and a scientific public [...] with a taste for the finer productions of art," claiming that such a public does not yet have the means to entirely support artists financially, the latter of whom must consequently be excused for still, as this stage, resorting to patronage (*DBF* 1814A020).

## II. "Her readers" vs. "our readers"

The myriad ways in which the generic "reader" is conceived of in the reviews of the novels of both corpora further demonstrates the uncertainty of the reviewers in their construction of their relationship to what they perceive to be the novels' and their own actual readership (Tables 4 and 5). This appears both when the reader is introduced by the definite article "the" and pronouns such as "our," "her," and "their."<sup>78</sup> The reviews of the didactic corpus introduce the figure of the reader with personal pronouns such as "our," "her", or "their" significantly more often than the reviews of the reference corpus, with 36% of total occurrences in the former and only 18% in the latter. Such disparity indicates the

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<sup>78</sup> Though "our" and "their" are also considered to be adjectives, John Burrows calls these pronouns (1987: 18).

particular difficulty in the reviews of the didactic corpus to balance the relationship to readers and authors, the former of which are at times conceived of as equals, and at other times as inferiors in terms of taste.

1778evelina CR	What effects has this upon the	readers	? They are convinced that happiness is not to be found in
1778munster CR	We must therefore present <b>our</b>	readers	with some of the entertainment which Munster Village
1782cecilia CR	Having prepared <b>our</b>	readers	for the pleasure which they will receive in the perusal of
1782cecilia CR	But the tender part of <b>our</b>	readers	will, we imagine, be more pleased with the interesting and
1782cecilia CR	We will not, however, anticipate the	reader	's pleasure by many quotations, but refer them to the
1782cecilia CR	performance has many beauties, as <b>our</b>	readers	must perceive by the extract which we have given, it is
1782cecilia CR	no improper scenes presented to the	reader	; a fault which may be too often discovered in the most
1782cecilia CR	and recommend it to <b>our</b>	readers	as worthy their attention, and replete with instruction and
1782cecilia MR	We will, however, present the	Reader	with two or three extracts from the Author's masterly
1782cecilia MR	disgusting one without nauseating the	Reader	, is one of the most difficult and delicate tasks of a
1798wrongs MR	might have been more satisfactory to <b>her</b>	readers	: but its moral effect or utility would not, we apprehend
1801belinda CR	under the title that best befits it; and the	public	will determine where is its proper classification.
1801belinda CR	She is not long together out of the	reader	's sight in any part of the performance; but the first
1801belinda MR	not now require any introduction to <b>our</b>	readers	; and the account which we gave of her elaborate treatise
1801belinda MR	too highly excited the feelings of the	reader	by the brilliancy of its first flashes,
1801fatherdaughter CR	stating our opinion of its merits. The	public	have, by the extensiveness of its circulation, given a
1801fatherdaughter CR	lay it down as a universal rule that the	public	voice is the voice of just taste, yet we must observe
1801fatherdaughter CR	diminish the pleasure of such of <b>our</b>	readers	as may be induced to read the work itself; but,
1801fatherdaughter MR	Mrs. Opie to the approbation of <b>our</b>	readers	
1805nobility CR	they were presented to the	public	.
1808coelebs CR	designed to make an impression on the	reader	very adverse to that pernicious representation of the
1810romance CR	if not known before, will make the	reader	smile; but as the authoress of 'Romance Readers, '
1810romance CR	KINDLY adopted by way of a clue <b>her</b>	readers	, that they might know what they were about. Our
1810romance CR	and ridiculous character. But that <b>our</b>	readers	may judge for themselves what kind of animal this Miss is,
1811self-control CR	<b>Our</b>	readers	we trust will give us some merit for combating our
1811self-control CR	Self Controul, we must inform <b>our</b>	readers	that this humblest of all humble insects, in her dedication
1811self-control CR	may well be believed when we tell the	reader	that she is at a very early age made to read by
1811self-control CR	With a mind thus imbued <b>our</b>	readers	may pretty well form an idea of what sort of a lady
1811self-control MR	on the disposition of the	reader	: but it is a pardonable fault if a character, which
1811sense CR	the conclusion such as the	reader	must wish it should be, and the whole is just long
1811sense CR	sensibilities are all in the extreme. The	reader	will form a judgment or the character of Mrs. Dashwood
1811sense CR	give the following extract, to show <b>our</b>	readers	how is the procrastination of liberality well as a specimen
1813pride CR	agreeably divides the attention of the	reader	. Mr. Bennet, the father of this family, is
1813pride CR	young ladies claim a great share of the	reader	's interest and attention, none calls forth our admiration
1813pride CR	obtrudes itself upon the notice of the	reader	with troublesome impertinence. There is not one person
1813pride CR	and much satisfaction to the	reader	.
1814patronage CR	We congratulate the	public	upon another effusion of genius from the elegant pen of
1814patronage CR	not trespass upon the patience of <b>our</b>	readers	in relating an exploit of the same hero Buckhurst, in
1814patronage CR	To keep him on some terms with the	reader	, he is described as originally a respectable man, with no
1814patronage CR	give a tone to the opinions of their	readers	. Thus occupied, we can expatiate but little on mere

Table 5. Generic References to Readers in the Reviews of the Didactic Corpus

1791simplestory CR	excite the curiosity and raise the hopes of the	public	. The entertainment her theatrical pieces have so
1791simplestory CR	scene, but gives place to Matilda: and the	reader	's thought are then as intensely fixed on the daughter, as
1791simplestory CR	Having given the	reader	our own opinion, we think it proper that he should have
1792anna st MR	arranged so as to keep awake the	reader	's attention. The narrative, though long, is never tedious
1794caleb MR	for systematical eccentricity, (the	reader	will pardon the paradoxical expression,) this performance,
1796natureart CR	either of the useful or the pleasing to attract	public	attention.
1798rosamund CR	it abounds with passages which the	reader	will wish to remember, and which he will be the better
1799vagabond CR	all those enormous crimes which shock the	reader	in themselves, without any consideration of the principles
1805adeline CR	Nor has she failed to affect <b>her</b>	readers	with many heart-rending scenes in the work before us.
1805adeline CR	She keeps up the attention of <b>her</b>	readers	to the end. The moral of her work is declared in
1805adeline MR	safely recommend them to the perusal of <b>our</b>	readers	. We wish, nevertheless, to hint to Mrs. Opie
1805fleetwood CR	We wish we could present <b>our</b>	readers	with two further extracts; one relating to the character of
1805fleetwood CR	In Vol. II. page 153, the	reader	will find what we think rather a tantalizing picture of
1806irish girl MR	truth and fiction are blended together, and no	readers	can discriminate what is precisely true on the subject. If
1806leonora MR	object than merely the amusement of the	reader	, Miss Edgeworth endeavours to shew the bad tendency of
1813heroine CR	think, that Mr. Barrett deserves well of the	public	, for thus endeavouring, through the medium of good
1813heroine CR	From this specimen the	reader	may pretty well judge what kind of amusement Miss
1813heroine MR	cruelty towards her father indisposes the	reader	for being interested in her subsequent fate. Mr. Barrett
1814wanderer CR	a new novel by an author so grateful to the	public	feelings, as Madame d'Arblay.

Table 6. Generic References to Readers in the Reviews of the Reference Corpus

There are four occurrences of the generic term "reader" being introduced by a personal pronoun in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus, evenly distributed between "her" and "our" (respectively in red and bold in Table 6). The use of the third-person personal pronoun "her" emphasizes the closeness of author and imagined readers as a way to judge the success or failure of the work, actually revealing more about the relationship between critic and author than with readers themselves. The two mentions of "her readers" occur in the *Critical* review of Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1805) and support the critic's positive opinion of the novel by focusing on the author's power over "her readers," stressing her ability to "affect [them] with many heart-rending scenes" and "kee[p] up [their] attention to the end" (*DBF* 1805A058). The "readers" are unspecified other than by virtue of belonging to this particular readership, centering the reviewer's attention on the author's abilities rather than on the identification of her actual readers. The critic is moreover implicitly included as one of "her readers," further supporting the positive review by granting power to the author over both reviewer and general readers.

In the reviews of the didactic corpus, the personal pronoun "her" to introduce readers is also used by critics as a way to emphasize comments on the author's merits—or

lack thereof (in red in Table 4). The *Monthly* review of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman* (1798) states that "Had Mrs. Wollstonecraft Godwin lived to finish her 'Maria,' the story might have been more satisfactory to her readers." Whether or not the critic includes themselves in this group of readers, the suggestion that all of Wollstonecraft's readers have been dissatisfied with the unfinished nature of the work serves to give weight to the critic's view by making it a shared rather than a personal opinion.

The other occurrence of "her readers" in the reviews of the didactic corpus appears in the *Critical* review of Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) and emphasizes the distance taken with the author in question. The critic paraphrases Green's disapproval of the use of "the word *Historique*, which ["a celebrated French romance writer"] had KINDLY adopted by way of a clue her readers [*sic*], that they might know what they were about" (DBF 1810A046, author's emphases). The focus here is not on who "her readers" are, but on the criticism of the practice of the unnamed author hinting at a *roman à clef*, which the ironic use of the capital letters in "KINDLY" underlines. In this case, the use of "her readers" emphasizes the distance taken by the critic with that author and her readership, thereby implicitly supporting Green's opinion.

While the third-person personal pronoun "her" to introduce readers is consistently used in the reviews of the novels of both corpora as a means to support the critics' opinions regarding authors' narrative achievements, the use of the first-person "our" highlights the instability of the construction of the relationship between critic and reader. The reviews of the novels of the reference corpus feature two occurrences of "our readers," each of which illustrates a different stance on the reader/critic relationship. In the *Monthly* review of Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1805), the critic writes that "we can safely recommend [these volumes] to the perusal of our readers," given that these are "so superior to those which we usually encounter under the title of novels" (DBF 1805A058). The critic confidently acts as a judge of the work's merit in order to make a recommendation to readers, creating a hierarchy between author, reader, and critic that positions the latter at the top through the use of the personal pronoun.

In contrast, the *Critical* reviewer of William Godwin's *Fleetwood* (1805) appears humbler in "wish[ing] we could present our readers with two further extracts" of the novel,

after claiming that "we have already made an extract of greater length, from a work of so small importance as a novel, than we should have done, had it not proceeded from the pen of so well-known an author as Mr. Godwin" (*DBF*1805A032). The critic's stance is paradoxical here, with on the one hand a jab at novels as being by nature of "small importance," and on the other the suggestion that the fame of Mr. Godwin drives the reviewer's will to quote extensively from the novel. The reading public thus comes across as being of capital importance and in some measure dictating the content of the review. The critic also suggests that they are limited in length for reviews of novels, which reinforces the sense that reviewers' agency is somehow circumscribed. In this case, the use of the personal pronoun illustrates a proximity with readers that does not imply any superiority on the part of the reviewer.

This ambivalence in the construction of the reader/critic relationship is all the more visible in the instances of "our readers" in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus (see Table 5). These are significantly more numerous than in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus, with 16 occurrences making up 29% of the addresses to readers in these reviews. The prevalence of the structure "our readers" in the reviews of the didactic corpus can first of all be linked to a will on the part of the reviewers to create a personal link with their readership in order to influence them into reading these novels deemed instructive. Overall, this link does not hinge on the construction of readers as potential learners, however, as out of the 16 occurrences, only three are in direct relation to didacticism, complicating the link between the presence of the phrase "our readers" and the perception of moral didacticism.

The first reference to "our readers" appears in the *Critical* review of Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782). The critic deems the novel fit to be recommended "to our readers as worthy their attention, and replete with instruction and rational amusement" (Raven 313). The phrase "our readers" creates a bond with the reviewer, who respectfully yet decidedly pronounces the novel "worthy" of their readers' time because of its didactic content. The other two such occurrences appear in the overwhelmingly positive *Critical* reviews to Jane Austen's first two novels. In both cases, the critics use the personal pronoun to address readers in conjunction with a direct quote from the novels to frame the praise of the moral

instruction they perceive. In the *Critical* review of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, the critic writes: "we will give the following extract, to show our readers how is the procrastination of liberality well as a specimen of a matrimonial tete-a-tete [*sic*]" (*DBF* 1811A017). In the *Critical* review of *Pride and Prejudice*, we are told that "The line [Jane Austen] draws between the prudent and the mercenary in matrimonial concerns, may be useful to our fair readers—therefore we extract the part" (*DBF* 1813A007). The proximity created by the use of the phrase "our readers" may here be interpreted as a rhetorical tool to convince readers of the validity of the critics' perception of valuable moral didacticism, further supported with the inclusion of direct quotes from the texts. William Christie argues that reviewers' use of paraphrase and quotations was "an exercise of power over both writer and reader," and indeed a power struggle of sorts is evident here (286). The reviewers' readers are portrayed as a group needing persuasion, mitigating the sense of unity implied by the use of the personal pronoun "our" and highlighting the aim of critics to assert their authority as professional assessors of literary merit.

In addition, notions of pleasure and entertainment are central to five of the occurrences of "our readers," showing once again that the merits of novels received as didactic for early reviewers far exceed moral instruction and must include successful artistry. The *Critical* reviewer of Lady Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village* (1778) states that "We must therefore present our readers with some of the entertainment which Munster Village affords" (*CR* 1778, vol. 45: 300), just as the *Critical* reviewer of Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) mentions "the pleasure which [our readers] will receive in the perusal of these volumes", how "the tender part of our readers will, we imagine, be more pleased with the interesting and the pathetic," and "the many beauties [present in the novel], as our readers must perceive by the extract which we have given" (*CR* 1782, vol. 54: 414, 416, 420). The *Critical* reviewer of Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801) likewise vows that "We will not, by analysing the story of the Father and Daughter, diminish the pleasure of such of our readers as may be induced to read the work itself" (*DBF* 1801A056).

These examples further illustrate the ambivalence of the critics' posture in relation to 'their' readers, similar to what we find in the reviews of the reference corpus. Indeed, *Cecilia's* reviewer positions themselves as a figure of authority over their readers by asserting that the



latter "will receive" pleasure in reading the novel and "must perceive" the "many beauties" of the work from the passage previously quoted (my emphasis). Nevertheless, that same reviewer mitigates the claim that "the tender part of our readers will, we imagine, be more pleased with the interesting and the pathetic" by the inclusion of "we imagine," which casts doubt on the ability of the critic to successfully predict the reactions of readers qualified as "tender." Similarly, the assertion that the reviewer "must therefore present our readers with some of the entertainment which Munster Village affords" suggests that readers cannot be expected to take the critic's word for granted and should be given textual evidence (my emphasis). Finally, the claim that the critic will not "diminish the pleasure of such of our readers as may be induced to read the work itself" in the *Critical* review of *The Father and Daughter* comes as a preface to the justification that "as a specimen of Mrs. Opie's skill in composition, we shall make an interesting extract" (DBF 1801A056). It reinforces the reviewer's respectful stance towards these readers, which is already evident in the phrase "such of our readers as may be induced to read the work" since it avows that the choice of picking up the novel is ultimately the readers', try as the critic may to influence their decision.

Out of the sixteen occurrences of the phrase "our readers" in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus, ten demonstrate such a respectful stance toward the readers evocative of a horizontal reader/critic relationship, while only six show the critics positioning themselves as superiors to the readers in a vertical relationship. In the context of reviews of novels noted for their instructive quality toward readers, this first of all implies that reviewers grappled with the idea expressed by the *Monthly* reviewer of Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) that "had less been attempted in the way of female reformation, more would probably have been accomplished," suggesting the ineffectiveness of overt moralizing (DBF 1808A081). On the other hand, the ambivalence regarding the construction of the reader/critic relationship also mirrors that found in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus, indicating that the question of the critics' position relative to readers was a prevalent concern for reviewers as they were striving to establish their cultural importance.

For instance, the introductory sentence of the *Monthly* review of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1806) establishes a vertical relationship between reader, critic, and author: "The name of Miss Edgeworth does not now require any introduction to our readers; and the account which we gave of her elaborate treatise on Education [...] will, in particular, have produced considerable respect for her talents" (*DBF* 1801A026). The respective roles of readers, critic, and author are portrayed as interdependent, with the author responsible for producing works worthy of respect, critics for advertising their qualities to readers, and readers for appreciating them. A similar sentiment is expressed in the *Monthly* review of Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801), with the critic stating that "This is not the first time that we have introduced the Muse of Mrs. Opie to the approbation of our readers" (*DBF* 1801A056). The critics in these cases confidently position themselves as mediators between authors and readers rather than as superior cultural authorities.

The negative *Critical* review of Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) also includes the construction of a vertical relationship between critic and readers but comes at the expense of the author to support the staunch criticism of the review, discussed in chapter 1, II, iii. The critic directly references readers five times in this review, three times in the form of "our readers," once in the second-person address "gentle reader," and once in the impersonal "the reader" (*DBF* 1811A026). After quoting from Brunton's dedication to Joanna Baillie using italics ironically to underline the author's excessive humility of tone, the critic comments that "Our readers we trust will give us some merit for combating our disposition to nausea, and suppressing the inclination we felt to throw the book into the fire." The tone in addressing readers creates intellectual proximity with the critic, using hyperbolic and personal comments to secure reader assent at the author's expense.

The other two occurrences of "our readers" in this review function in the same way. The critic thus claims that "we must inform our readers that this humblest of all humble insects, in her dedication to the rugged and stately oak [Joanna Baillie], assigns the following reason for publishing the present tale," using Brunton's words ironically against her, which reinforces the opposition between her on one side and the critic and 'their' readers on the other, securing the latter two as partners in this vitriolic review. This paves the way for the last instance of "our readers," which follows a quote from the protagonist's thoughts early in

the novel: "With a mind thus imbued our readers may pretty well form an idea of what sort of lady Laura presents herself to us at the age of sixteen." "Us" mirrors "our" in the sentence, which firmly secures the intellectual link between the critic and the readers since "us" can refer at once to the critic who routinely uses the first-person plural and to the critic and their readers. The heavily modalized phrase "may pretty well" moreover suggests a spirit of equality in the construction of the critic/reader relationship by assuming that readers will concur with the critic without needing to be authoritatively induced to assent.

While the much larger amount of "our readers" in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus than in those of the reference corpus might at first glance suggest a will on the part of the critics to position themselves as superiors and readers as *theirs* to authoritatively direct to proper reading material for the sake of their instruction, taking a closer look at the context of the phrase paints a much more nuanced picture. Indeed, several instances of "our readers" do work to place readers as inferiors to critics, but the majority indicates rather an attempt to create a proximity with readers in order to gain their assent. This suggests that these critics saw the nature of readers' subscription to their opinions as potentially volatile, which is precisely what the *Critical* reviewer to Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814) expresses in relation to the influence of authors on readers: "We have said a great deal on the views of Miss Edgeworth in this publication, because we consider her to be *one of the very few* instructively amusing writers, who are *likely* to give a tone to the opinions of their readers" (*DBF* 1814A020, my emphasis). "One of the very few" and "likely" infuse the statement with a considerable amount of doubt, ultimately implying that readers are not necessarily easily swayed by others' words, whether authors' or critics'.<sup>79</sup>

### III. The impersonal reader

In fact, critics' concern with authors' effects on readers is what materially differentiates the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus from those of the novels of the reference corpus, illustrating a hope in but also an anxiety over the efficacy of the instructive

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<sup>79</sup> Indeed, the discrepancy between the rather lukewarm reviews of Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) and the resounding success of the novel in sales indicates that while reviews were widely read, this does not mean that they were necessarily heeded (Donoghue 16, Stott 274).

nature of the novels reviewed. The various uses of the impersonal "the reader(s)" in the reviews of both corpora particularly exemplify this.

Strikingly, a significantly higher proportion of "the reader(s)" in a context where critics are positioned as superior to the readership can be found in the reviews of the reference novels than in those of the didactic corpus: out of fifteen occurrences in the former, eight fall in that category, which amounts to 53%. In the reviews of the latter, this occurs eight times out of twenty-three, or 35%. Thus, the recommendation of works deemed instructive does not translate into a particularly authoritative critical stance over readers in comparison to reviews of works not received as didactic. For instance, occurrences where critics confidently anticipate the reader's reactions to elements of a novel appear in the *Monthly* review of Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* from the reference corpus, with the claim that "the heroine's cruelty towards her father indisposes the reader for being interested in her subsequent fate" (*DBF* 1813A009). Likewise, the *Critical* review of Frances Burney's *Evelina* from the didactic corpus asserts that because "The subjects of novels are, with a dangerous uniformity, almost always taken from superior life," "[the readers] are convinced that happiness is not to be found in the chilling climate of low life, or even, where one of our poets so truly fixed it, in the temperate zone of middle life" (*CR* 1778, vol. 46: 204). In these instances, the reviewers imposingly project specific reactions onto general readers, without modalization or possible caveats.

Nevertheless, critics also tend to convey an egalitarian stance with readers more often in the reviews of the reference corpus and comment more on authors' performances in the reviews of the didactic corpus. Out of the 15 occurrences of "the reader(s)" in the former corpus, four demonstrate a horizontal relationship between critic and reader, which is 26%. In contrast, this is the case in only two occurrences of the 23 in the latter corpus, or 7%. For instance, the *Critical* reviewer of *The Heroine* writes that "we have been very much entertained with the ingenious performance, and think, that Mr. Barrett deserves well of the public" (*DBF* 1813A009). The phrase "we [...] think" illustrates a measure of humility in the statement, and ultimately leaves "the public" free to decide whether or not they agree with the critic's opinion. Similarly, the *Monthly* reviewer of Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811, didactic corpus) allows for differing opinions on whether Laura's character is quite

believable, implying that the critic's own view of the matter is merely one of these possible positions: "Whether Laura's 'self-control' be perfectly natural is mere matter of opinion; and the decision depends, in a great measure, on the disposition of the reader: but it is a pardonable fault if a character, which is offered as a model, transcends those for whose emulation it is intended" (*DBF 1811A026*).

Among the fifteen generic mentions of the reader(s) in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus, only three focus on the author's role in shaping reader response, which amounts to 20%. In the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus however, this is the case in eleven instances of "the reader(s)" out of 28, or 48%. For example, the *Monthly* reviewer of Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1794, reference corpus) states that "The incidents ... are, on the whole, well contrived, and arranged so as to keep awake the reader's attention" (Raven 566), and the *Critical* reviewer of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813, didactic corpus) claims that "the fair author of the present introduces us, at once, to a whole family, every individual of which excites the interest, and very agreeably divides the attentions of the reader" (*DBF 1813A007*). In both cases, the critics emphasize the author's role in shaping reader response rather than centering solely on the responses themselves. The fact that the proportion of this stance on the reader/critic/author relationship in the context of the generic appellation "the reader" or "the public" is over twice as frequent in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus illustrates the centrality of the author/reader relationship to the early reception of moral didacticism.

The proportions of stances on the reader/critic/author relationship when all of the occurrences of "reader" or "public," generic and otherwise, are taken into account confirm these trends. 28% of the occurrences in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus show a horizontal construction of the reader/critic relationship, 50% position the critic above the reader, and 21% focus on the author's power over reader responses, against 25%, 40%, and 27% respectively in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus. The differences between the reviews of the two corpora are less marked in this global perspective however, which can first of all be explained by the fact that the vast majority of expressions of verticality in the conception of the reader/critic relationship in the reviews of the didactic corpus occurs in the context of first-person plural addresses to readers (see section II in this

chapter). As we have seen, first-person addresses to readers are much less common in the reviews of the novels of the reference corpus, which also serves to highlight the greater concern surrounding the reader/critic/author relationship for the reviewers of the didactic corpus.

Moreover, six references to readers in the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus could not be classified in any of those first three categories, which necessarily impacts the overall proportions. One of these is the concluding remark in the *Critical* review of Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* (1805) concerning the work's "few typographical errors; which are to be laid to the charge of the editor, rather than to the respectable writer of these volumes, during whose absence from town they were presented to the public" (*DBF* 1805A067), which factually mentions but does not comment on the public itself. More strikingly, two references to "the public" explicitly address the power of readers both in relation to authors and critics. In the *Critical* review of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), the critic reacts to Edgeworth's defense of her previously mentioned choice to call her work a *moral tale* rather than a *novel* thus: "Let a novelist publish his work under the title that best befits it; and the public will determine where is its proper classification" (*DBF* 1801A026). Since the reviewer takes issue with the author's choice and defends the appellation of 'novel' in the rest of the paragraph, "the public" seems to include critics as well as general readers. It is however significant that such a generic term is used in this case, emphasizing authors' dependence on the reading public at large, who as a growing consumer body detained a considerable amount of power at the turn of the nineteenth century (Donoghue 17).

This is precisely what the following passage from the *Critical* review of Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801) stresses: "We are by no means surprised that this work should have passed through the first edition before we had an opportunity of stating our opinion of its merits. The public have, by the extensiveness of its circulation, given a decisive verdict in its favour" (*DBF* 1801A056). Although the critic goes on to reassert their own role as ultimate judge of literary merit ("we would not lay it down as a universal rule that the public voice is the voice of just taste"), such immediate popular success is also viewed as "afford[ing] strong presumptive evidence that it is calculated strongly to arrest the attention and to interest the feelings," legitimizing the "public voice" as a judge of literary merit in its own right.

Finally, the *Critical* reviewer of Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814) takes up the condemnation of all forms of patronage in the novel, drawing a picture of the necessary elements for a move from reliance on individual patronage—which the critic calls a "nursery" state—to dependence on the "mercantile principle" whereby the market can sustain the artist, qualified here as an "independent situation" (DBF 1814A020). They write:

That the patronage of science and literature, *has* proved serviceable, the history of civilised Europe, authenticates beyond controversy; that both literature and science, are now out of the nursery in Great Britain, is equally clear. But are the fine arts in the same independent situation? Will they ever be in it? A reading and a scientific public, may be said to exist—a public, with a taste for the finer productions of art, is rapidly growing up; but a public, enabled to purchase them, is quite another thing. (Author's emphasis)

Although the consumer market is thus presented as a means of emancipation for authors, dependence is merely transferred from an identifiable individual to an amorphous "public," since literary, scientific, or artistic creation cannot be separated from money if it is to survive and reach an audience. This consequently acknowledges that the general reading public holds a considerable amount of power over authors, irrespective of critics' attempts to influence it.

## Conclusion

The construction of the figure of the reader in the reviews of the didactic corpus certainly illustrates what Frank Donoghue has called the self-appointed task of "correcting or civilizing the tastes of the reading public" in the *Monthly* and especially in the more conservative *Critical* (3, 25), which is evident in the relative proportions of occurrences referencing readers from *Critical* reviews (74%) and *Monthly* reviews (26%). The reviews of the novels received as didactic unsurprisingly evince a greater explicit engagement with the notion of the reader than the reviews of the reference novels. However, looking at the ways in which the references to readers are framed in the reviews of both corpora also shows the critics attempting to navigate their relationship with the reading public, between fellowship and authority.

Indeed, the variety of categories of readers can be seen as an attempt on the part of the critics to recognize and appeal to the multifaceted nature of the growing readership of

novels, which the frequent use of the plural "readers" supports. In addition, the types of readers which are singled out in the reviews of the didactic corpus show that reviewers viewed moral edification as important for several kinds of readers. Nevertheless, a greater concern with and respect of the responses of readers from polite society and a more pointed focus on the education of young female readers are evident, reinforcing Nancy Armstrong's argument that the growing cultural power of the novel at the end of the eighteenth century served to create and consolidate subsequent prevalent middle-class feminine ideals (9).

But what is most striking in these reviews is the critics' difficulty in positioning themselves within the triangular critic/author/reader relationship as well as the reluctance to explicitly assert their cultural authority over the reading public, which is particularly counter-intuitive when it comes to the reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus. This ambivalence nonetheless illustrates a will to define and influence the growing reading public in ways which will not alienate it, since the *Monthly* and the *Critical* were themselves written publications dependent on the "mercantile principle" (DBF 1814A020). Building on these findings, chapter 3 proposes to analyze the authorial discourse found in the novels' prefatory material, looking at the ways in which intent, and specifically didactic intent where applicable, is framed and what it illustrates about authors' engagement with critics and the figure of the reader.



## Conclusions from Part 1.

Part 1 has highlighted the *Monthly* and *Critical* contributors' aspiration to establish themselves as arbiters of good taste regarding literature. Analysis of the reviews' discourse in chapter 1 has shown moral tendency to be central to the early reception of the novels from both corpora. In addition, for these critics, sound morality, good composition and style are paramount to a successful novel. As such, according to the reviews, the best novels are the ones from the didactic corpus which successfully blend moral instruction with compelling narrative and stylistic choices, showing such moral instruction to be a valued component of the emerging novel genre. Two main conclusions may consequently be drawn: for early critics, moral didacticism in fiction neither inherently makes nor precludes a novel's success, and must be about more than mere perception of sound morality, given that many reference novels were considered to be unexceptionable in that regard, though not instructive.

Chapter 2 has underlined the ambivalence of the critic-reader relationship as established by the reviews. This illustrates the difficulty of navigating the position of judge of literary merit, conceptually close to that of a teacher and therefore appropriate to the recommendation of morally edifying material, and the reality of the book market whereby reviews depended on readers to buy their issues. The same difficulty arguably applies to authors if part of their intent is instructing readers, which is investigated in part 2. Overall, these two chapters have highlighted the need to question previous assumptions about moral didacticism in fiction as chiefly characterized by the straightforward moral instruction of readers, which the following three chapters do through textual analysis of the corpora.

## Part 2. Textual Basis for the Early Reception of Moral Didacticism

Following the study of early reception in the first two chapters, chapters 3, 4, and 5 propose a textual analysis of the novels from both corpora in order to determine with more precision the elements which may explain the critics' perception of the didactic novels as instructive rather than simply morally commendable. This supposes an examination of the novels' "tendency," which Megan Woodworth considers to be encoded in the narrative by the author, although it may "elude authorial control" in the experience of reading (39). Chapter 3 analyzes the prefatory material from the two corpora, aiming to assess whether explicit marks of didactic intent may be found in such extradiegetic elements and said to differentiate between the two sets of novels. A study of the relationship between author and reader as established in the prefatory material is also included, mirroring the examination of the reader's construction by reviewers in chapter 2.

Chapter 4 then investigates the textual features of the novels from the perspective of genre and register as defined by Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad. It first looks at the narratives' conclusions, so as to determine whether explicit comments on moral lessons to be drawn is a formal feature constitutive of a possible didactic subgenre of the novel. The software TXM is used to investigate predetermined linguistic features of the two corpora, both lexical and grammatical, examining the register of moral didacticism. Finally, still from the perspective of register, chapter 5 takes the opposite approach, using AntConc to compare the most prevalent elements of vocabulary, or keywords, of the two corpora. This is done to corroborate and refine the findings from chapter 4 in order to define the prevalent differences among the novels in terms of topic.

## Chapter 3. Didactic Intent in Prefatory Material

### Introduction.

Following the analysis of early reception from chapters 1 and 2, I now want to address the possible traces of didactic intent found in the novels and the ways in which these are framed. This chapter focuses on the prefatory material of the novels of both corpora where applicable in order to determine whether the didactic corpus systematically features works with a particularly manifest morally didactic intent, as previous claims made on didactic novels of the period tend to suggest (Havens 5, 8, Wood 12, 16). As will be made clear in section I, there is actually no evident dividing line between the corpora in the ways in which the authors frame their novels from the standpoint of moral instruction and didactic intent, although some differences do emerge. Sections II and III investigate the construction of the triangular critic-author-reader dynamic using the same methodology applied to the early reviews in chapter 2, ultimately showing the difficulty for the overwhelmingly female authors of the didactic corpus to establish an assertive authorial voice. These conclusions echo in several ways those derived from the discussions in Part I on early reviews, and shape the direction that this dissertation takes in the subsequent chapters, in order to arrive at a possible definition of the didactic novel according to the early reception, which is detailed in Part 3.

Identifying intent is often a fraught endeavor, and the debate surrounding authorial intention must be mentioned here. The concept of author and authorial intention has been questioned in critical theory over the last fifty years, with Roland Barthes' article 'La mort de l'auteur' (1967) being a prime example. Barthes argues that language is performative, and that trying to read the author through their writing is vain. He contends that freeing oneself from such an enterprise allows for plural readings rather than a quest to find the one correct reading or unified message, which he terms the author's "confidence" (62). Although Barthes' conceptualization of the reader is far from the flesh-and-blood individual with their socio-historical and cultural background and personal experiences of reader-response theorists such as Louise Rosenblatt, his argument for the displacement of the author in literary

criticism is at the core of much subsequent theory, including reader response and reception.<sup>80</sup> In the Anglo-American critical tradition, W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley questioned what they called "the intentional fallacy" in poetry study as early as 1946, stating that "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of the work of art" (468). In the vein of New Criticism, the scholars argue that careful exegesis of poems constitutes critical inquiry, not questions of "author psychology" (477).

Moreover, many narratologists make a point of separating the author, the person "who created [a work] and brought it into existence," from the narrator, the constructed persona who relates a narrative, as Dorothee Birke and Tilmann Köppe define them (2-3). Although the author obviously creates the narrator, the two scholars argue that "conflating author and narrator is to make a category mistake" (6), a position which is in line with classical narratology (see Booth 1965, Genette 1972, Bal 1997). In light of this, it becomes problematic to impute authorial intentions through the interpretation of narratorial attitudes.

However, some scholars have contested this view, particularly within feminist criticism. For instance, Susan Lanser posits that the narrative voice is not merely a technical and aesthetic construction, but also a political one. For her, narrative authority "is the extent to which a narrator's status conforms to [the] dominant social power," which confers "intellectual credibility, ideological validity and aesthetic value" interactively with the work (6). She develops the concept of authorial voice, which occurs in "narrative situations that are heterodiegetic, public, and potentially self-referential" and argues that extrarepresentational acts of the authorial voice such as direct addresses to the narratee, comments on the narrative process, or intertextual allusions confer authority to the authorial voice and "expand the sphere of fictional authority to 'nonfictional' referents and allow the writer to engage, from 'within' the fiction, in a culture's literary, social, and intellectual debates" (16). She also argues that such authority has been difficult to claim for many female writers across literary history.

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<sup>80</sup> Louise Rosenblatt's work, developed through much of the twentieth century, forms the theoretical basis of chapter 9, and is explained in detail in the literary review section of that chapter (9, I, i).

When studying how an element like verbal irony operates, one must also confront the question of intentionality, if only because of irony's "evaluative edge" which implies both a target and a judgment of that target (Hutcheon 2). While Linda Hutcheon emphasizes the importance of the agency of the interpreter in deciphering irony, her cautious hypothesis that "perhaps the ironic intentional function is one activated and put into play by the interpreter" does not do away with the concept of authorial intention (122). Likewise, certain critics in the reader-response tradition, such as Wolfgang Iser and Umberto Eco, develop notions which imply the possibility of elucidating authorial intention, for example the model reader (Iser 1978) and closed or open texts (Eco 1979).<sup>81</sup>

The question of determining authorial intention is a complicated one, and I do not contest that "conflating author and narrator is to make a category mistake." However, I agree with Lanser that "where a distinction between the (implied) author and a public, heterodiegetic narrator is not textually marked, readers are invited to equate the narrator with the author and the narratee with themselves (or their historical equivalents)" because it confers authority to the work (16). Particularly when it comes to didactic fiction, it is impossible to escape the question of authorial intention. As Garrett Stewart discusses in his investigation of the nineteenth-century "conscriptive" authorial practices in novels, "the eighteenth-century pioneers of prose fiction, by any number of flamboyant ploys, peopled the novel with avatars of fictional attention, not infrequently with individual personifications of its readers" (7), echoing Marilyn Butler's sentiment that the concept of authorial intention is particularly relevant in the context of the fundamentally partisan fiction from the turn of the nineteenth century (1987: xvi). Stewart's "flamboyant ploys" coincides with Lanser's "overt authoriality," a useful tool to study the rhetoric of authorial intent. Faye Halpern's claim that in American nineteenth-century sentimental novels, "the implied author is the same as the narrator," also supports Stewart's statement (156).<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, according to Séan Burke, the author can never be done away with, and I argue that this is particularly relevant in the fiction that I study, which is imbibed with

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81 Eco's theory of closed and open texts is developed further in chapter 4, and as are theoretical perspectives on the concept of the reader in chapter 9.

82 The term "implied author" comes from Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1965), where Booth differentiates the implied author from the actual author, making the attitudes expressed through the implied author a largely rhetorical act (137).

concerns over the potentially pernicious effects of narrative fiction writing and reading, making a clear distinction between a work and the ideology conveyed by its author very difficult to delineate (154). Terry Eagleton defines ideology as "the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in" (13), and claims that eighteenth-century narrative fiction is "frankly ideological: writing which embodied the values and 'tastes' of a particular social class qualified as literature, whereas a street ballad, a popular romance, and perhaps even the drama did not" (15). Of course, a text's ideology may be invisible to a reader despite the author's intention, as we are not always explicitly aware of the influence of the "power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in."<sup>83</sup>

However, whether or not the attitudes expressed rhetorically in the didactic corpus are representative of what the actual authors believed is not central to my inquiry. What does matter is whether and how the authors invest and use overt authoriality in the way they build a connection with their implied or rhetorically actualized readership, and whether overt authoriality is used differently in the didactic and the reference corpora. Susan Lanser does not deal with prefatory material in her discussion of overt authoriality. Nevertheless, prefaces and dedications are just as constructed as the main texts they introduce and abound with authors' discourse on their fictional works, as Baudouin Millet's study of the rhetoric of prefaces in eighteenth-century British fiction demonstrates. Thus, I start here by looking at the prefatory material of novels from both corpora where applicable, as potential places of overt authoriality, in order to see whether the authors profess to have a point to make, and whether that point pertains to moral didacticism if they do (sections I and II). Section III of the chapter hones in on the authorial construction of the figure of the reader, to be paralleled with the conclusions from chapter 2 in order to determine how authors avowing a didactic aim navigate their position of moral instructors. The analysis underlines the importance of gender in the construction of the author-reader dynamic.

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83 As Burke states, "[t]here are greater and lesser degrees of authorial inscription, certain authors occupy vastly more significant positions than others in the history of influence, the attraction of the biographical referent varies from author to author, text to text, textual moment to textual moment" (173).

## I. Moral Intentions?

As shown by Gérard Genette, prefatory material may serve different purposes. In almost all the cases studied here, the prefatory material comes from the first edition of the novels, meaning that its core function is to make sure that the story it introduces is read as was intended by the author (Genette 1987: 183). Stressing the moral utility of a work may be a way of pointing to its importance without resorting to unseemly bragging of one's own talent, as we see in a number of prefatory materials in the novels of the two corpora, and particularly of the didactic corpus—as may be expected (193). Another way of directing readers in their understanding of the work is by insisting on its place within a preexisting literary tradition or, conversely, on its originality, as becomes more common in the late eighteenth century, and is also visible in the corpora (186). Dedications seem at first glance to be very different from prefaces, in that the former are addressed to a specific person, often a social superior if not an actual patron, while the latter are usually intended for general readers.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Genette cites Fielding's *Tom Jones* to illustrate an instance where the two types merge, as the author goes from praising George Lyttleton specifically to explaining the general design of his work, as if addressing now a wider readership (116-117). The permeability of the functions of the preface or the shorter advertisement and the dedication is clear in the novels of the two corpora; they are therefore treated together here under the general heading of "prefatory material."

Comparing reception to intent, it becomes apparent that reviewers are much more overtly concerned with questions of morality than the novelists of the two corpora. In the didactic corpus, thirteen of the eighteen novels have some type of prefatory material, be it a preface, an advertisement, or a dedication, in contrast to only eight of the eighteen novels in the reference corpus, as shown in Table 7 below. In the didactic corpus, twelve instances of prefatory material appear in novels written by women and one in a novel written by a man (out of two), while in the reference corpus, half appear in novels written by women and half in novels written by men. The greater amount of prefatory material in the didactic corpus shows a propensity toward paratextual authorial discourse in novels originally received as didactic, and this section investigates whether this fact denotes the presence of a decidedly

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<sup>84</sup> The distinction is obvious in the prefatory material present in Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), as is discussed below.

overt authoriality linked to moral didacticism. As will be made clear, although prefatory material from the novels of the didactic corpus tends to engage in morality to a greater degree than in the novels of the reference corpus (I), these passages most often appear to be sites of negotiation rather than affirmation of authorial authority (II).



DIDACTIC CORPUS	PREFATORY MATERIAL	REFERENCE CORPUS	PREFATORY MATERIAL
<i>Evelina</i> (1778)	YES	<b><i>Learning at a Loss</i></b> (1778)	YES
<i>Munster Village</i> (1778)		<i>Emmeline</i> (1788)	
<i>Cecilia</i> (1782)	YES	<i>A Simple Story</i> (1791)	YES
<i>Mary, A Fiction</i> (1788)	YES	<b><i>Anna St. Ives</i></b> (1792)	
<i>Julia, A Novel</i> (1790)	YES	<b><i>Caleb Williams</i></b> (1794)	
<b><i>Hermesprong</i></b> (1796)		<b><i>Henry</i></b> (1795)	YES
<i>Emma Courtney</i> (1796)	YES	<i>Nature and Art</i> (1796)	
<b><i>Edgar</i></b> (1798)	YES	<b><i>Rosamund Gray</i></b> (1798)	
<i>The Wrongs of Woman</i> (1798)	YES	<b><i>The Vagabond</i></b> (1799)	YES
<i>Belinda</i> (1801)	YES	<i>Adeline Mowbray</i> (1805)	
<i>The Father and Daughter</i> (1801)	YES	<b><i>Fleetwood</i></b> (1805)	YES
<i>The Nobility of the Heart</i> (1805)		<i>Leonora</i> (1806)	
<i>Cœlebs</i> (1808)	YES	<i>The Wild Irish Girl</i> (1806)	
<i>Romance Readers</i> (1810)	YES	<i>The Son of a Genius</i> (1812)	YES
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1811)		<b><i>The Heroine</i></b> (1813)	YES
<i>Self-Control</i> (1811)	YES	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814)	
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)		<i>Discipline</i> (1814)	YES
<i>Patronage</i> (1814)	YES	<i>The Wanderer</i> (1814)	

Table 7. Prefatory Material<sup>85</sup>

### *i. Expressing Explicit Morally Didactic Intentions*

Unsurprisingly, the prefatory material from the didactic corpus is much more marked with overt concern regarding morality and virtue than that found in the reference corpus: ten out of the thirteen instances of prefatory material from the didactic corpus reference morality, virtue and/or vice by name, whereas only two out of the eight prefaces from the reference corpus do so (see tables 8 and 9 with the corresponding concordance lines). This appears to support the distinction between the two corpora along the lines of moral didacticism, although only tentatively, since not all novels have a preface.

<sup>85</sup> The titles of male-authored novels are in bold.

1778evelina	If in my heart the love of	Virtue	glows
1778evelina	Could my weak pow'rs thy num'rous	virtues	trace, By filial love each fear should be repress'd, The
1778evelina	For though Courage is one of the noblest	virtues	of this nether sphere and though scarcely more requisite in the
1778evelina	the dignity of human nature! yet is it a	virtue	of no necessity in a situation such as mine a situation
1778evelina	the great and busy stage of life with a	virtuous	mind, a cultivated understanding, and a feeling heart, her
1782cecilia	tender pathetic, the comprehensive and noble	moral	, and the sagacious observation, that appear quite throughout
1790julia	by prudence, they involve even the	virtuous	in calamity since, under the dominion of passion, if
1790julia	though we do not become the slaves of	vice	we must yield ourselves the victims of sorrow. The materials
1796memoirs	Innumerable mistakes have been made, both	moral	and philosophical: - while covered with a sacred and mysterious
1796memoirs	Free thinking, and free speaking, are the	virtue	and the characteristics of a rational being: - there can be
1796memoirs	to represent her, as a human being, loving	virtue	while enslaved by passion, liable to the mistakes and
1796memoirs	applicable to all the purposes of education,	morals	, and legislation—and on this I rest my moral
1796memoirs	and legislation—and on this I rest my	moral	—Do men gather figs of thorns, or grapes of
1796memoirs	thorns, or grapes of thistles? asked a	moralist	and a reformer. Every possible incident, in works of this
1798wrongs	allowed to be mortal, and to become wise and	virtuous	as well as happy, by a train of events and circumstances
1801belinda	But so much folly, error, and	vice	are disseminated in books classed under this denomination,
1808coelebs	publications which, by impairing the	virtue	, have diminished the happiness of mankind that if I possessed
1808coelebs	talents to promote the cause of Christian	morals	, I possessed an abhorrence of those principles which lead to
1810romance	inculcate the first rudiments of	vice	, and give the first alarm to the still sleeping passions.
1810romance	how contemptible are sentiments of	morality	and religion from the pen of such a weak enthusiast!
1810romance	the Author has, while endeavouring to keep	morality	strictly in view, interspersed the pages with a few authentic
1810romance	hypocrisy and grimace, she truly venerates	virtue	and morality and trusts her writings will ever be found replete
1810romance	and grimace, she truly venerates virtue and	morality	and trusts her writings will ever be found replete with such
1811self-control	heart to glow with a warmer love of	virtue	. On one solitary point I claim equality with you
1811self-control	Perhaps in an age whose lax	morality	, declining the glorious toils of virtue, is poorly
1811self-control	morality, declining the glorious toils of	virtue	, is poorly content to dwell in decencies for ever
1811self-control	the ordinary standard of the times. A	virtue	which, though essentially Christian, is certainly not very
1811self-control	reply, that I do not ascribe any of the	virtues	of Laura to nature, and, least of all, the
1814patronage	is of little consequence to the	moral	or interest of the tale. As to the charge of having
1814patronage	from congenial manners, and sympathy in	vice	, will think the fidelity of history a satire on themselves
1814patronage	themselves and even the praise due to	virtue	is sure to give umbrage.

*Table 8. Morality, Vice, and Virtue in the Prefaces of the Didactic Corpus*

1813heroine	heroines, whom they thought too comic,	moral	, and natural. I met the Lady of the Lake,
1813heroine	unpalatably, and the rest uncondusive to the plot,	moral	, and peripeteia. In short, Madam, it will appear
1814discipline	time, which, without exercising the rational or	moral	faculties, cherishes the appetite for fiction, and the habit of
1814discipline	of its connection with that of Self-Control; the whole	moral	and religious discipline of life being intended to form those

*Table 9. Morality, Vice, and Virtue in the Prefaces of the Reference Corpus*

Most of the prefatory material that not only deals with virtue and morality but also explicitly states a didactic aim comes from the didactic corpus. Within the novels of the didactic corpus, this type of prefatory material can be divided in two groups: one introducing a positive model (*Belinda*, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, *Self-Control*), and the other a cautionary tale (*Julia*, *A Novel*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*).<sup>86</sup> Such expressions of a moral aim follow the early-eighteenth-century tradition in England of justifying in prefaces the writing of a novel by invoking a will to edify, in order to counteract the moral stigma carried by works of narrative fiction (Millet 43, 93).

In the short 'advertisement' to the first edition to *Belinda* (1801), Maria Edgeworth claims that "[e]very author has a right to give what appellation he may think proper for his works." She states that hers is to be called a "Moral Tale" rather than a "Novel," because "so much folly, error, and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination, that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable, and not fastidious." Although Edgeworth does not explicitly assert a didactic aim in her work, she does so by implication. She refuses to apply the term "novel" to her book because of the "folly, error, and vice" that books called novels so often "disseminate" according to her, implying by contrast her aim to impart sense, truth, and virtue as she settles on the appellation "Moral Tale."

The preface to Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) is very different in form from Edgeworth's preface to *Belinda*, but also states a didactic aim.<sup>87</sup> *Cœlebs* is the only female-authored novel from the didactic corpus to have a male protagonist. The autodiegetic narration starts in the preface, where the narrator affects authorship of the work, asserting the veracity of his account as a form of memoir, which a friend urges him to publish. More uses the early-eighteenth-century tradition of authors denying fictionality (*déni de fiction*), thereby denying authorship (*déni d'autorité*), by pretending to be mere editors of authentic material or having their autodiegetic narrators claim authorship, as is the case here (Millet 21). The didactic aim is put forth multiple times, but in a roundabout way which is

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86 As we will see in subsection ii, not all prefaces engaging in the notion of morality and virtue do so in a didactic vein.

87 It is worth noting that neither Maria Edgeworth nor Hannah More were originally marketed solely as moralists, yet this is how they tend to be remembered in large part. The evolution of the reception of the authors and novels of the corpora is taken up in chapter 8.

reminiscent of Edgeworth's implied didactic design. Indeed, the didactic aim is first stated with the narrator's friend as intermediary, and in a heavily modalized sentence: "He brought back my manuscript in a few days, with an earnest wish that I would consent to its publication, assuring me that he was of opinion that it might not be altogether useless, not only to young men engaged in the same pursuit with myself, but to the general reader" (vi). The middle clause introduces an assertive tone ("assuring me") immediately followed with extreme caution ("might not be altogether useless"). This prudence is reinforced by the last paragraph of the preface, where the narrator writes to his friend:

If I have been altogether deceived in the *ambitious hope* that these pages *may not be entirely useless* [...] I must be content with the *humble hope* that no part of these volumes will be found injurious to the important interests which *it was rather in my wish than in my ability* to advance; that *where I failed in effecting good, little evil has been done*; that if my book has answered no valuable purpose, it has, at least, not added to the number of those publications which, by impairing the virtue, have diminished the happiness of mankind; that if I possessed not talents to promote the cause of Christian morals, I possessed an abhorrence of those principles which lead to their contamination. (x, my emphasis)

The repetition of conditional sentences starting with "if" and the prevalence of negative structures also participate in creating a tone of utmost humility, mitigating the assertiveness of expressing an explicit didactic aim. The grammatical structures and the use of a fictional author's voice, as well as his friend's, within the framework of what Baudouin Millet calls *déni de fiction* create multiple mediating layers between Hannah More's authorial voice and the reader, mitigating the use of overt authoriality and illustrating how women writers' adoption of the latter "has usually meant transgressing gendered rhetorical roles," especially in the early nineteenth century when the novel's status within literature was increasingly established and no longer required rhetorical devices such as *déni de fiction* (Lanser 17-18).

In the dedication to *Self-Control* (1811), Mary Brunton's tone is also heavily deferential. She uses the didactic aim to justify the very acts of writing and publishing a novel, pointing to the corrupting potential of fictional works which Edgeworth and More also mention. She claims that her "little work," written by a metaphorical "insect of the day," is moral medicine in the guise of a novel: "When the vitiated appetite refuses its proper food,

the alternative may be administered in a sweetmeat" (2-3). Her deference appears in her status as a novelist, an occupation which she claims to have started "for [her] own amusement" (2). She counterbalances this, and the fact that she writes in a genre directed at an audience considered to have a "vitiating appetite" for reading material, by asserting a didactic aim in no uncertain terms: "In the character of Laura Montreville the religious principle is exhibited as rejecting the bribes of ambition; bestowing fortitude in want and sorrow; as restraining just displeasure; overcoming constitutional timidity; conquering misplaced affection; and triumphing over the fear of death and of disgrace" (2). This objective is then used to justify her writing a novel, "unknown to the world both as an individual and as an author" as she claims to be: "the avowal of a useful purpose may be an inducement to tolerate what otherwise might be thought unworthy of regard" (2-3).

The two prefaces of novels from the didactic corpus which introduce a cautionary tale are more confident in tone than the three discussed above; they seem to use diffidence to counterbalance their affirmed didactic aim as a generic necessity rather than as a means to soften its expression, as is particularly the case in the preface of *Cælebs*. In her advertisement to *Julia, A Novel* (1790), Helen Maria Williams states her design in the first sentence:

The purpose of these pages is to trace the danger arising from the uncontrolled indulgence of strong affections; not in those instances where they lead to the guilty excesses of passion in a corrupted mind—but, when disapproved by reason, and uncircumscribed by prudence, they involve even the virtuous in calamity; since, under the dominion of passion, if the horror of remorse may be avoided, misery at least is inevitable; and, though we do not become the slaves of vice, we must yield ourselves the victims of sorrow. (2)

The tone here is assertive, with a series of statements using confident language, such as "misery at least is *inevitable*" and "we *must* yield ourselves the victims of sorrow" (my emphasis). After this particularly self-assured statement regarding the moral aim of her work, Williams shows humility in relation to her artistry:

I have been encouraged, by the indulgence which my former poems have met with, to intersperse some poetical pieces in these volumes; but the uncertainty of being able to engage the continuance of favour, leads me to offer these farther productions in verse, with as little confidence as this first attempt in prose. (2)

Terms such as "indulgence," "uncertainty," "little," and "attempt" are typical of the humble tone found in many of the prefaces of these two corpora and of eighteenth-century prefaces in general, and provide a stark contrast with the assertive tone of the first paragraph (Donoghue 160). Indeed, poetical pieces aside, Williams introduces her "first attempt in prose" very confidently, making this concluding uncertainty appear as an afterthought that does not quite balance out the confidence exhibited in the first half of the advertisement. The author seems to be paying mere lip-service to the kind of conventional modesty that would have been expected of her, especially as a female writer (Donoghue 160).

Similarly, Mary Hays shows more confidence than humility in her preface to *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), and the former is not counterbalanced by the small mark of modesty that appears at the end of the preface. Hays begins by making general comments on "the most interesting, and the most useful, fictions," and cites William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), which incidentally is in the reference corpus, as a prime example (3). Thus, she positions herself as more of a critic than an author asking for the indulgence of critics, reminiscent of what Frances Burney does for instance in her preface to *Evelina*.<sup>88</sup> Hays then goes on to delineate her didactic aim, which is mixed with her artistic goal of making her heroine "a human being, loving virtue while enslaved by passion, liable to the mistakes and weaknesses of our fragile nature" rather than "a sort of *ideal perfection*" which she claims pervades fiction (3, author's emphasis).<sup>89</sup> Again, this shows confidence in her ability and position as a novelist, able to create characters who are truer to life than her predecessors.

Hays then enjoins her readers to "look into their own hearts" before judging "with severity the extravagance and eccentricity of [the protagonist's] conduct" (4). While Hannah More preempts possible criticisms through her first-person narrator stating for instance that (s)he does not aim to simply amuse readers, therefore not striving to change the judgment of what (s)he terms "the novel reader" (v), Hays, in her own voice, strives to influence her readers' reactions by encouraging introspection before judgment.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, she states her

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88 This is discussed in section I, c of this chapter.

89 This is very close to what Mary Wollstonecraft provides as her artistic aim in writing *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), discussed in the following subsection. Eleanor Ty describes Hays as Wollstonecraft's "disciple" in her introduction to Hays's novel *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799), which explains this resemblance as well as Hays' mentioning *Caleb Williams*, written by Wollstonecraft's husband and fellow political radical William Godwin (x).

90 I add '(s)' before 'he' to suggest that Hannah More's authorial voice may be heard through the fictional voice of her male protagonist.

didactic aim in the same paragraph, reinforcing her confident authorial voice: "Let them bear in mind, that the errors of my heroine were the offspring of sensibility; and that the result of her hazardous experiment is calculated to operate as a *warning*, rather than as an example" (4, author's emphasis). The fact that her work is intended as a cautionary tale seems to make it less necessary for her to justify its existence, in contrast to *Belinda*, *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, or *Self-Control*.

In fact, only one sentence falls under the deference typical of prefaces of the period, and especially of those penned by women (Spencer 95). Toward the end of the preface, Hays writes "I am not sanguine respecting the success of this little publication." The adjective "little," as we have seen, is frequently used in these prefaces, but given the tone and length of the rest of this particular one, the concluding sentence seems to be mere lip-service paid to the performance of humility demanded by the genre of the preface, recalling Williams' advertisement to *Julia*. Aside from the fact that *Julia* and *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* are cautionary tales, they were also both penned by radical or Jacobin writers, who supported the ideals of the French Revolution.<sup>91</sup> William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft's prefaces, which I discuss below, are also much more confident in tone than prefaces written by more moderate or conservative authors. Conservative authors needed the approval of the established moral doxa, and female authors, in particular, had to adhere to their position in the patriarchal social order, which puts conservative female writers such as Hannah More in a paradoxical position that can be perilous to navigate. This is exemplified by the assertiveness cloaked in modalized humility and distanced by the use of a male fictional narrator in the preface to *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*.<sup>92</sup>

The fact that prefaces which state a didactic aim are often imbued with humility and deference—a tone which is difficult to reconcile with the assertiveness necessary to proclaim an aim to instruct and improve readers through one's writing—may explain why only five novels from the didactic corpus feature an explicitly didactic intent in their preface.

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91 As Matthew Grenby writes in *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution*, Jacobinism became "almost extinct by the mid-1790s" due to the Terror, creating a fertile ground for the development and sale of Anti-Jacobin fiction (1, 10). Wollstonecraft and Godwin were considered Jacobin writers, who according to Gary Kelly "fused the major elements of Enlightenment and Sentimental ideas and values" (1989: 28).

92 See Anne Stott's *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (2003) for a detailed discussion of the paradoxical position of More as an outspoken advocate of reform within a conservative framework.

In fact, prefaces appear first and foremost as places of negotiation between author and readership, where authors seldom appear assertive, which is further discussed in section II below.

Two novels of the reference corpus present us with prefaces that similarly feature authorial deference and an explicitly didactic aim: Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812) and Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814). Hofland dedicates the work to her son specifically, beginning her foreword thus: "Accept, my dear Son, this little work, as a proof of that tender regard and sincere desire for your improvement, not only in the learning of the mind, but of the heart, in which it is not less my duty than inclination to instruct you." The author positions herself specifically as a mother to her own son, whom she describes as being very young still, which may explain why the conventional reference to her novel as a "little work" is the only instance of authorial humility: she does not affect to aim to instruct a broader audience, and thus does not need to justify her position of authority beyond the confines of her traditional role as a mother (Havens 13).

Novels that make up the reference corpus were not all reviewed in the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review*—the inclusion criterion of no early reception as expressly morally instructive in some cases translates to no early reception at all. *The Son of a Genius* is one of two novels in this situation, the other being Austen's *Mansfield Park*—which, like all Austen novels, does not have a preface and is therefore not included in the present discussion. The presence of novels that did not garner reviews when first published gives perspective to the study of the corpora when comparing textual content and reception, and in spite of Hofland's explicitly morally didactic intent, her novel will be shown to align with certain defining elements of the novels of the reference corpus, clarified in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Brunton's *Discipline* was reviewed when it was first published, clearly illustrating that the presence of an explicit instructional intent does not necessarily translate into the reception of the novel as didactic. Strikingly, Brunton makes an explicit connection between her first novel *Self-Control*, received as didactic, and her second attempt: "The subject [of *Discipline*] was chosen chiefly on account of its connection with that of *Self-Control*; the whole moral and religious discipline of life being intended to form those habits of self-command, in which Laura excelled, and in which Ellen Percy is so miserably defective" (59).



Illustrating this principle through fiction is cited as the "main purpose" of the work, even though the author states that she has not made as much of an effort "forcing every character to serve either as illustration or contrast" as she did in *Self-Control* (59). By her own admission, the novel is presented as less overtly didactic than its predecessor, yet the instructive aim is still very much apparent.

This section has shown that prefaces from novels of the didactic corpus are more prone to expressing an overt morally didactic aim than those found in the novels of the reference corpus, supporting the dividing line between the corpora on the basis of declared intent, although with some caveats. Nonetheless, as the following section underlines, four out of the ten prefaces from the didactic corpus that engage with the notion of moral instruction do not directly avow a didactic aim; it is also the case for the other prefaces from the novels of the reference corpus that mention moral improvement. Reception of moral didacticism consequently does not appear to be fully correlated to professed didactic intent.<sup>93</sup>

## *ii. Non-Didactic References to Morality and Improvement*

Aside from Hofland's *The Son of a Genius*, the novels from the reference corpus that discuss morality do so without asserting a didactic intent. These are George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799), William Godwin's *Fleetwood* (1805), and Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813). Incidentally, they are all male-authored works, penned by writers who could express authorial authority on topics going beyond the moral instruction of their readership without contravening prevailing gender roles, although they still exhibit elements of conventional humility.

George Walker's preface to his Anti-Jacobin novel *The Vagabond* consists of a short dedication to the Lord Bishop of Landaff, which, much like Mary Brunton's dedication in *Self-Control* to established literary figure Joanna Baillie (1811, didactic corpus), is full of diffidence and shows that extreme deference in conservative writers does not only affect female authors.<sup>94</sup> Walker offers a variation on the appellation 'little work' in calling his novel

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<sup>93</sup> This conclusion is further supported by a study of the novels' endings in chapter 4, I.

<sup>94</sup> According to Norma Clarke on the *ODNB*, Joanna Baillie was a respected Scottish playwright and poet of the early nineteenth century, who regularly used her understanding of the publishing world to advise less well-connected authors. According to Norma Clarke, "her intelligence and integrity were allied to a modest demeanour which made her, for many, the epitome of a Christian gentlewoman."

a "trifling performance." His justification for writing a novel, close to Brunton's idea of "medicine," is softened by the adverb "perhaps" and the modal "may":

but perhaps a Novel may gain attention, when arguments of the foundest sense, and most perfect eloquence, shall fail to arrest the feet of the Trifler from the specious path of the new Philosophy. It is also an attempt to parry the enemy with their own weapons; for no channel is deemed improper by them, which can introduce their sentiments. (iv)<sup>95</sup>

However, Walker justifies his novel in the context of a metaphorical war ("enemy," "weapons") opposing proponents and detractors of the ideals of the French Revolution, which he calls the "new Philosophy." This gives the didactic purpose of the novel a political dimension, which, however, rests on morality. Indeed, the author vows to follow "[his] Lordship in the cause of genuine Religion, Morality, and Liberty," implying an interrelation between two areas pertaining on the one hand to individual belief and behavior in society—religion and morality—and on the other to the philosophical and political notion of liberty. Although Walker doesn't explicitly state an aim to instruct or improve his readership, he involves them in an ideological conflict that his work is supposed to affect, anchoring his morally didactic intent in politics.

But references to morality or virtue do not necessarily denote a didactic aim, as is evident in William Godwin's preface to *Fleetwood*, which insists on the importance of the difference between the genre of the treatise and that of the novel. Godwin states that the former "aim[s] to ascertain what new institutions in political society might be found more conducive to general happiness than those which at present prevail," while the latter deals with individuals, who, for him, do not form a proper basis to call for systemic change:

The author of *Political Justice*, as appears again and again in the pages of that work, is the last man in the world to recommend a pitiful attempt, by scattered examples to renovate the face of society, instead of endeavouring by discussion and reasoning, to effect a grand and comprehensive improvement in the sentiments of its members. (xvi)

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According to Matthew Grenby, Anti-Jacobin novels were "written in opposition to what their authors believed, or perhaps affected to believe, were the principles of the French Revolution" and were very popular entertainment in the post-revolutionary period (1). Indeed, George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799) went through at least six editions before 1850 (Raven 805).

95 Ironically, the *CR* reviewer indeed judges the novel to be a failed attempt at such an aim, as discussed in chapter 1.

In this preface, Godwin distinguishes between the type of writing that proposes institutional changes that may bring about more "general happiness," which he aims to do through his political writings, and the kind that focuses on a single individual's experience of the social system as it is, with no reforming end, as he claims the novel form does.<sup>96</sup> This distinction serves as the author's justification for the discrepancy between his treatment of the marriage state in his political writings and in his fiction: while in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* he delineates the changes to matrimonial laws he thinks may be beneficial to society, he upholds the institution of marriage in place in *Fleetwood*.

While in the preface Godwin suggests that he does not believe in the possibility of improving society through narrative fiction, and as such denies his work a didactic aim, he also preempts potential criticism regarding the apparent inconsistency on the question of marriage between his political and fictional writings. Thus, he treads the fine line between denying a morally didactic goal while in effect still catering to the prevailing norms regarding fiction writing in order to garner a positive review, which includes adhering to a certain moral standard as the basis for individual behavior, as was delineated in the general introduction and in chapter 1.

Similarly, Eaton Stannard Barrett's preface to *The Heroine* mentions morals, but does not affirm a specific didactic aim. His preface reads like a marvelous tale written from the perspective of the novel's protagonist, depicting characters from novels and romances as inhabitants of the moon engaged in discussions about fiction informed by non-fictional works such as theoretical essays.<sup>97</sup> The continued existence of "Lunarians" is tied to the endurance of the fame of the work from which they originate: "The moment, however, that a book becomes obsolete on earth, the personages, countries, manners, and things recorded in it, lose, by the law of sympathy, their existence in the moon" (3).

The notion of improvement present in the preface is used in the context of scientific advancement in an apocalyptic description of the projected "consummation of all things,"

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96 He writes that the possible merit of his novel "must consist in the liveliness with which it brings things home to the imagination, and the reality it gives to the scene it portrays" (xv).

97 This preface is another instance of what Baudouin Millet calls "déli de fiction," or "denying fictionality" (21, 101). *Déli de fiction* is not incompatible with overt authoriality, however, as we have seen in the case of *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* from the didactic corpus. Indeed, whether an author uses his or her own identity or assumes a fictional one, the preface remains a place of direct communication with readers, and is thus one of the spaces where an author's aim can be stated overtly, even in the guise of a fictional narrator.

which follows the introduction of the use of volcanic stones to send the letter of the heroine to her readers (8). Likewise, the presence of the term "moral" is not tied to an overt didactic aim in this preface, although it supports moral writing, much like the reviews as discussed in chapter 1 (4, 6). "Moral" is used to describe the "Edgeworthian heroines," shunned on the moon by "Radcliffian" heroines for being "too comic, moral, and natural" (4). Edgeworth's writing was associated from its inception with moral instruction, as the advertisement to *Belinda* and the early reviews of the novel highlight. The adjectives "comic" and "natural" emphasize the generic contrast between Edgeworth's fictional works meant to be set in a realistic environment that do not rely particularly heavily on pathos or tragedy, and the propensity of Gothic novels to include elements of horror and the supernatural, as epitomized here by the reference to Ann Radcliffe (Baldick 2001: 106-107).

The perspective of the Radcliffian heroines frames the three adjectives unfavorably, preceded by "too;" but "comic," "moral," and "natural" are not intrinsically negative terms. This becomes particularly clear in the second mention of "moral," this time in noun form, included in a harangue against narrative elements "unconducive to the plot, moral, and peripeteia" of a story, put in the mouth of Laurence Sterne's character Tristram Shandy (6). In both cases, "moral" is positioned between two terms central to the language of storytelling and of its commentary: between the adjectives "comic" and "natural" in the former, and between the nouns "plot" and "peripeteia" in the latter. Much like many of the reviews of novels from the reference corpus, this preface binds the question of morality with that of fictional storytelling, although it does not overtly profess to instruct readers in them.

Several prefaces from novels found in the didactic corpus also treat the notions of morality and virtue in ways which are not explicitly didactic, sometimes close to their counterparts from the reference corpus. This is the case for Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), which again questions the pertinence of the distinction between the two corpora, at least in terms of professed didactic intent. I have elected to go against the chronological order here and discuss Green's preface first, due to its stylistic proximity with Barrett's.

Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* is similar to Barrett's *The Heroine* as it is also a long satire of excessive female readers who fancy themselves heroines of romances

to catastrophic effect.<sup>98</sup> This may explain why the prefaces to these two novels are strikingly different from the others. Indeed, in both cases exaggeration, an essential rhetorical tool of satire, is an important feature.<sup>99</sup> In Barrett's preface, this is evident with the minute description of the "Moonites" and the sudden depiction of an apocalyptic meteor shower, which the narrator claims to use to convey her book to earth. In *Romance Readers and Romance Writers*, Green spends most of her preface critiquing and criticizing contemporary novels as "licentious" and full of dangerous indelicacy in no uncertain terms, even taking pointed jabs at the famous and well-regarded Walter Scott (9).<sup>100</sup> In contrast to the novels she decries, Green states that in her work "which is now offered to the world, to shew *the effects of romance-reading* on the weak and ductile mind of youth" she endeavored "to keep morality strictly in view" (11, author's emphasis). Much like Barrett, Green inscribes her tale within the bounds of "strict morality," but does not directly avow a didactic aim. She cautiously hopes that "youth may peruse [her writings] without danger," but falls short of positively asserting a wish to instruct readers morally (11).<sup>101</sup>

Just as Green's preface may be compared to Barrett's, the improvement mentioned in the preface to Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman* has a political dimension, analogous to what we find in the foreword to George Walker's *The Vagabond*, discussed at the beginning of this section. In both cases, the improvement willed by the authors relates to society as a whole, and is as such a political aim of reform rather than an exclusively moral one. However, the content of their political designs is in stark opposition, with Mary Wollstonecraft famously being a radical and Walker expressing conservative views.

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98 Green's preface is over six-thousand words long, making it the longest prefatory material of either corpus. Barrett's is the second longest in the reference corpus, with over two thousand words. The longest preface in that corpus is Gregory Lewis Way's with close to three thousand words; it is also largely satirical in tone, as is evidenced further down in this section.

99 See the *OED*'s definition of 'satire' as "A poem or (in later use) a novel, film, or other work of art which uses humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/171207](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/171207). Accessed 12 March 2020.

100 For example: "Does [Scott] imagine that his name alone can attach importance to a book, and, like the touch of Midas, that it can make every thing gold to which it is attached? Some people may be blinded by their prejudices in his favour, but he will do well to remember that we are not all, like the devotees to SERTORIUS'S *hind, ignorant Barbarians*" (10, author's emphasis). Scott was not yet known as a novelist in 1810, and Green references his narrative poems, such as "MARMION" and "THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL" (10).

101 Green participates here in the widespread rhetoric on the corrupting dangers of novel-reading for young women, which we also see very explicitly in Brunton's prefaces to *Self-Control* and *Discipline*, discussed above (Bray 1).

In her preface to *The Wrongs of Woman*, Wollstonecraft points to the social and political applications of her novel, writing that its "history ought rather to be considered, as of woman, than of an individual" (67). Her stated aim in her novel is to "show the wrongs of different classes of women, equally oppressive, though, from the difference in education, necessarily various" (68). This is an aim of political reform, which could be termed political didacticism, since social change stems from educating the readership in a societal problem—here "matrimonial despotism of heart and conduct" as it applies to women—in order to bring about social change (68). It should be noted that in asserting the possibility of representing society in general and how it would benefit from particular improvements within the formal constraints of a novel, Wollstonecraft refutes her husband's opinion on the subject, discussed above.

However, by extrapolating the subject of morals to politics, Wollstonecraft steps out of the confines of femininity to join Godwin and Walker, and is the only female author of the corpora to do so explicitly. Questions of morals are at the heart of this project, since Wollstonecraft claims to apply the *Bildungsroman* trajectory of a hero who is "allowed to be mortal, and to become wise and virtuous as well as happy, by a train of events and circumstances."<sup>102</sup> Virtue is part of what the author considers as beneficial development, and is central to her ideal vision of matrimony: "Love, in which the imagination mingles its bewitching colouring, must be fostered by *delicacy*" (67, my emphasis). Moreover, having to endure a tyrannical husband such as depicted in the novel "degrade[s] the mind," and consequently has an adverse effect on the seat of moral conduct.<sup>103</sup> Thus, Wollstonecraft's professed aim is anchored in moral didacticism, but goes beyond it to spur political change, much like Charles Walker's preface—though they differ in the nature of the change they wish to inspire. It is worth noting, however, that neither the *Critical* nor the *Monthly* reviewer picks up on Wollstonecraft's explicitly political aim in the passages of their reviews available

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<sup>102</sup> Wollstonecraft here points to the different treatment reserved to female protagonists from their male counterparts in novels, which has led Susan Fraiman to question to existence of a female *Bildungsroman* as defined by Franco Moretti insofar as "the myth of bourgeois opportunity has little place for the middle-class female protagonist, and to reinvent the genre around her is to recognize a set of stories in which compromise and even coercion are more strongly thematized than choice" (1987: 6). Richard Barney has similarly argued that the *Bildungsroman's* focus on Romantic "ideas of mastery and coherent self-image" is based on a particularly masculine model of development, at odds with the loss of authority and abandonment of personal goals which female socialization entails (30).

<sup>103</sup> Wollstonecraft's discusses the importance of reason as the seat of morality in the second chapter of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

in *Raven* (2000: 764-765); the reviewers only comment on the "moral tendency" and the composition of the work, and do not address the political aspect of her novel which later came to be seen as a transgression of gender norms, as discussed in chapter 8.

Finally, in the didactic corpus, morality and virtue appear in two instances in contexts quite removed from any avowal of a didactic aim. In *Evelina* (1778), Frances Burney mentions virtue four times, twice in the poem addressed to her father, and twice in the dedication "To the Authors of the Monthly and the Critical Reviews" and once in the preface to general readers (3, 6, 9). In the poem, she pays tribute to the virtues that have been imparted on her by her father, but does not profess to aim at inculcating these virtues to others herself ("If in my heart the love of Virtue glows,/'T was planted there by an unerring rule" and "Could my weak pow'rs thy num'rous virtues trace," 3). In the dedication to critics, she discusses the necessity of the virtue of courage "to ward off that littleness of soul which leads, by steps imperceptible, to all the base train of the inferior passions, and by which the too timid mind is betrayed into a servility derogatory to the dignity of human nature" as a way to both justify her putting herself forward as an author and ask for the indulgence of the "authors of the Monthly and Critical reviews" whom she addresses (5, 6). Finally, she mentions the "virtuous mind" of her heroine in her preface, yet her discussion of the ability of novels to bring about moral improvement in their readers, specifically young ladies, leads her to position her work in the category "of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury," falling short of establishing a clear didactic intent—though not denying the potential of didactic effect, just as Sarah Green does thirty years after her (9).

Likewise, Maria Edgeworth's preface to the third edition of *Patronage* (first edition 1814) focuses on the relationship between author, readers and reviewers, and references the Roman historian Tacitus, whose quote includes references to vice and virtue, as a defense against accusations of pointed satire in her work:

As to the charge of having drawn satirical portraits, [the author] has already disclaimed all personality, and all intention of satirizing any profession; and she is grieved to find it necessary to repel such a charge. [...] Tacitus says that 'there must always be men, who, from congenial manners, and sympathy in vice, will think the fidelity of history a satire on themselves; and even the praise due to virtue is sure to give umbrage.' (vi-vii)

Rather than being a place where an author simply states their aim, whether ideological or aesthetic, these prefaces reveal themselves to be a place where authors negotiate their positions in relation to the different agents that hold power over their reception and success and to whom—and sometimes through whom—authors justify the very existence of their work (Maingueneau 123, Millet 14-15). This may in part explain why prefaces are often imbued with humility and deference. The following section analyzes this phenomenon through the ways in which the prefaces of both corpora establish a relationship with patrons, specific readers such as family members or reviewers, and general readers.

## II. The Preface: A Site of Negotiation More than Affirmation

The *OED* defines the act of negotiating as "to communicate or confer (*with* another or others) for the purpose of arranging some matter by mutual agreement; to discuss a matter with a view to some compromise or settlement" (*OED* emphasis).<sup>104</sup> Negotiation implies the preexistence of a conflict, within which participants aim to find common ground and gains "relative to one's own value system" (Schelling 4). As such, negotiation is "concerned with the common interest and mutual dependence that can exist between participants in a conflict" (Schelling 5). In political negotiation, making concessions and meeting demands are central to arriving at a point of mutual agreement, with the aim of "reaching outcomes that are mutually advantageous" (Schelling 5, 19). Thomas Schelling's discussion of negotiation pertains to political science, and the concept may form the theoretical basis for studies in a vast array of fields, ranging from game theory and law to pedagogy and literature, as illustrated by the longstanding publication *Negotiation Journal*. In the introduction to its first issue, Jeffrey Rubin defines negotiation as "the settlement of differences and the waging of conflict through verbal exchange" (5).

In the context of scholarship on late-eighteenth-century literature, the concept of negotiation has been used to describe the relationship between specific authors and the larger culture in which they strove to carve out a place for themselves (Williams 29, Grogan 160, Fraiman x). The eighteenth-century novel has also been said to "negotiate a provisional alliance between the contending values of individual autonomy and social discipline" Forster

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<sup>104</sup> "negotiate, v." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2021, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/125878](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125878). Accessed 4 August 2021.



2001(Barney 13). This form of negotiation with conflicting social forces is particularly relevant to women, and even more so when they are authors (Barney 304, Fraiman x, Ty 1998: vii, Wood 102). As Steven Brams notes, power imbalance such as that seen in Biblical narratives involving a man, like Cain or Abraham, and God, does not preclude the possibility of negotiation (265). One may therefore fruitfully apply the notion of negotiation to conflicts between individuals and specific cultural forces, and more specifically, as will be the case here, between different actors of the book market.

In this section, I contend that the prefatory material from the novels of both corpora prove to be primarily a site of negotiation between the respective places of authors and readers, who may be at once consumers and critics, in the growing and evolving literary marketplace. Crucially, book reviewing established itself as a major force in the book trade in the second half of the eighteenth century, profoundly and durably altering it (: 172). As will be made apparent, the vast majority of the prefatory material found in both corpora engage in this negotiation, illustrating a prevalent concern with the kind and amount of authority an author can claim as one of several key elements of an industry, eclipsing in part the function of the prefatory material as a means to assert a particular authorial aim. The following discussion examines dedications to patrons, family members, as well as references to critics and general readers in the prefaces and advertisements. Such inscriptions occur in novels of both corpora, and the analysis treats the works together for each type of readership mentioned.

Out of the twenty-one prefaces across the didactic and reference corpora, only three feature dedications to a patron. This rather low number may be a reflection of the waning importance of literary patronage in favor of the professionalization of authorship starting in the eighteenth century (Gomille 144, Watt 56, Donoghue 1). In the didactic corpus, Mary Brunton dedicates *Self-Control* (1811) to established literary figure Joanna Baillie. In the reference corpus, George Walker addresses *The Vagabond* (1799) to Lord Bishop of Landaff, and Eaton Stannard Barrett inscribes *The Heroine* (1813) to Tory politician George Canning. These dedications have the function of associating the author to a better-known figure than themselves, thereby claiming a specific artistic (*Self-Control*) or political (*The Vagabond*, *The Heroine*) lineage. By dedicating her novel to Joanna Baillie, Brunton hopes to confer upon her

work "the purity of intention" which Joanna Baillie's fame has secured, and claims that the "triumph of RELIGION" which she displays in her character Laura Montreville follows the path of Baillie's own characters (2).

Walker and Barrett both advertise their work as Anti-Jacobin through their inscriptions, with Walker aiming to "follow the track of your lordship in the cause of genuine Religion, Morality, and Liberty," as discussed in the previous section, and Barrett dedicating his work to a Tory politician who has written in the *Anti-Jacobin* periodical. Barrett also claims literary lineage by comparing his address to Laurence Sterne dedicating *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759) to statesman William Pitt the Elder, both more important figures in their respective fields than Barrett or Canning (2). Barrett's demanding a place in the literary canon is then accentuated in the heroine's preface, where a distinction is made between the works which remain part of the collective consciousness in spite of the passing of time, and those which sink into oblivion. This process is dramatized by characters living or dying on the moon, where the fictional preface is set (2-3).<sup>105</sup> As mentioned in the previous section, this preface includes a reference to the character of Tristram Shandy, who shows no sign of such "dying," setting a dividing line between works of prose fiction which are worth remembering and those which are not (3).<sup>106</sup>

Through their dedications, these authors assert their ideological inclination, which in Brunton's case includes an explicitly didactic aim, as examined in section I, i of this chapter. They also seek the approval and protection of relatively powerful figures, as a way to legitimize the very act of writing a novel. This is particularly significant in light of the negative associations that the authors claim to have with the genre, indicative of their conservative politics, as narrative fiction was seen increasingly favorably at the turn of the nineteenth century (Warner 14).

Dedications to a specific person can also be used to place filial love and approval above public judgment, which circumvents the uncertainty of responses by critics and the wider public. This is the case in Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812) dedication to the author's child, already mentioned in section I, i. Barbara Hofland dedicates her work to

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<sup>105</sup> The heroine explains that whenever "a book becomes obsolete on earth, the personages, countries, manners, and things recorded in it, lose, by the law of sympathy, their existence in the moon" (2).

<sup>106</sup> The notion of the literary canon is explored in detail in chapter 8.

her son, and positions herself as an "affectionate mother," circumscribing her didactic aim to her duty as a domestic, not social, educator. The dedication is exempt from apologies for writing and publishing a novel aimed at the larger public, which may be explained by the author remaining within the bounds of her role as mother (vii).

This is not the case in Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) or Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) from the didactic corpus, which include aims of educating a public readership ("the general reader" in *Cælebs* and "the readers," especially "young ladies" in *Self-Control*). This is strikingly audacious on the part of these conservative writers, which perhaps explains the particularly pronounced marks of humility in the preface to *Cælebs* and the dedication to *Self-Control*, to counterbalance these assertive acts. In fact, in two other novels of the didactic corpus, Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) and Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801), dedications to the authors' fathers function as a way to circumvent potential public censure, be it from reviewers or from bad sales. Such appeals to paternal authority consequently appear as another possible strategy for authors to negotiate their place in the public eye, particularly for women writers.

Frances Burney, whose three-part prefatory material to her first novel *Evelina* was mentioned in the previous section, positions herself as a dutiful and respectful daughter. Her dedicatory poem begins with an apostrophe, "Oh, Author of my being!" which establishes her father as a superior and central influence by evoking the poetic tradition of invocation and suggesting a parallel between paternal and godly creation (3, Baldick 1991: 185).<sup>107</sup> Her poem is an encomium to her father's "num'rous virtues," and an unfaltering homage to him as her educator: "Thy life, my precept,—thy good works, my school" (3). Burney stays strictly within the bounds of filial piety in this dedication, which she uses to justify her recourse to anonymity: "Concealment is the only boon I claim;/Obscure be still the unsuccessful Muse,/Who cannot raise, but would not sink, thy fame" (3). Burney also expresses humility in her abilities as a writer, calling her poem "feeble lines" and suggesting that her father may never read them ("*If e'er thy eyes these feeble lines survey,*" 3, my emphasis). Indeed, as an anonymous publication, its failure in the literary market would preclude Dr. Burney from reading the work unless his daughter explicitly put it in his hands, as well as protect his

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<sup>107</sup> As mentioned above, obvious difference in status does not necessarily hinder the process of negotiation (Brams 265).

status as a public figure himself.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Burney simultaneously claims filial piety and paternal (and hence patriarchal) protection in a way that secures her status as a modest lady, in spite of her coming forward as a published novelist.<sup>109</sup>

In her dedication to *The Father and Daughter* (1801), Amelia Opie posits her aim in her novel and her dedication as dependent on one another, writing "having endeavoured in 'THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER' to exhibit a picture of the most perfect parental affection, to whom could I dedicate it with so much propriety as to you, since, in describing a good father, I had only to delineate my own?" (iii-iv). Opie then explicitly links her potential success to her filial love, which achieves the goal of remaining modest without having recourse to professions of humility seen for example in Burney's dedication:

Allow me to add, full of gratitude for years of tenderness and indulgence on your part, but feebly repaid even by every possible sentiment of filial regard on mine, that the satisfaction I shall experience if my Publication be favourably received by the world, will not proceed from the mere gratification of my self-love, but from the conviction I shall feel that my success as an Author is productive of pleasure to you. (iv)

Opie mentions her potential "success as an Author"—albeit mitigated by the hypothetical "if," which comes in stark contrast to Mary Brunton declaring herself an "insect," for instance (Opie iv, Brunton 2). Opie's fairly confident way of writing about herself as a professional author is however kept within the bounds of female modesty through the focus on filial love, and the respect for the father figure which she expresses. Indeed, she compares her inscription to "those nations who devoted to their gods the first fruits of the genial seasons which they derived from their bounty," effectively linking the paternal to the divine, much like Burney (3). Moreover, Opie follows this dedication to her father with another one "To the Reader," where she writes that "It is not without considerable apprehension that I offer myself as an avowed Author at the bar of public opinion" (v). She circumvents this fear of "public opinion" by disavowing the term "novel" and the standards to which she holds works of this description: 'I know "THE FATHER AND THE DAUGHTER' is wholly devoid of those attempts at strong character, comic situation, bustle, and variety of incident, which

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108 Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace traces the importance of paternal authority in the careers of Frances Burney, Hannah More, and Maria Edgeworth in 'Milton's Daughters: The Education of Eighteenth-Century Women Writers,' *Feminist Studies*, 12 (2), Summer 1986, pp. 275-293.

109 In chapter 2, we will see how modesty and filial piety are crucial values upheld by reviewers, and participate in how positive a review can be.

constitute a Novel, and that its highest pretensions are, to be a SIMPLE, MORAL TALE" (vii). Opie paradoxically bolsters novels and distances her work from them, in a claim to avoid her "simple, moral tale" to be judged by similar standards. I argue that these two successive dedications are constructed to deflect both criticism of the novel genre—even though it is described in generally positive terms in the second dedication—and of this particular work by invoking filial affection and simplicity of composition that place it in a different realm.

These three dedications to family members thus illustrate the delicate act of negotiating one's relationship to authorship, especially for women writers, whose inscriptions reinforce their place within the family and social hierarchy as mothers and daughters in an effort to justify their entering the literary marketplace.

Before Amelia Opie in *The Father and Daughter*, Frances Burney had also added a foreword to a wider readership. She directly addresses the *Monthly* and *Critical* reviewers in the second part of the prefatory section to *Evelina*, asking for the critics' "patronage" (5). As Frank Donoghue notes, Burney is "the first author to acknowledge openly and seriously that Reviews occupy a legitimate place of power in the field of literature," and argues that in her preface to *Evelina* she "used their position of dominance to her advantage" (162, 170). She calls reviewers "magistrates of the press, and Censors for the public," whose "engagements are not to the supplicating authors; but to the candid public," and to whose judgment she must defer, while still appealing to their sympathy by reminding them that they "were all young writers once," liable to the same "terrors" when publishing for the first time (5-6). The author clearly engages in negotiation here, offering a position which compromises on her authorial power in the hopes to nonetheless carve a place for herself in the author-critic dynamic.

Burney completes the introduction to the novel with a preface to general readers, broadening the scope of the audience. There again, the difficult path Burney walks as a young author working within a relatively new literary genre is visible. She pays tribute to the famous authors preceding her, citing "Rousseau, Johnson, Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett," thus establishing her lineage within literary history (9). However, she does so with clear humility, claiming that though "they have rendered the path [of novel writing] plain, they have left it barren" (10). Similarly, she introduces her narrative goals ("to draw

characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the time," 9) and discusses artistic merit, including the relative importance of imitation of nature and originality in works of visual and written art, only to devalue the views she expresses on the subject. She writes that "the candour of my readers I have not the impertinence to doubt, and to their indulgence I am sensible I have no claim; I have, therefore, only to intreat, that my own words may not pronounce my condemnation" (10). The same reserve pervades the paragraph devoted to the possibility of her novel providing moral improvement to young ladies. Through a metaphor which pathologizes novel writing and reading as a "contagion" spreading "incurable distemper," she cautiously intimates that "surely all attempts to contribute to the number of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury, ought rather to be encouraged than condemned" (9-10). The position expressed here embodies the difficult line Burney is treading, using the medical metaphor later deployed by authors such as Brunton and Walker. She appeals to the prevalent opinion that novels constitute a moral threat, especially to young female readers, in the middle of a piece that otherwise praises previous novelists and asserts the legitimacy of publishing her novel so long as it may be read "without injury" (10).<sup>110</sup>

In this general preface, Burney's work is left to meet the "justice" and potential "censure" of the public (10). If Burney is the first author to directly acknowledge the importance of the *Reviews* for authors' literary careers, she also points to the power of novel readers as consumers in the fate of an author's work, in terms of commercial success and reputation, both artistic and moral. The three-part prefatory section shows Burney negotiating her place as a young female novelist, conceding ample room for different classes of potential readers as moral and literary judges, from familial authority figures to reviewers and general readers. Burney's first novel turned out to be a great success sanctioned by her father who helped to propel her to literary fame. Yet, the author fully credits the "indulgence shewn by the Public to *Evelina*" for the novel's success in her short advertisement to *Cecilia* (1782), also in the didactic corpus, and as encouragement to publish again, though still aware of the "precariousness any power to give pleasure" (3).

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<sup>110</sup> The question of the intended recipients of moral didacticism among an author's readership is the subject of chapter 3.

In the following years, a trend of directly engaging with a wider readership than dedications to a single person is visible in the prefatory material from both corpora, further demonstrating how prefaces act more as places of negotiation to be trod carefully by writers rather than straightforward spaces of artistic and/or ideological—including didactic—declaration.<sup>111</sup>

Indeed, William Godwin illustrates the ambivalent relationship between authors and critics in his preface to *Fleetwood* (1805, reference corpus). He also responds to objections expressed by critics to elements of his previous novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), regarding events that were "so much out of the usual road, that not one reader in a million can ever fear they will happen to himself" (2). He professes to have written *Fleetwood* on the opposite basis, "consist[ing] of such adventures, as for the most part have occurred to at least one half of the Englishmen now existing, who are of the same rank of life as my hero" (2). In doing so, he expresses resentment towards the influence of critics on his writing, and the impossibility of completely living up to their expectations: "Gentlemen critics, I thank you. In the present volumes I have served you with a dish agreeable to your own receipt, though I cannot say with any sanguine hope of obtaining your approbation" (2).<sup>112</sup> In spite of the perceptible irony present in this statement, the fact is that Godwin is influenced by past reviews, which supports Matthew Grenby and Frank Donoghue's claims that the *MR* and *CR* had considerable power over literary careers in this period (Grenby 174, Donoghue 3).

A decade later, Maria Edgeworth similarly engages with critics in the 'Preface to the Third Edition' of *Patronage*, considering it "the duty of the author to take advantage of the corrections which have been communicated to her by private friends and public censors" (v). "Public censors" are likely to be reviewers, and indeed Edgeworth addresses some of the reserves that the reviewer from the *MR* expressed regarding the improbability and inaccuracy of the medical and legal subplots (*DBF* 1814A020), for which Edgeworth pleads indulgence from "candid judges" (vii). In contrast to Godwin, Edgeworth's tone is devoid of contempt, yet she manages to navigate her position as an author by showing herself bound

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111 Lucy-Anne Katgely details the influence of *Evelina's* prefatory materials on a number of female novelists of the period in the fourth chapter of her PhD dissertation entitled 'Entre obscurité et renommée : trajectoires et chemins de traverse des romans de l'"école Burney" (1778–1820).'

112 In his preface to *The Heroine* (1813, reference corpus), Eaton Stannard Barrett also points to the impossibly high standards of "the Scotch Reviewers," which he uses the character of Tristram Shandy to satirize.

to the judgment of her readership, including critics, while also affirming her authority as a writer: "Whatever she has thought liable to just censure has in the present edition been amended, as far as is consistent with the identity of the story" (v). In Burney, Godwin, and Edgeworth's prefaces, critics appear as potentially tyrannical judges with considerable power over authors, whose different reactions to them suggest that such power is constraining.<sup>113</sup>

In addition, the general public, mostly voiceless when it comes to literary criticism but vocal—or not—in market sales and library borrowings, also appears as a force to engage with in prefaces, as the occurrences of "reader" and "public" in those of both corpora illustrates.<sup>114</sup> Ten out of the thirteen prefaces from the didactic corpus and five out of the eight from the reference corpus mention readers and or the "public," already seen in Burney and Edgeworth's prefaces. Although Helen Maria William's *Julia* (1790, didactic corpus) does not specifically mention the reading public, she does cite "the *indulgence* which [her] former poems have met with," pointing to a judging entity which appears to have had an influence on her subsequent writing (2, my emphasis).

In the reference corpus, Richard Cumberland's *Henry* challenges elements of the typical preface, by denying the conventional profession of humility to justify the publication of his work. He wonders "when a man acts from his own free motives in resorting to the press, how can he be warranted for intruding on the Public without a proper confidence in his powers for entertaining them?" (iii). Still, Cumberland's argument gives credit to his readers, whom he calls "that generous Public, who are so justly intitled to every grateful exertion on my part, and to whose future favours it is my best ambition to aspire" (iv). While he subverts one of the conventional features of the preface, he still devotes the entirety of his "Advertisement" to the relationship between author and reader.

In fact, the only prefatory material in either corpus which is used solely as a way of stating the author's artistic project appears in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary* (1788, didactic corpus). Wollstonecraft states her departure from the models of Samuel Richardson's

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<sup>113</sup> This is quite different from the way Laurence Sterne treats "connoisseurs" in *Tristram Shandy*, decidedly rejecting critics' influence on him as an author and asserting the independence of the "work of genius" (124). This change in attitude once more illustrates the clear growth in cultural importance of critics over the course of the second half of the eighteenth century.

<sup>114</sup> See Tables 8 and 9 in section III of this chapter.



Clarissa or Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Sophie, and decries the authors who have tried to copy these ideals to no great success:

It would be vain to mention the various modifications of these models, as it would to remark, how widely artists wander from nature, when they copy the originals of great masters. They catch the gross parts; but the subtile spirit evaporates; and not having the just ties, affectation disgusts, when grace was expected to charm. (3)

Wollstonecraft asserts that "[i]n her artless tale, without episodes, the mind of a woman, who has thinking powers is displayed." The fact that this preface is the only one in a group of twenty-one to feature solely the author's artistic project underlines by contrast the importance of the triangular relationship between author, reader, and critic (Donoghue 29).<sup>115</sup> Moreover, in neither *Mary* nor *Wrongs* does Wollstonecraft express humility. This decidedly sets her apart from the other authors in the didactic corpus, and also largely from those of the reference corpus, which further highlights the importance of conventional deference in this process of negotiation.

Overall, these prefaces exhibit an acute concern with the different agents of literary fame, sometimes very explicitly linked to the author's need for money. In his preface to *Edgar, or the Phantom of the Castle* (1798, didactic corpus), Richard Sicklemore writes: "That I have endeavoured, by the only method in my power, to benefit my family, at a period, when I could have remained inactive, without reproach, I trust, will prove a motive too laudable for censure" (2). He also uses typically humble phrases to describe his work, stating himself to be "[c]onvinced that this simple tale is full of imperfections" (2).

Two novels from the reference corpus similarly mention their authors' monetary concern. In her preface to *A Simple Story* (1791), Elizabeth Inchbald alludes to the financial stress she is under, hoping for the continued "good fortune" which her literary endeavors have so far met with because of the "NECESSITY"—repeated four times in capital letters throughout the roughly six-hundred-word preface—which forces her to keep publishing novels (1, 2). Finally, although the preface to Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* does not

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<sup>115</sup> The question of composition and artistry was treated from the perspective of reception in part in chapter 1 and appears again in chapter 8. It is worth noting that this artistic project was perfectly compatible with the moral expectations of fiction at the time, given that Wollstonecraft aimed for verisimilitude against poor imitations of models where "affectation disgusts." As was made clear in chapter 1, II, affectation forms part of the list of vices commonly condemned by critics, and verisimilitude was one of the criteria for a positive review.

feature the term "public" or "reader," an addendum to the 1817 edition mentions that "the encomiums passed on this little work by many distinguished literary characters, induced the Publishers to lower the price, in the hope that it may have a more extensive circulation," showing a direct link between literary criticism and sales (viii). The concern with one's livelihood shows these authors' awareness of the importance of both critics and readers for their material success, which takes precedence over artistic or didactic aims in these prefatory matters.

Strikingly, Gregory Lewis Way dedicates his novel to "all the circulating librarians in the kingdom of Great-Britain," thanking them for "their very vigorous and spirited Exertions in promoting the extensive sale of this little Production" (3). He also openly discusses the importance of not revealing too much of the plot in his preface, lest it be returned to booksellers by his readers—whom he supposes to be female and treats with obvious condescension—thereby hurting the merchants' business and his own (9-10). The financial aspect of novel writing and publishing is highlighted crudely here, ending with the blatantly satirical "I am, Gentlemen, With the utmost sincerity of submission, Your most accidentally Biographical Caricature—istical Dat—Dicat—Dedicat—orial Humble servant, slave, and Blackamoor, To the Tune of as much Money As you think proper to give me for my Compliments, The AUTHOR" (24). Way denies all the staples of the preface observed in the other novels, deriding readers, refusing to make "pretty Apologies for the Inaccuracy of the Stile, and Infinity of other Defects which [his work] may be supposed to abound with," attacking those who uphold the rules, and omitting reviewers altogether (5-6). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the *MR* and the *CR* in turn denied him proper reviews: the former printed a curt appraisal, deeming the book "An illiberal attack upon the learned; the Author of which seems to have mistaken *vulgarity* for ease;—*fun* for humor, and *pertness* for wit," and the latter did not mention the publication at all (Raven 2000: 273). As for the reading public, the novel never went beyond the initial print run. The case of *Learning at a Loss* illustrates the interdependence of authors, critics, and readers; here, no compromise is made by any party, and the negotiation fails.

Indeed, critics play an active verbal part in the triangular relationship as was made evident in chapter 1, sometimes referring to the prefaces of the works they review—while

readers, though they may individually write to authors, most audibly participate in the exchange through sales and library borrowing. For instance, the *Critical* reviewer of *Belinda* (1801) takes issue with Edgeworth's "not wishing to acknowledge a Novel" (DBF 1801A026). Edgeworth foresaw this potential reaction in her advertisement, stating that "[t]he public have also a right to accept or refuse the classification that is presented," further illustrating the conflict between authors and readers, particularly critics, over cultural authority (3). In the *Critical* review of *Self-Control* (1811), the commentator takes up Brunton's extreme humility, calling her "this humblest of all humble insects," sarcastically using her own term to define herself, and goes on to quote part of her dedication to Joanna Baillie, to criticize her claim that she has decided to publish her work "that [she] may reconcile [her] conscience to the time which it has employed" (DBF 1811A026). This review shows that extreme deference is not always well received, and illustrates the potential volatility of the author-critic relationship, a term taken from Frank Donoghue's analysis of mid-eighteenth-century authors' relationship with critics (55).<sup>116</sup>

Brunton seems to have taken this criticism into account in her subsequent novel *Discipline* (1814), where the tone of the preface is significantly more assertive. She continues to engage in conventional humility, stating that "the author has no means of judging" of the success of her attempt to "amuse" (59). However, she moves away from the type of deference present in *Self-Control* when she asserts that "for an endeavour to show the necessity and the progress of religious principle, *no apology seems requisite*" (59, my emphasis). From first to second publication, the relationship developed through the diachronic dialogue between author and critic in prefatory materials and reviews clearly evolves, illustrating the on-going negotiation of both parties, as Godwin's preface to *Fleetwood* (1805) also discussed earlier underlines.

In a different vein, the *Critical* reviewer of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791, reference corpus) contends that the author "deceives herself" in believing only necessity brings her to novel-writing, and enjoins her to "reflect how often she has experienced such delight, such rapture, and forbear to complain of the labour by which it was preceded" (*CR* 1791, vol. 1: 207). By directly responding to authors, these critics emphasize to extent to which

<sup>116</sup> This review also shows that novels fitting the criteria for the didactic corpus are far from having all garnered exclusively positive reviews, as was discussed in detail in chapter 2.

prefaces were sites of complex negotiation between authors and critics over cultural authority on the discourse surrounding novels, much like the reviews themselves (Donoghue 5).

As we have seen, the concern with morals is more obviously prevalent in reviews, discussed in chapter 1, than in the prefaces of the novels from both corpora. I argue that this is because the prefaces primarily appear as sites where the author-reader-critic relationship is negotiated rather than platforms where authors can simply state their goals as creators. Overt authoriality is certainly a defining feature of prefaces, with the authorial voice commenting on narrative process and directly involving readers, but this rarely translates into unequivocal assertiveness whether or not the prefaces express a morally didactic aim.

Moreover, although there are more intentionally moral novels in the didactic corpus according to the prefaces, novels from the reference corpus such as *The Vagabond* (1799) and *The Heroine* (1813) feature aims that are close to being didactic, while the majority of prefaces from the didactic corpus do not feature an explicitly didactic aim. There is consequently no unmitigated link between the presence of an explicit didactic intent and the early reception of moral didacticism. Nevertheless, whereas a considerable number of novels from both corpora do not include prefatory material, two thirds of such paratext do appear in the didactic corpus, suggesting that the presence of a preface, whether or not it includes an explicit didactic intent, appears to be a feature of the didactic novel as it was received by early reviewers. It is consequently worth analyzing in more detail the prefaces' discourse regarding readers specifically, as the supposed recipients of moral instruction, regardless of whether the latter is explicitly stated as an aim, to determine if a stance specific to the prefatory material from the didactic corpus emerges.

### **III. Constructing the Reader in Prefatory Material**

Now that the complexity of prefatory material as a space of affirmation of authorial intent and a site of negotiation of the author/critic/reader relationship has been established, one wonders how the figure of the reader is conceived of, and the extent to which a difference exists between the didactic and the reference novels' engagement with it in their prefatory material. This section echoes chapter 2 in that it proposes to analyze the

construction of the reading public through a study of concordance lines including direct addresses to readers. As a space where authors comment publicly on their work without the mediating presence of a narrative voice, whether homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, prefatory material can be seen as a counterpart to reviews, particularly when it comes to the portrayal of possible readers. As will be evidenced, a similar ambivalence toward the construction of the relationship with one's readers is found in the prefatory material of both corpora, further mitigating the link between turn-of-the-nineteenth-century literary moral didacticism and overtly authoritative authorial stances. Gender appears to be a determining factor in the ways in which authors conjure the figure of the reader, with female authors, who are over-represented in the preface of the didactic corpus and underrepresented in those of the reference corpus, unsurprisingly assuming in general a much less assertive posture than their male counterparts.<sup>117</sup>

When looking exclusively at the prefaces, advertisements, and dedications, the authors of the didactic corpus appear to be more concerned with readership than those of the reference corpus.<sup>118</sup> Tables 8 and 9 show the occurrences of direct addresses to the reader or the public (DAR) in the prefaces of both corpora; the didactic corpus features roughly twice as many such occurrences as the reference corpus (45 and 23 respectively), echoing the discussion of DAR in the reviews. Only prefaces written by the authors of the novels have been taken into account, therefore excluding William Godwin's editorial preface to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* and Richard Lovell Edgeworth's "sanction" of his daughter's novel *Patronage* (v), both from the didactic corpus. Maria Edgeworth's preface to the third edition of *Patronage*, where she answers criticism levied at her by reviewers and private readers alike, has however been included, just as it was in the discussion presented in the first section of this chapter.

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<sup>117</sup> Susan Lanser argues that Jane Austen moved away from overt authoriality in *Northanger Abbey* to the narrative "indirections" characteristic of her later novels because of the publishing failure of her first novel, which relied on an authorial stance associated with male discursive authority (62-63). She writes that Enlightenment "had never deconstructed patriarchy; on the contrary, the rigidification of sexual spheres and the valorization of female domesticity continued fairly relentlessly, destabilizing female authorship even as it emerged as a significant force" (65). While Lanser focuses her analysis on diegetic authoriality, a study of voice in prefatory material confirms her conclusions.

<sup>118</sup> Chapter 4 addresses DAR in the main texts of the novels of both corpora.

1778evelina	As magistrates of the press, and Censors for the	public	, -to which you are bound by the sacred ties of integrity
1778evelina	not to the supplicating authors but to the candid	public	, which will not fail to crave The penalty and forfeit of
1782cecilia	ADVERTISEMENT. The indulgence shewn by the	Public	to Evelina, which, unpatronized, unaided, and unowned,
1796memoirs	aim of the author; with what success, the	public	will, probably, determine. Every writer who advances
1796memoirs	and weaknesses of our fragile nature. - Let those	readers	, who feel inclined to judge with severity the
1798edgar	permit the following pages to encounter the	public	eye, it is requisite I should make some apology for them
1798wrongs	PREFACE THE	PUBLIC	are here presented with the last literary attempt of an
1798wrongs	So much of it as is here given to the	public	, she was far from considering as finished, and, in
1798wrongs	himself into the work, but to give to the	public	the words, as well as ideas, of the real author
1798wrongs	more forcibly impress the mind of common	readers	they have more of what may justly be termed stage-effect
1801belinda	appellation he may think proper to his works. The	public	have also a right to accept or refuse the classification that
1801belinda	The following work is offered to the	public	as a Moral Tale - the author not wishing to acknowledge a
1801father	AMELIA OPIE. TO THE	READER	. It is not without considerable apprehension that I offer
1801father	offer myself as an avowed Author at the bar of	public	opinion, --and that apprehension is heightened by its
1808coelebs	the same pursuit with myself, but to the general	reader	. He obviated all my objections arising from my want of
1808coelebs	censure of two classes of critics. The novel	reader	will reject it as dull. The religious may throw it aside
1808coelebs	the other of censurable levity.	Readers	of the former description must be satisfied with the
1808coelebs	But to entertain that description of	readers	makes no part of my design. " The persons with whom
1808coelebs	is time to meet the objections of the more pious	reader	, if any such should condescend to peruse this little
1810romance	my occupation is " but a dream. " The	public	, in general, knows but little of the ingenuity of
1810romance	intended composer, to retrieve him with the	public	, whom he must otherwise disappoint; and, not without
1810romance	modest, and yet how true! Does not the	reader	consider " The Monk Udolpho " a taking title? and does
1810romance	But I have to entreat the	reader	's pardon for this burst of indignation: I hope, however
1810romance	I am half inclined to think that the	reader	's opinion may not, perhaps, be so conscientious and
1810romance	Now whether thou art a "gentle	reader	" or not, I am firmly persuaded thou dost already fear
1810romance	is known to every star-gazer - romance	reader	- but his satellites to a very few. M. G
1810romance	these nocturnals unnoticed by enlightened	readers	. Were it not for Mr. Pickersgill's affectation, innovation
1810romance	To carnival and regatta!! " But perhaps the	reader	thinks I am hoaxing him with these extracts, and that
1810romance	as this inimitable poem. But, to make the	reader	acquainted with this gentleman's " affectation, " let me
1810romance	One more quotation, gentle, patient, indulgent	reader	, and I will introduce you to Joshua's " innovations.
1810romance	I have only to lay before the	reader	a note, which will be found at page 177, vol
1810romance	only that I would direct the	reader	's attention. " The audacious attempt of John Lewis Fiesco
1810romance	me intreat you, gentle, benevolent, and christian	reader	, to peruse in pity the romances of Francis Lathom, for
1810romance	author of " THE MONK " has declined in the	public	estimation, every since the publication of that which
1810romance	has done so, and in order that the	reader	may make himself thoroughly acquainted with the real
1810romance	longer in her company, and I am sure the	reader	will gladly bid adieu to this " chartered LIBERTINE. " A
1810romance	is very anxious, on all occasions, that the	reader	should not do what she herself has done, that is,
1810romance	moment, that, after closing the book, the	reader	can separate those incidents that are historical, from
1810romance	? - but is it not rather probable that the	reader	will retain a recollection of that, which is the most
1810romance	The title-page of this work informs the	Public	censors. Whatever she has thought liable to just censure
1810romance	the mercy, the forbearance of a BRITISH	PUBLIC	, ample; to such she looks up for support and protection
1811self-control	work of fiction necessarily unprofitable to the	readers	. When the vitiated appetite refuses its proper food, the
1811self-control	while, for the generality of my	readers	, I breathe a fervent wish, that these pages may assist
1814patronage	PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION. The	public	has called for a third _impression_ of this book

1814patronage	been communicated to her by private friends and	public	censors.
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*Table 10. Direct Addresses to Readers in Didactic Prefatory Material*

1778learning	As to my <b>sentimental</b>	Readers	, if any such there should be; for them indeed I
1778learning	and Latin Knowledge, for fear of Puzzling my	Readers	,) " Know Thyself. "
1778learning	to avoid Ill-will and Censure is, to let every	Reader	form his own Judgment upon it.
1778learning	should the discriminating stomach of the	Public	find any accidental Nausea in swallowing the Bolus
1795henry	Henry ADVERTISEMENT TO THE	READER	. IT is a custom with some authors to introduce their
1795henry	works by a prefatory appeal to the candour of the	Reader	, and circumstances may undoubtedly combine to justify
1795henry	True respect to the	Reader	refers itself to his judgment, and makes no attempts
1795henry	how can he be warranted for intruding on the	Public	without a proper confidence in his powers for
1795henry	both in stile and matter, of that <b>generous</b>	Public	who are so justly intitled to every grateful exertion on my
1805fleetwood	Some of those <b>fastidious</b>	readers	they may be classed among the best friends an author
1805fleetwood	much out of the usual road, that not one	reader	in a million can ever fear they will happen to himself.
1805fleetwood	In this little work the	reader	will scarcely find any thing to " elevate and surprise; "
1805fleetwood	<b>Multitudes of</b>	readers	have themselves passed through the very incidents
1805fleetwood	has twice before claimed the patience of the	public	in this form. The unequivocal indulgence which has
1805fleetwood	, the first foundation of its author's claim to	public	distinction and favour, was a treatise, aiming to ascertain
1813heroine	E. S. BARRETT. THE HEROINE TO THE	READER	Attend, gentle and intelligent reader; for I am not the
1813heroine	Attend, <b>gentle and intelligent</b>	reader	; for I am not the fictitious personage whose memoirs
1813heroine	This, <b>most grave</b>	reader	, is but a short and imperfect sketch of the way we
1813heroine	a very pretty one, I assure you, <b>dear</b>	reader	. I then perceived advancing a lank and grimly figure in
1813heroine	I trust you will feel, <b>dear</b>	reader	, that you now owe more to my discoveries than to those
1813heroine	Believe it piously, <b>dear</b>	reader	, and quote me as your authority. It is by means
1814discipline	she cannot hope to escape reminding the	reader	of the more successful adventurers who have attempted

*Table n. Direct Addresses to Readers in Reference Prefatory Material*

Nine out of the thirteen prefaces mention the reader or the public in the didactic corpus, as opposed to five out of eight in the reference corpus, showing the authors of the didactic novels explicitly engage with the question of their readership to a greater degree, aligning with what one might expect in works perceived to reproduce in some way a teacher-learner dynamic. There are also twice as many such references in the prefaces of the didactic corpus, which appears to reinforce the possible link between the presence of direct addresses to readers and the reception of moral didacticism. Nevertheless, almost half of the occurrences of the prefaces from that corpus appear in Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), showing that particular preface to be distinctively concerned with the author/reader relationship rather than illustrating a particularly widespread interest in the preface of the didactic corpus in general. The tables do not include cases where an author dedicates their work to one specific person, *de facto* positioned as one of the readers, such as Barbara Hofland's dedication to her son in *The Son of a Genius* (1812, reference corpus). The following discussion focuses on the authorial construction of categories of readers and not on the instances of addresses to actual individual readers, paralleling the analysis of the early reviewers' engagement with the figure of the reader from chapter 2.

### *i. Confident Authorial Voice: A Male Prerogative*

One of the most striking elements of Tables 8 and 9 pertains to gender. Among the prefaces from the novels of the reference corpus which openly address readers, only one is written by a woman (from Mary Brunton's *Discipline*), while the opposite is true in the case of the didactic corpus. The ratio in the reference corpus is particularly striking, since over half of the novels were written by women, as were three of the eight that feature prefatory material. Only two novels of the didactic corpus were written by men, one of which includes a preface with one direct address to readers. The following discussion starts with a study of the type of authorial posture relative to readers found in the prefaces of the reference corpus, before moving on to the analysis of those of the didactic corpus (ii).

The prefaces that mention the reader and/or the public in the reference corpus and exhibit a confident authorial voice are all male-authored. For instance, Gregory Lewis Way writes in his preface to *Learning at a Loss* (1778): "I will not make any farther Display of my



Greek and Latin Knowledge, for fear of Puzzling my Readers" (20), after spending four pages on the topic. The end of the preface helps clarify the tone of this passage as ironic:

I am, Gentlemen, With the utmost Sincerity of Submission, Your most accidentally Biographical Caricature—istical Dat—Dicat—Dedicat—orial humble Servant, Slave, and Blackamoor, To the Tune of as much Money As you think proper to give me for my Compliments, The AUTHOR. (25)

The tone is blatantly satirical here, recalling Sterne's in Laurence Sterne's mock dedication in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759),<sup>119</sup> painting a picture of authorial humility rendered absurd by the written stammering and the hyperbolic "Servant, Slave, and Blackamoor," as well as somewhat coarse by the direct reference to money.<sup>120</sup> The signature in capital letters "the AUTHOR" likewise participates in crafting a highly confident authorial voice.

Richard Cumberland is also assertive in his preface to *Henry* (1795), which he dedicates explicitly "to the reader," and makes a similar point to Way regarding customary humility in prefaces albeit in a more earnest tone:

IT is a custom with some authors to introduce their works by a prefatory appeal to the candour of the Reader, and circumstances may undoubtedly combine to justify the measure; but when a man acts from his own free motives in resorting to the press, how can he be warranted for intruding on the Public without a proper confidence in his powers for entertaining them? True respect to the Reader refers itself to his judgment, and makes no attempts upon his pity. (iii)

Here, Cumberland associates confidence as an author with "respect to the Reader," justifying his assertiveness—particularly highlighted by the statement on "true respect"—without humbling the reader in the process. This suggests an ease with his role as an author which was more difficult to attain for female writers at the end of the eighteenth century (Donoghue 160).

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119 Chapter 9 from Volume I starts with the following words from the autodiegetic character: "I solemnly declare to all mankind, that the above dedication was made for no one Prince, Prelate, Pope, or Potentate, —Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount, or Baron, of this, or any other Realm in Christendom;—nor has it yet been hawked about, or offered publicly or privately, directly or indirectly, to any one person or personage, great or small; but is honestly a true Virgin-Dedication untried on, upon any soul living" (13).

120 Though gentility and its associated values of elegance, gracefulness, and taste rest on a certain level of financial comfort, Way essentially portrays literary publication as a trade to be profited by, unapologetically aligning it with the culturally less valued world of commerce (Mingay 7).

William Godwin shows himself to be just as at ease with his role as an author, starting his preface to *Fleetwood* (1805) by recounting the criticisms he received for his previous two novels, as discussed in section I, ii of this chapter:

Some of those fastidious readers may be classed among the best friends an author has, if their admonitions are judiciously considered who are willing to discover those faults which do not offer themselves to every eye, have remarked, that both these tales are in a vicious style of writing; that Horace has long ago decided, that the story we cannot believe, we are by all the laws of criticism called upon to hate; and that even the adventures of the honest secretary [*Caleb Williams*], who was first heard of ten years ago, are so much out of the usual road, that not one reader in a million can ever fear they will happen to himself. (xiv-xv)

Godwin strikingly equates "fastidious readers" and "gentlemen critics," which depending on the interpretation may be taken to mean that fastidious readers will fancy themselves critics, or that critics tend to be fastidious. Either way, the stance is critical, and the authorial voice assertive. Even as he claims that the story prefaced offers a plot that should not incur the same admonitions, suggesting some allowance has been made for the negative assessments, Godwin asserts his independence, distancing himself as the author from critics and readers, whose influence he diminishes by representing them as equivalent and interchangeable.

Finally, the fictitious narrator in Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813) also demonstrates a confidence in the author's position relative to the reader. The prefatory text entitled "The Heroine to the Reader" starts by a second-person direct address to the reader in the form of an order: "Attend, gentle and intelligent reader; for I am not the fictitious personage whose memoirs you will peruse in 'The Heroine'; but I am a corporeal being, and an inhabitant of another world" (3). This phrase introduces the marvelous narrative context of the preface, where the "supernatural, magical, or other wondrous impossibilities are accepted as normal within an imagined world clearly separated from our own reality" (Baldick 213). The rules of this marvelous world, including the gendered reversal of associating stays with men and boots with ladies, are explained to the reader in a series of imperatives:

Know, that the moment a mortal manuscript is written out in a legible hand, and the word End or Finis annexed thereto, whatever characters happen to be sketched in it (whether imaginary, biographical, or historical), acquire the

quality of creating and effusing a sentient soul or spirit, which instantly takes flight, and ascends through the regions of air, till it arrives at the moon; where it is then embodied, and becomes a living creature; the precise counterpart, in mind and person, of its literary prototype.

Know farther, that all the towns, villages, rivers, hills, and vallies of the moon, owe their origin, in a similar manner, to the descriptions given by writers of those on earth; and that all the lunar trades and manufactures, fleets and coins, stays for men, and boots for ladies, receive form and substance here, from terrestrial books on war and commerce, pamphlets on bullion, and fashionable magazines. (3)

Having established a respectful stance toward the reader by qualifying him or her as "gentle and intelligent," the autodiegetic narrator is rhetorically positioned as the authority in the world of the story (Birke 2015: 103). This assertive stance continues throughout the preface, with such direct addresses to the reader as "I assure you, dear reader," "I trust you will feel, dear reader, that you now owe more to my discoveries than to those of Endymion, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Galileus, and Newton," and "Therefore, say the philosophers, these [luminous meteors] came all the way from the moon. And they say perfectly right. Believe it piously, dear reader, and quote me as your authority" (4, 7, 8). The hyperbolic nature of the last two examples further establishes the preface as (marvelous) fiction, which its title "The Heroine to the Reader," coming immediately after the dedication to George Canning signed by the male author, also clearly indicates. The authorial voice perceptible through the autodiegetic character however conveys a sense of confidence in the relative positions of the author and the reader, the former comfortable in his position of authority.<sup>121</sup>

In contrast, Mary Brunton addresses the general reader in her preface to *Discipline* rather deferentially, assuming in her audience the knowledge of contemporary literary phenomenon *Waverley* (1814) by Sir Walter Scott, which went through at least four editions in its first year of publication alone (DBF 1814A054). Brunton recognizes that the partial setting of her novel in Scotland will incur comparison with Scott's work, published earlier in the same year, "a comparison with it is most truly her interest to avoid" (60). She points to the unfortunate coincidence which leads two works set in Scotland to appear one after the other, defending herself from any imitation with the assertion that "the story of *Discipline* has been

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<sup>121</sup> I use the masculine pronoun here to suggest that the Heroine's rhetorical stance betrays the author's masculine gender through the ease with which it wields overt authoriality (Lanser 16, 18, Birke 2015: 104).

planned for years; that the whole held very nearly its present form before she knew the subject of *Waverley*" (61). This is the context in which she writes that "she cannot hope to escape reminding the reader of the more successful adventurers who have attempted [this type of fiction] before her" (60). Brunton positions herself below her contemporary Sir Walter Scott ("one of the more successful adventurers"), and takes a respectful stance toward readers and their assumed ability to judge the literary merits of the novel in light of the very recently published and hugely successful *Waverley*, possibly as a way to anticipate an unfavorable comparison.<sup>122</sup>

Such a stance is particularly striking in that it coexists with an otherwise overtly stated didactic intent, as discussed in section I of this chapter. Authorial assertiveness is consequently all the more shown to be a male prerogative, difficult to invest for female authors.

## *ii. Women Writers and the Difficulty of Authorial Assertion*

The gendered divide in the ways in which authors figure their relationship to readers in prefatory material is also highlighted in the didactic corpus. The prefaces show a somewhat ambiguous construction of the author-reader relationship, revealing a greater difficulty for female authors to navigate the public platform of prefaces. Indeed, only in the preface to Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) is the tone decidedly assertive, reminiscent of the vertical relationship of the traditional teacher-student dynamic. The preface to this novel is the longest of either corpus with 6038 words. It is largely devoted to the criticism of other works, presented as the author's reason for writing a satirical novel on a quixotic reader. Her tone is consequently assertive, as is evident in the way she addresses readers: "Then let me intreat you, gentle, benevolent, and christian reader, to peruse in pity the romances of Francis Lathom, for he no doubt 'prays,' and I will bear witness that he 'works' manfully for 'his daily bread'" (x). Several elements of language here denote a strong authoritative voice—the phrases "let me intreat you" and "no doubt," the precise qualification of the reader as "gentle, benevolent, and christian," and the quotation marks indicating the author's ironical stance regarding Francis Fathom, whom she sharply criticizes for being overly prolific and derivative in his use of "a soporific ingredient called

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<sup>122</sup> Such a comparison in fact does not arise in the one review the novel garnered in the *Monthly*.

sentimental passion" (x). According to Linda Hutcheon, "irony has an evaluative edge and manages to provoke emotional responses in those who 'get' it and those who don't, as well as in its targets and in what other people call its 'victims'" (2), and the use of irony in conjunction with the assertive phrases "let me intreat you" and "no doubt" thus creates a confident authoritative voice.

The way that Maria Edgeworth carves out a place of authority for herself as the author while remaining respectfully aware of the independent opinion of the "public" regarding her works has been discussed in section II of this chapter, and shows the author to be similarly confident in her authorial role and voice. However, I argued in the previous section that Edgeworth negotiates that place rather than simply assuming it in her prefaces to *Belinda* (1801) and *Patronage* (1814, third edition 1815), which may illustrate the greater need of female writers at the time to justify the very act of publication (Donoghue 160). And indeed, as discussed in chapter 2, Sarah Green and Maria Edgeworth's reviewers assert their own authority over the authors', showing the difficulty for female writers' authoritative voices to be accepted.

Mary Wollstonecraft takes into account the potential responses of "common readers" in order to justify her narrative choices in her preface to *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) in a way which shows a confident authorial stance mitigated by the concern expressed for the effect of these choices on readers. After explaining her aim of portraying "passions rather than manners" and of "exhibiting the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society," Wollstonecraft concludes:

What are termed great misfortunes, may more forcibly impress the mind of common readers; they have more of what may justly be termed stage-effect; but it is the delineation of finer sensations, which, in my opinion, constitutes the merit of our best novels. This is what I have in view; and to show the wrongs of different classes of women, equally oppressive, though, from the difference of education, necessarily various. (66)

Wollstonecraft cautiously projects responses onto "common readers" with the dual use of the modal "may," showing an awareness of both the difficulty of foreseeing the reactions of one's readers and the importance that these reactions can have for an author. However, much like

Edgeworth, she asserts her authority as an author by reaffirming her narrative choices in accordance to her aim.

The prefaces to Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782), Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1810), and Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) are more ambivalent in asserting an authoritative authorial stance, further exemplifying the greater difficulty for women writers to express such a stance.

The preface to Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) has been noted for its ability to navigate the growing importance of reviews successfully by "directly address[ing] the presence of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* and us[ing] their position of dominance to her advantage" (Donoghue 16). Her mentions of the public support this claim, stressing the role of the critics as mediators between authors and readers. She calls critics "Censors for the public" whose "engagements are not to the supplicating authors; but to the candid public" (5). Burney's preface is tripartite in *Evelina*, separating three kinds of readers: her father, critics, and general readers, as discussed in section I of this chapter. The third part explicitly equates "the Public" with "novel readers," and acknowledges in the latter a great deal of power over the author (9). Indeed, Burney writes "[t]he candour of my readers I have not the impertinence to doubt, and to their indulgence I am sensible I have no claim" (10). The following passage emphasizes the perilous situation of an author trying to find a place in relation to "the Public":

The following letters are presented to the Public—for such, by novel writers, novel readers will be called,—with a very singular mixture of timidity and confidence, resulting from the peculiar situation of the editor; who, though trembling for their success from a consciousness of their imperfections, yet fears not being involved in their disgrace, while happily wrapped up in a mantle of impenetrable obscurity. (9)

Anonymity, the "mantle of impenetrable obscurity," protects the author from public censure, illustrating a far from confidently authoritative authorial stance.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> It is important to note that Burney was the first female author to directly address critics, and according to Donoghue "used their position of dominance to her advantage" (162). This contextualizes her "singular mixture of timidity and confidence" toward the reading public, as she navigated the as yet largely untrodden territory of the preface for a female novelist.

In the much shorter "advertisement" that prefaces *Cecilia* (1782), Burney shows a similarly ambivalent authorial stance. She cites the success of *Evelina*, "which, unpatronized, unaided, and unowned, past through Four Editions in one Year" as the encouragement to "risk this SECOND attempt" (3). While this success, openly acknowledged, demonstrates greater authorial confidence than in the preface to *Evelina*, her future as an author is repeatedly said to hinge on the reception of the public, starting with her initial fame owing to the "indulgence" of the public:

The animation of success is too universally acknowledged, to make the writer of the following sheets dread much censure of temerity; though the precariousness of any power to give pleasure, suppresses all vanity of confidence, and sends CECILIA into the world with scarce more hope, though far more encouragement, than attended her highly-honoured predecessor, EVELINA. (3)

Already being a successfully published author does not assuage Burney's fears of censure—which seems to be commercial rather than moral here, ascribing much greater authority to the public than to critics.

Mary Hays, a politically radical writer like Mary Wollstonecraft, projects reactions onto specific kinds of readers to justify her writing agenda in her preface to *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), echoing what has already been discussed in relation to Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798). Hays, after stating her aim to represent her heroine "as a human being, loving virtue while enslaved by passion, liable to the mistakes and weaknesses of our fragile nature," appeals to a certain kind of reader thus:

Let those readers, who feel inclined to judge with severity the extravagance and eccentricity of her conduct, look into their own hearts; and should they there find no record, traced by an accusing spirit, to soften the asperity of their censures—yet, let them bear in mind, that the errors of my heroine were the offspring of sensibility; and that the result of her hazardous experiment is calculated to operate as a *warning*, rather than as an example. (4, author's emphasis)

Hays counterbalances her generally assertive stance, discussed in more detail in section I of this chapter, with further justification of her picturing a heroine "enslaved by passion" hinging on projected reader response. Indeed, she completes her original justification based on narrative realism—a prerogative of the author—with a direct address to readers which

takes their position as potential judges seriously. The structure LET + VERB is used twice to further justify the portrayal of such a heroine before introducing the idea of the cautionary tale, likely to preclude further condemnation—and indeed successfully so as the reviews of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* attest. Readers are presented by Hays as possible censors whose judgment is to be addressed.

Mary Brunton's explicit didactic aim has been discussed earlier in this chapter, and shows a certain degree of assertiveness as an author. However, she also projects potential censure onto her readers, leading her to justify and qualify her didactic aim further:

[*Self-Control*] is published that I may reconcile my conscience to the time which it has employed, by making it in some degree useful. Let not the term so implied provoke a smile! If my book is read, its uses to the author are obvious. Nor is a work of fiction necessarily unprofitable to the readers. When the vitiated appetite refuses its proper food, the alternative may be administered in a sweetmeat. (2-3)

Immediately after stating that she wishes her book to be "useful," she foresees potential incredulity in her reader, prompting further explanation. Her assertion that a work of fiction is not "necessarily unprofitable to the readers" is very cautious with the negative turn of phrase, and the more assertive statement that follows, with a construction reminiscent of a maxim, is also mitigated by the modal "may." Moreover, Brunton conceives of her intended readership as "young ladies," which further assuages the presumption of asserting a didactic aim for an unknown authoress and makes it more acceptable as it does not destabilize existing social hierarchies based on gender and age (3). Indeed, she ends her dedication with the claim that "for the generality of my readers, I breathe a fervent wish, that these pages may assist of my enabling their own hearts to furnish proof that the character of Laura, however unnatural, is yet not unattainable," suggesting that her intended audience is exclusively female as the aim is for readers to emulate the avowedly "unnatural" virtues of the character of Laura Montreville (3). The didactic aim expressed, which presupposes a sufficient degree of authoritativeness to support the vertical relationship of author-reader model on that of teacher-learner, is here continually mitigated by the use of modality and complicated by questions of gender, illustrating an uncertainty regarding the author's place in relation to the potential variety of her readers.



The importance of navigating gender politics is equally evident in Hannah More's preface to *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808). As has already been stated, it is written in the voice of the autodiegetic character Charles or "Cœlebs" and recounts the journey of the work from personal to published memoir through the intervention of a friend "with an earnest wish that [Cœlebs] would consent to its publication," who believes in its usefulness "not only to young men engaged in the same pursuit with [himself], but to the general reader," and who undertakes the whole business of printing in London (vii). The first few paragraphs of the preface thus create a distance between the fictional male author and the publication of the work, protecting him from censure and allowing More to claim to specifically instruct young men in addition to "the general reader," who could thus be male or female, as well as young or old. This is very bold in terms of gender dynamics, and is arguably made possible by the use of the fictional male voice.

These paragraphs also serve to introduce a letter written by Charles to his friend, where all further mentions of readers occur. In the voice of Charles writing directly to his friend, More addresses the potential criticisms which she apprehends from various groups of readers in a tone whose assertiveness, I argue, is made possible through the additional layer of distance from the direct author-reader channel of communication of the preface provided by the format of the reported private letter:

I here send you my manuscript, with permission to make what use of it you please. By publishing it I fear you will draw on me the particular censure of two classes of critics. The novel reader will reject it as dull. The religious may throw it aside as frivolous. The one will accuse it of excessive strictness; the other of censurable levity. Readers of the former description must be satisfied with the following brief and general answer:

Had it been my leading object to have indulged in details that have amusement only for their end, it might not have been difficult to have produced a work more acceptable to the tastes accustomed to be gratified with such compositions. But to entertain that description of readers makes no part of my design. (viii)

The sentence "The one will accuse it of excessive strictness; the other of censurable levity," with its balanced structure and assertive use of the modal auxiliary *will* counterbalances the more cautious "The religious may reject it as dull" in the previous sentence. Moreover, More decidedly rejects the potential criticism of the "novel reader," stating that "to entertain that

description of readers makes no part of my design." This reinforces prevalent anti-novel prejudice inherited from the early eighteenth-century belief in the futility of prose fiction (Millet 33), similarly expressed for instance by the *Critical* reviewer of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) deriding "the readers of circulating libraries" for whom a work "being a novel is sufficient to command their attention" (*CR* 1791, vol. 1: 213). Projected criticisms on the part of "the more pious reader" are consequently given more consideration, but the justification reinforces the author's design:

If it be objected, that religious characters have been too industriously brought forward, and their faults somewhat too severely treated, let it be remembered, that while it is one of the principal objects of the work to animadvert on those very faults, it has never been done with the insidious design of depreciating the religion, but with the view, by exposing the fault, to correct the practice (ix).

This overall assertive explanation is however followed by a resurgence of humility, in a long paragraph which concludes the preface:

[...] if I shall be found to have totally disappointed you, my friend, in your too sanguine opinion that some little benefit might arise from the publication, I shall rest satisfied with a low and negative merit. I must be content with the humble hope that no part of these volumes will be found injurious to the important interests which it was rather in my wish than in my ability to advance; that where I failed in effecting good, little evil has been done [...]. (x)

While the tone is in keeping with the rest of the letter with the continued use of decisive phrases such as "I shall" and "I must," the authorial voice in the guise of that of the autodiegetic character ends on the notion of "negative merit" typical of the humility found in prefaces, especially of eighteenth-century prose (Donoghue 160), and derided by Richard Cumberland in his own preface to *Henry* (1795). In this preface, More's concern with her readers' potential responses is therefore evident in the multiple distancing strategies put in place in order to create an authoritative authorial voice, ultimately in part obviating it.

As discussed in section I, i of this chapter, five novels of the didactic corpus feature an explicit didactic aim in their prefatory material, namely William's *Julia*, Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, Edgeworth's *Belinda*, More's *Cœlebs*, and Brunton's *Self-Control*. All these have been shown in this section to negotiate the relative place of the author and the reader in their prefaces, at once asserting their authorial intents yet ultimately affirming readers'

autonomy. This may be seen as a reconfiguration of the traditional teacher-learner relationship, moving from the benevolent but all-knowing Lockean pedagogue as defined in chapter 2 in the context of reviewers to a relationship where the author-teacher remains relatively assertive in her teaching aims and means in order to reach those goals while the reader-learner is able to retain their agency.<sup>124</sup> Nonetheless, a similar posture is visible in the preface to Mary Brunton's *Discipline*, analyzed at the end of section III, i of this chapter, and the majority of the prefatory material from the didactic corpus does not evince a specific didactic aim. The creation of a possible female take on the Lockean pedagogue remains a minority occurrence, and cannot on its own constitute a cogent criterion explaining the early reception of moral didacticism in fiction.

In fact, Richard Sicklemore's preface to *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798) exemplifies what may be termed a 'feminine' authorial posture in his preface, which does not include an explicitly didactic aim. He justifies his writing venture by citing the wish to "benefit [his] family" rather than remaining idle during "a disagreeable vacation of many months," and adopts a submissive position relative to "the public eye" as he makes "some apology" for his work, which he deems "full of imperfections" (1). This is typical of the kind of justification that women often engaged in, since the act of publication "required what was presumed to be an unfeminine temerity" (Donoghue 160). Sicklemore's preface thus exhibits elements of what one expects from prefaces written by women, reinforcing the gendered divide between the prefaces of the didactic and the reference corpora in terms of rhetorical strategies. Sicklemore engaging in rhetorical features associated with the feminine in this period is an example of the gendered theoretical model that Anne Mellor uses in defining "feminine" and "masculine" Romanticism, which illustrate general trends based on gendered polarity but that individual female and male writers may transcend and/or transgress (4).

Taken as a whole, the prefatory material from the didactic corpus illustrates first and foremost the construction of what we might call a feminine authorial posture in relation to the authors' potentially multifarious readership, as opposed to the masculine posture adopted by the male writers in the prefaces of the reference corpus.

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<sup>124</sup> This is consistent with the analysis I give in my article on the figure of the pedagogue in *Belinda, Cælebs, and Wrongs of Woman* (2018: 72).

## Conclusion

The study of prefaces from both corpora illustrates the greater precariousness of female authors' voices, in the ways in which they construct the triangular relationship between author, reader, and critic, though as the study of early reviews and the figure of the reader showed in chapter 2, such uncertainty is not circumscribed to women writers. The ambivalence in the construction of the relationship to readers sheds light on the paradox inherent in aiming to impart moral lessons on consumers who ultimately are the new literary patron, whose identity, age, education, and social class are much less easily identifiable than in the case of actual patrons. In this context, maintaining proper decorum in addressing one's readers according to each party's relative station becomes fraught, though it may be generative of a more egalitarian author-as-teacher and reader-as-learner relationship in the context of reception and expression of moral didacticism.

In addition, it becomes clear when combining the findings from the first three chapters that there is no obvious link of causality between the presence of overt intended didacticism and its reception as such, underscoring the reviewers' assertiveness in claiming their role of assessor regarding a work's effect, regardless of its author's stated aims. In fact, none of the most successful novels according to the reviews include overt professions of didactic intent, mitigating the association of didacticism with overt moralizing made by several scholars, due to the proximity of this type of novel with conduct books and the importance of conservative fears regarding the French Revolution (Spencer 98, 142, Wood 12). The feminine authorial posture analyzed in the last section of this chapter, characterized by the creation of a fairly egalitarian relationship with readers, also reinforces the disconnect between overt authoriality and the early reception of moral didacticism. Nevertheless, novels perceived to be didactic are more likely than those of the reference corpus to include a preface, making the latter a potential marker of a didactic novel subgenre, though this is not in itself sufficient to justify the existence of such a category.

Therefore, we must look elsewhere for evidence of didactic purpose and overt authoriality as potential markers of the didactic novel, and for elements which might otherwise explain and support the difference in reception between the two corpora. We will now turn to how the novels of both corpora engage with the notion of moral instruction

more largely and systematically within the diegesis, in order to determine the extent to which it actually is a relevant marker of difference between the didactic and the reference corpora.

## Chapter 4. Textual Expressions of Moral Didacticism

### Introduction.

Susan Lanser's concept of overt authoriality was introduced in chapter 3 to discuss the authorial stance found in the prefatory material of the novels of both corpora. The notion is particularly relevant as a framework to analyze elements of the diegesis, given that it is primarily designed to discuss the types of extrarepresentational acts that "expand the sphere of fictional authority to 'nonfictional' referents and allow the writer to engage, from 'within' the fiction, in a culture's literary, social, and intellectual debates" (17). The study of the early reviews and of the works' prefatory materials has already suggested the two corpora to be quite similar in their relationship to the reception and expression of morally charged content. This chapter delves into the narratives proper in order to determine whether the novels of the didactic corpus include more explicit moral instruction and overt authoriality than those of the reference corpus.

In her study of women's conservative fiction of the period, Lisa Wood states that regardless of the writer's position on the political spectrum, "the didactic text remains coercive, in that it attempts to effect behavioral changes within its readers," though in works by radicals and moderates "the punitive subtext is generally absent" (64). Wood cites the importance of embedded statements that "implicitly support the text's moral basis" and "value judgments that indicate the appropriate readerly response" in the creation of a coercive text, in addition to the presence of digressive pauses to directly comment on specific moral values (66). In order for these strategies to be effective, the narrative voice must be constructed as authoritative, or to use Lanser's terminology, it must be overtly authorial.

For Wood, didactic novels "are constructed to avoid ambiguity, and to discourage personal and idiosyncratic exegesis," recalling Umberto Eco's concept of "closed" versus "open" texts (65). Eco makes the distinction between "open" texts that invite the reader to make interpretive choices and "closed" texts which aim at "eliciting a sort of 'obedient' cooperation" (4, 7). It is important to note that a closed text may still give rise to "any possible 'aberrant' decoding," not included in the "predetermined path" created for the reader, and

open texts, however open they may be, "cannot afford whatever interpretation" as responses remain curtailed by the "lexical and syntactical organization of the text" (8-9). This is the difference between the way the text is constructed to encourage certain responses and the actual reactions of individual readers. This chapter focuses on the former, using a combination of close-reading and corpus stylistics to test the hypothesis that novels received as morally didactic by early critics may be considered as more "closed" in the way they engage with the topic of moral instruction and use more overt authoriality than their counterparts from the reference corpus.

Douglas Biber defines corpus stylistics as studies of literary language using corpus linguistics, which in turn refers to "a research approach that facilitates empirical descriptions of language use" (15-16). For Michaela Mahlberg, "a corpus stylistics study has to find a useful trade-off between general quantitative information and finding ways of selecting examples that can serve as a basis for more detailed textual analyses" (61). Mahlberg develops the concept of "corpus stylistic circle," involving a back-and-forth movement between quantitative analysis of large corpora and close-reading methods characteristic of what she calls literary stylistics (12). This chapter as well as chapters 5, 6, and 7 rely on this mixed-method approach so as to define the novels of the didactic corpus either in terms of engagement with a didactic register, and/or as constitutive of a coherent subgenre.

Biber and Conrad's concepts of register and (sub)genre were presented in the General Introduction. Genres imply recognizable features, format, and rhetorical organization, and may be further divided into subgenres (2019: 16, 55). In contrast, analyzing texts from the perspective of register implies looking at frequent and pervasive linguistic characteristics that serve important communicative functions (16). Biber and Conrad discuss novels from the perspective of genre and especially that of style, arguing that such texts share the same situation characteristics, one of the three main elements of register analysis, with an individual author writing a text "for a large number of readers scattered across different places and times," as with other types of public writing such as news reports (31, 76). Register analysis also implies describing "the pervasive linguistic features, and the communicative functions that explain why these linguistic features occur in this situational context," while "analysis of stylistic patterns focuses on the aesthetic effect rather than direct

communicative functions" (31, 52). Although novels are specifically used to illustrate Biber and Conrad's definition of "the style perspective," interpreting linguistic features in relation to "literary/aesthetic considerations rather than direct functional associations to the situational context," didacticism implies a communicative function of moral instruction within the situational context of the author-reader relationship, calling for register analysis in addition to the genre perspective aiming to define "linguistic conventions used to structure texts" (76-77, 33).

This chapter highlights a disconnect between the early and the later reception of these novels' register, showing that while some language features associated with moral didacticism can be found in the didactic corpus, the corpora appear more similar than different when studied in light of the later reception. Section I analyzes the discourse surrounding morality in the closing paragraphs of the novels of the two corpora, as a possible generic feature of didactic novels. Sections II and III explore the prevalent linguistic characteristics of the didactic corpus as a whole by comparing it to the reference corpus in terms of lexical and grammatical features associated with the register of moral didacticism.

## **I. Morality in Plot Trajectories**

As shown in chapter 3, morals and moral edification are not necessarily overtly attended to in prefaces; however, the novels of both corpora almost all explicitly deal with questions of morality and virtue in the narration, whether using overt authoriality, with direct references to the world outside the fiction, or strictly within the confines of the diegesis. This reflects the critics' concern that we saw in chapter 1, and attests to the importance of moral values in novels from production to reception, beyond those presented by authors and/or reviewers as morally didactic. In this section, the conclusions of the novels are compared, in order to determine if they engage with questions of morality, and if so whether these are expressed in ways that denote a closed or open text.

The exact parameters of narrative endings are difficult to define, but they are "critical points for analysis in all examinations of plot," including of the "assumptions about human life and social change" present in the texts (A. W. 1). My aim here is to examine expressions of moral intent, and I choose to trace in subsections i and ii moral language in concluding paragraphs, the elements of narrative endings that function as epilogues. These passages



may be considered to be conceptual counterparts to prefaces, thereby constituting possible sites for expressing morally didactic intent, where moral lessons may be found. The ending as epilogue may consist of one sentence or several paragraphs, so long as it provides a commentary on the conclusion or the aftermath of the story, coming from either the narrative voice or a character within the story.

As we will see, narrative endings turn out to be more obvious sites of confident authoriality on morality than prefatory material. Epilogues operate as sites where sense is made of the elements of the story preceding them, as Frank Kermode argues is the core function of most fictional endings and may already be found in Ancient texts, including the Bible (2000: 6-7). Following the comparison of endings as epilogue in the two corpora, I comment in subsection iii on moral ambiguity in narrative conclusions, and the existence of some texts appearing more open than closed. A wider discussion of the use of terms related to moral instruction throughout the entirety of the novels using corpus stylistics is found in sections II and III of this chapter.

The novels from both corpora overwhelmingly include such closing paragraphs commenting on the narrative conclusion, with only three not fitting the narrative pattern. In the didactic corpus, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* was left unfinished following the author's death, and in the reference corpus, Charles Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* end abruptly on pathetic death scenes, with no subsequent commentary. When comparing the endings of the novels from both corpora, at least one term indicating a moral value appears in fourteen cases out of eighteen in the didactic corpus, and in fifteen cases out of eighteen in the reference corpus. Although reviewers seldom detail what they mean by a "moral" story, as seen in chapter 1, the novels from both corpora tend to operate on a vice punished-virtue rewarded system which is fairly explicit in the concluding paragraphs, often relying on an opposition and contrast between two characters or two sets of characters.<sup>125</sup> As will be made clear, there is little difference across the corpora in the engagement with and rhetorical presentation of notions of

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<sup>125</sup> The recourse to contrasts between characters has been widely discussed as a prevalent narrative strategy in Austen's novels (Jan Fergus 1983, Howard Babb 1967, Marilyn Butler 1987). More recently, Anthony Mandal and Andrew McInnes have written about this doubling strategy in relation to Brunton's *Self-Control* (Mandal 2014) and Edgeworth's *Belinda* (McInnes 2017).

morality in the novels' endings, corroborating the findings from chapter 3 on prefatory material that early reception of moral didacticism must rely on more than evidence of authorial didactic intent. Closing moral commentary consequently appears to constitute a generic feature of wider late-eighteenth-century fiction, rather than be specific to a possible didactic subgenre of narrative fiction.

### *i. Concluding Paragraphs of the Didactic Corpus*

The closing paragraphs of the novels of the didactic corpus, with the exception of the unfinished *Wrongs of Woman*, all reference moral virtue one way or another, and often by name. For instance, the narrator in the last paragraph of *Munster Village* (1778) presents the character of Mr. Burt, a virtuous old man who dies contented, as a beacon of morality and virtue, directly addressing "men of letters" outside the world of her narration, therefore using overt authoriality:

In an age where men of letters seem so regardless of *morals* – in an age where they have endeavoured to persuade mankind, with but too much success, that the *virtues* of the mind and of the heart are incompatible – let them cast their eyes on the character of Mr. Burt – When they find so many *virtues* united in a man, whose understanding was both sublime and just – when they find a man of his penetration to have been a strictly *moral* man – they will then, perhaps, be convinced that *vice* is the natural effect of an imperfect understanding. (151, my emphasis)

In the corpus, *Cecilia* (1782), *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), *Edgar* (1798), *The Father and Daughter* (1801), *The Nobility of the Heart* (1805), *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), and *Self-Control* (1811) all feature the word "virtue" in their final paragraphs (see Table 12). Others, such as *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), *Julia, A Novel* (1790), mention specific moral virtues such as "benevolence" (*Mary* 61 and *Julia* 158). In the postscript to *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) William Godwin considers Wollstonecraft's aim of showing the oppression of women as a "great moral purpose," suggesting that lessons should be learned from reading the novel (177). The ending of *Belinda* (1801) also mentions the "moral" of the tale, although in a tongue-and-cheek way which I discuss in section iii. Of these, only *The Father and Daughter*, *Self-Control*, and *Belinda* contain reflections applied to the world beyond the fiction, showing that overall, moral considerations in the novels' endings do not

rely on overt authoriality, and that overt authoriality does not necessarily imply a straightforward moral conclusion, indicative of didactic intent.

1778munster	men of letters seem so regardless of	<b>morals</b>	in an age where they have endeavoured to
1778munster	with but too much success, that the	<b>virtues</b>	of the mind and of the heart are incompatible
1778munster	of Mr. Burt—When they find so many	<b>virtues</b>	united in a man, whose understanding was
1778munster	of his penetration to have been a strictly	<b>moral</b>	man—they will then, perhaps, be convinced
1782cecilia	upright mind of Cecilia, her purity, her	<b>virtue</b>	, and the moderation of her wishes, gave to
1796memoirs	controul, to the dignity of active, intrepid	<b>virtue</b>	! The dawn of my life glowed with the promise
1801belinda	to address the audience with a moral—a	<b>moral</b>	! Yes, " Our tale contains a moral; and
1801fatherdaughter	of the world by patient suffering, and	<b>virtuous</b>	exertion; and look forward to the attainment
1801fatherdaughter	whose innocence is yet secure, and whose	<b>virtues</b>	still boast the stamp of chastity, which can
1801fatherdaughter	has been injured by her deviation from	<b>virtue</b>	, should haunt her path through life; and
1801fatherdaughter	no one, and that the consequences of his	<b>virtues</b>	or his vices will be confined to himself
1810romance	the amiable woman, whom her towering	<b>virtue</b>	(which owed itself all to concurring
1810romance	useful life, Progressive	<b>virtue</b>	, and approving Heav'n! " FINIS.
1811self-control	finds daily exercise for her characteristic	<b>virtue</b>	since even amidst the purest worldly bliss

Table 12. Virtue and Morality in the Concluding Paragraphs of the Didactic Corpus

The five novels from the didactic corpus which do not explicitly mention morals or specific virtues in their finishing paragraphs are Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), Robert Bage's *HermSprong* (1796), Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814). However, Mr. Villars' last letter to *Evelina* in *Evelina* mentions the "purity" of his ward's mind and predicts her a life "full of honour" as he enthusiastically gives his consent for her to marry Lord Orville (405). In addition, the plots of the four remaining novels end on a pattern of vice punished and virtue rewarded which underlines the importance of moral virtue in spite of specific ones not being mentioned. Such instances highlight one way in which didactic intent may be covertly conveyed in narrative conclusions.

Indeed, *HermSprong* ends on multiple weddings, with the central—virtuous—characters HermSprong, who turns out to be nobleman Sir Charles Campinet, and his cousin Caroline Campinet happily marrying: "It was on the fifth month after the death of Lord Grondale that the happy HermSprong, the name he still best loves, led his blooming Caroline to the altar,—dressed in a white polonese—pshaw—dressed in love and innocence I mean" (340). This is presented as a matter of course by the narrator, who affects to only explicitly mention this wedding to satisfy his female readers' curiosity, using overt authoriality to

convey that the happy ending for the "innocent"—and therefore virtuous—bride was so natural a conclusion to the plot that it did not need to be explicitly stated:<sup>126</sup>

'And pray,' say a thousand of my fair readers all at once,—'pray, Mr. Glen, can you think of closing your book without giving us complete satisfaction respecting Sir Charles and Miss Campinet. Many things fall out between the cup and the lip. They might marry, or they might not. Are we at liberty to suppose which we please? For what END then did you write your book?'

Pardon me, dear ladies. I knew, or thought I knew, that there must be a total conformity of conclusion in your minds respecting this great event; and my hopes were, that you would have the goodness to marry them, when and where, and how you pleased. But since otherwise is your pleasure, I, as in duty bound, submit. (339-340)

This happy wedding comes as a contrast to the union between mercenary and hypocritical Mrs. Stone and Dr. Blick, who make each other unhappy for life:

Sir Charles allowed Mrs. Stone's claim upon the effects of Lord Grondale, and ordered immediate payment; a circumstance so agreeable to the doctor, that he wooed the lady, and won the lady, to wed, not love. They settled at Winchester; and as they are little visited, have the more time to despise and plague each other, which they do with great sincerity. (338)

*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Patronage* follow the same pattern, where the characters presented as virtuous are made to marry others of the same description, while irremediably unpleasant and vicious characters are paired off, whether in marriage or in companionship. However, in these novels, the narrative epilogue remains within the bounds of the diegesis, with no recourse to overt authoriality.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, mercenary and hypocritical Lucy Steele marries affected and selfish Robert Ferrars, becomes a favorite to prejudiced Mrs. Ferrars, and remains in the society of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood, the latter of which is shown as petty and selfish throughout the novel. Theirs is a perfectly matched union, as the narrator describes in an ironic tone typical of Austen's writing:

They [Robert and Lucy] settled in town, received very liberal assistance from Mrs. Ferrars, were on the best terms imaginable with the Dashwoods; and setting aside the jealousies and ill-will continually subsisting between Fanny [Dashwood] and Lucy, in which their husbands of course took a part, as well as

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<sup>126</sup> Indeed, J. Hillis Miller notes that one of the most common narrative resolutions in nineteenth-century novels is marriage or death (5).

the frequent domestic disagreements between Robert and Lucy themselves, nothing could exceed the harmony in which they all lived together. (287)

In contrast, sensible and honorable Elinor and Edward finally marry, and Marianne, having learned from her mistakes, is made to fall in love and marry Colonel Brandon. Whether the match between Marianne and Colonel Brandon can be qualified as a happy ending has been questioned; in fact, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Grubar describe "the slightly malevolent futurity of all happily-ever-afters" in Austen, where heroines go through a "surrender of self-responsibility and definition" (163). However, the match fits the moral framework of the novel, whereby the really morally vicious such as Lucy Steele, Robert Ferrars, and Fanny Dashwood are punished by being settled in the same place as a family, while the morally virtuous are also kept together, these separate branches of the families no longer overlapping.

Willoughby exists in a sort of purgatory between the hell of the Ferrars-Dashwoods and the paradise of the Ferrars-Brandons, reflecting his incomplete repentance. In the end, Willoughby is no longer the rake he was to young Eliza and might have been to Marianne, but he is not free from envy and not so remorseful that he is unable to enjoy his life of material comfort with his rich wife. Accordingly, his life is one of tepid happiness:

That his repentance of misconduct, which thus brought its own punishment, was sincere, need not be doubted;--nor that he long thought of Colonel Brandon with envy, and of Marianne with regret. But that he was for ever inconsolable, that he fled from society, or contracted an habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended on--for he did neither. He lived to exert, and frequently to enjoy himself. His wife was not always out of humour, nor his home always uncomfortable; and in his breed of horses and dogs, and in sporting of every kind, he found no inconsiderable degree of domestic felicity. (288-289)

The end of *Pride and Prejudice* follows a similar pattern, where Lydia and Wickham are made to marry in order to conform to the rules of society but do not improve in character. They do not become any less imprudent in their married state, whose only—albeit sizable—benefit is to confer on Lydia a modicum of propriety which allows her to be "occasionally a visitor" at her sisters', though a mostly unwelcome one (333). Although their marriage restores Lydia

and Wickham to social respectability, their union is shown to be a precarious one, and therefore only the least worst option rather than a happy ending:

Their manner of living, even when the restoration of peace dismissed them to a home, was unsettled in the extreme. They were always moving from place to place in quest of a cheap situation, and always spending more than they ought. His affection for her soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted a little longer; and in spite of her youth and her manners, she retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had given her. (333)

Finally, *Patronage* ends on the reunion of overly ambitious Lord Oldborough with his long-lost son. Lord Oldborough is contented to finally "know the pleasures of domestic life" after an existence marked by political ambition that did not afford him happiness, showing that reformation is always possible—and that virtue and independence are best found in the retirement of domestic country living rather than political exertion (ÓGallchoir 118). The marriage plots are settled in the preceding chapters, with Caroline and Rosaline, the two daughters of virtuous, respectable and reasonable Mr. and Mrs. Percy, happily married to virtuous men. In contrast, the daughters of the opportunistic Falconers, Arabella and Georgiana, end up alone, the former married to rich but tyrannical Sir Robert Percy who eventually deserts her to go to the continent, and the latter having "lost her bloom" and grown "rather old for India" where she otherwise might have found marriage prospects (616). This information is given to Mr. Percy by Mr. Falconer, who sees the fault in his conniving behavior and the value of the Percys' reliance on their own exertions and virtues in life (617).

The question of morality evidently pervades the endings of the novels of the didactic corpus, confirming the definition of such novels as works which teach moral lessons (King 197). When compared with the tone of the prefaces, closing paragraphs appear to be much less contentious places to affirm a moral lesson, with a confident authorial voice. There is no particular trace of humility or modesty in the examples given, and Robert Bage's ironic jab at the supposed expectations of female readers underlines the poise of the authorial voice through the narrator. In novels where a character delivers the concluding words bearing a moral quality, such as *Evelina*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, and *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, the speakers are all parental figures giving advice to a young adult, thereby providing a framework of social hierarchy conducive to the creation of a confident voice explicitly

providing moral instruction from within the diegesis. Closing words are not always expressed through overt authoriality, with reflections about the extradiegetic world: while Mary Hamilton and Robert Bage refer to the world beyond the fiction in the conclusions to *Munster Village* and *Hermsprong*, Austen and Edgeworth do not, and the adaptability of their moral lessons to the readers' own lives remains implicit. Still, the discussions of moral conclusions to draw from the diegetic resolutions are explicit and assertive in tone.

## *ii. Concluding Paragraphs of the Reference Corpus*

The moral tenor of the concluding paragraphs and the pattern of vice punished and virtue rewarded that we see in the didactic corpus are by no means surprising. However, these elements also permeate the reference corpus, with fifteen novels out of eighteen mentioning moral virtues in their finishing pages and only one ending in an amoral way according to the social standards of the time.

Indeed, Gregory Lewis Way's 1778 novel *Learning at a Loss*, just as it denied the conventions of negotiation between author, critics, and readers in its preface, also turns on its head the practice seen elsewhere in the corpora of making moral remarks about the conclusion of the plot. Here, Mr. Easy, successful suitor to Miss Hartley in spite of Mr. Hartley's wishes, recounts in the last letter of the epistolary novel how the central conflict has been resolved: he and Miss Hartley have eloped, and Mr. Pedant, whom Mr. Hartley wished his daughter to marry, has left their social circle without a word. The paternal figure is greatly diminished in his authority, "considering as he says, that What is done cannot be undone, he resolves to put the best Face upon Things, and make up his Mind as well as he can about it, before he sees us [Easy and Miss Hartley, married]" (162). Easy shows contempt for his father in law, calling him "the old Gentleman," and concluding with a metafictional reference to "pantomime[s]" that "All's well that Ends well" (162-163). The only term that evokes morals in the closing paragraph is "Wisdom," used ironically to comment on Pedant's sudden departure.<sup>127</sup> Although some endings in the corpora may be morally ambiguous, as

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<sup>127</sup> Here is the full passage: "So here all our Wonderments are unriddled, and our Reception accounted for. For the sneaking Animal [Pedant] you see, finding all his Hopes at an End, thinks proper to slink off, and leave *Hartley* to make the best of it. This piques the old Gentleman, who begins at last to open his Eyes a little and perceive what a Fool he has been. And so, considering as he says, that What is done cannot be undone, he resolves to put the best Face upon Things, and make up his Mind as well as he can about it, before he sees us. I wondered what the Deuce made him so amazingly *Piano* upon the Occasion, but this clears up



analyzed below, this one is positively amoral, disregarding completely the importance of filial authority in assessing the morality of one's choices, as is further discussed in chapters 2 and 6, and subverting the practice of moral conclusions seen in the rest of the corpora, including through the rhetorical device of overt authoriality.

In the reference corpus, *Emmeline* (1788), *Anna St. Ives* (1792), *Caleb Williams* (1794), *Fleetwood* (1805), *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), *The Heroine* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Discipline* (1814), and *The Wanderer* (1814) all include the term "virtue" in their endings, in some cases in addition to specific moral qualities. In *The Heroine*, the mention of the "moral" to "conclude the book" is mentioned tongue-in-cheek by the reformed quixotic heroine to her now husband, using overt authoriality by foregrounding metatextuality in the way in which it calls attention to the convention of the marriage plot in novels:

'You see,' said I to Stuart, 'After all your pains to prevent me from imitating romances, you have made me terminate my adventures like a true romance—in a wedding. Pray with what moral will you now conclude the book?'

'I will say,' returned he, 'that virtue—no. That calamity—no. That fortitude and resignation—oh, no! I will say, then, that Tommy Horner was a bad boy, and would not get plumcake; and that King Pepin was a good boy, and rode in a golden coach.' (298)

The thrice aborted moral of the story, ending in the simple dichotomy expressed in child-like language "bad boy"/"good boy" recalling nursery rhymes, along with the pointed and metafictional question which it answers, implies that a strict moral need not be stated. This reinforces the reformed status of the heroine, now able to use irony to point to her own past faults, and affirms that she and Stuart are finally well-matched as a couple. I would argue that this also suggests that the narrative trajectory of the heroine in this novel makes the moral about "virtue," "fortitude and resignation" self-explanatory and its statement redundant, but still very much relevant.

*A Simple Story* (1791), *Nature and Art* (1796), *The Vagabond* (1799), *Leonora* (1806), and *The Son of a Genius* (1812) all mention specific virtues and/or vices in their concluding paragraphs, including "prudence" (*A Simple Story* 338, *Leonora* 224), "vanity" (*Nature and Art*

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the Mystery. And as for Pedant, he has shewn his Wisdom too. For to be sure his Appearance at the Baronet's must have been rather a silly one, circumstanced as he was, like Squire *Gawkey* at the End of a Pantomime, when he finds Harlequin in full Possession of his Mittress. So All's well that Ends well, that I may conclude like my Father-in-law with a Proverb, and I forthwith subscribe myself, Yours, sincerely, *W. Easy*." (162-163, author's emphasis)

553), "industry and patience" (*The Son of a Genius* 171), and "modesty" (*The Vagabond* 228). Prudence is also featured in several endings of novels from the didactic corpus, as stated above, underlining the similarity between the corpora with regard to concluding moral commentary.

The four remaining novels from the reference corpus, none of which cite virtue in general or specific virtues in particular, are *Learning at a Loss*, already discussed above, *Henry* (1795), *Rosamund Gray* (1798), and *Adeline Mowbray* (1804). Nevertheless, the endings of the last three show the main characters acting virtuously. Henry, having overcome adversity and being now settled comfortably with his bride Isabella, shows prudence and benevolence in his treatment of his relatives, friends, and nearby residents. Once settled in their country seat,

the hospitable doors were thrown open to their neighbours, both rich and poor. Heaven blessed their days with prosperity, and crowned their wishes with a beauteous offspring. Faithful to Ezekiel's charge, Henry never forgot the lessons of adversity, nor those faithful friends whom his adversity had tried and approved.—To Zachary, to the house of Williams, and to Ezekiel, in his humble cottage, he was ever the same grateful, cordial and unaltered friend. The charge of young Blachford's affairs he devolved upon Ezekiel, with a proper allowance, but still under his own superintendence. (302-303)

Henry is here shown as an able, reasonable man who has *learned* morally from his experiences, bestowing and deserving respect, and rewarded with "prosperity" and "a beauteous offspring."

Although *Rosamund Gray* does not end on a happy marriage, the would-have-been bride Rosamund having died of pain and sorrow after being raped, the story concludes with Rosamund's virtuous lover Allan, now a middle-aged man, caring for the dying rake who led to Rosamund's death. The novel is a rare example in these corpora of a text that ends rather abruptly, without any authorial or character comment on the conclusion of the plot, but the closing scene illustrates moral virtue. The dying Matravis was "not in a condition to excite any other sensation than pity in a heart more hard than Allan's," explains the intradiegetic narrator (47). Moreover, Allan is shown to be "sobbing" upon listening to Matravis' delirium (48). Allan's desire to accompany the narrator—his childhood friend, and now a surgeon—to the deathbed of Matravis in the hopes that "it might lie within his ability to do the unhappy

man some service" and his tears at Matravis' ravings are proof of a benevolent temper full of sensibility, able to care and feel for any human being, even one who has wronged him (47). *Adeline Mowbray* also abruptly ends in death, but the latter is presented as a proof of moral reformation for the main character.<sup>128</sup>

In addition, these novels rely on the pattern of vice punished and virtue rewarded, reflecting in the plot the concern with moral virtue that is illustrated by the language of the endings. This is evident in the deaths of several morally deficient characters. In Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796), which contrasts two sets of brothers over two generations, one embodying nature as artlessness and the other art in the sense of artifice, the elder brother William, rich but cold and calculating, dies after realizing he as a justice had his own mother executed, while his vain former wife Lady Clementina succumbs to "that incorrigible vanity which even old age could not subdue" (550). In contrast, his penniless brother Henry, his son, and his son's bride, with the former two particularly embodying nature, live in contented poverty (551).

In Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812), which shows a young boy cultivating his talents industriously in order to successfully provide for his family, his "genius" but indolent father dies heavily in debt, not having been able to provide for his family (133). The narrator directly addresses her "dear young reader" in the concluding paragraph, and states that "poverty [may be] relieved by industry and patience," which indeed the son Ludovico manages to do for himself and his mother and sister (171). It is worth noting that the tone of the authorial voice is much more confident here than in the preface.<sup>129</sup> In her conclusion, Hofland widens her intended audience from specifically her son in the preface to any young reader, and only one mark of humility persists, when she describes her book as "imperfect, though well-intended" (172). In Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814), the main character and first-

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<sup>128</sup> The portrayal of reformed protagonists is discussed in chapter 6, II.

<sup>129</sup> See discussion in chapter 3, I, ii. Through the direct address to the "dear young reader," this concluding section evokes an epilogue written in the voice of the author, a sentiment which is reinforced by the layout of the page in the 1817 edition referenced here, with a line creating a visual partition between the end of the diegesis and the closing commentary (171). This passage also echoes the author's way of addressing her son in the second person in her dedication to him (iii). Nevertheless, the passage occurs before the mention "THE END" and is not signed by the author's name, unlike the dedication (172, vii). The dividing line between the diegesis and the author's commentary is here blurred, which may explain the lack of express humility in the final pages, given that the remarks are structurally constructed to be the narrator's rather than presented as the author's words.

person narrator Ellen learns morally from her experience and is rewarded with a happy, virtuous domestic life in an idyllic Scottish glen (375), while her childhood friend, dissipated and disobedient Juliet dies deserted by her husband with whom she eloped, although the legitimacy of the marriage is ascertained, securing a respectable basis for her child's life (334).

These examples illustrate the pattern of vice punished and virtue rewarded present in the novels of this corpus through the contrast of virtuous and vicious characters, in similar proportions to the novels of the didactic corpus. Indeed, several of them also include the deaths of vicious characters, such as murderous tyrant Sir Armine in Sicklemore's *Edgar* (1798), seducer Sir Charles Sefton in Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), or abductor Hargrave in Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811). In addition, the novels of the reference corpus are just as likely as those of the didactic one to end on at least one wedding between morally deserving characters, though they rely less on pairing off vicious characters as moral punishment. In terms of the moral tenor of overall narrative trajectories, both corpora are therefore strikingly similar.

Moreover, much like the endings of the novels of the didactic corpus, those of the reference corpus highlight a greater authorial confidence in making moral claims than in prefaces, with no obvious evidence of humility. Hofland's change of tone from preface to conclusion is conspicuous in this regard, highlighting the greater ease with which authors of both corpora assert authorial authority within the narration rather than in their own name in forewords. Finally, Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* stresses the importance of "A PROPER EDUCATION" in its overtly authorial closing words, affirming an explicit lesson to take away from the novel (338), and Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* ends on a letter from the protagonist's father instructing him on how to be a morally good landlord in Ireland, relying on intradiegetic communication to express the novel's lessons (245-252).

These are the same rhetorical tools observed in the didactic corpus, although the three novels of that corpus which include an explicitly didactic ending all use intradiegetic communication, while overt authoriality appears in conclusions that discuss moral improvement less pointedly. In contrast, explicit moral commentary in the reference corpus such as found at the end of *The Son of a Genius* and *A Simple Story* may be expressed using

overt authoriality, which we might have expected to find in the didactic corpus instead. Overall, the similarities between the two corpora with regards to the presence of morality in their closing paragraphs are striking, as is the existence of explicit didactic intent in the endings of a small number of novels in both corpora, specifically three in each.

### *iii. Morally Ambiguous Endings in Both Corpora*

In addition, we arguably find more morally ambiguous endings in the didactic corpus than in the reference corpus, which goes against the vision of didactic novels as ideologically straightforward and moralistic, sometimes to the point of propaganda (Wood 11, 65).<sup>130</sup> Several novels from the didactic corpus, while making sure that readers are aware of the line between vice and virtue by clearly separating vicious characters from virtuous ones, do not condemn the former through death or forced and/or unhappy banishment but rather leave some characters impervious to moral improvement, without further punishment. This is the case in Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782), Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) also ends on an unclear moral note. In contrast, William Godwin's *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) is the only novel of the reference corpus whose ending features such moral ambiguity, and may consequently be considered more open than closed according to Eco's terminology.<sup>131</sup>

In Burney's *Cecilia*, spendthrift Mrs. Harrel, whose husband committed suicide following his bankruptcy, does not learn one iota from the experience, and "married very soon a man of fortune in the neighbourhood, and, quickly forgetting all the past, thoughtlessly began the world again, with new hopes, new connections,--new equipages and new engagements!" (940). Although this inability to learn suggests the possibility of similar future tragedy, it is only a possibility, and Mrs. Harrel is presented as blissfully unaware rather than humbled by tragic punishment. Similarly, gambler Lady Caroline in Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* remains set in her vicious ways, with neither the

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130 Lisa Wood uses these words to describe Jane West's novels, which fit the criteria for inclusion in the didactic corpus, but are undigitized.

131 Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798, didactic corpus) and Gregory Lewis Way's *Learning at a Loss* (1778, reference corpus) are excluded from this discussion: the former is unfinished, so the purported moral tenor of its ending is a moot point, and the latter is explicitly amoral, as discussed in the last subsection.

possibility of moral improvement nor the certainty of demise: "The love of gaming is the vice of all others, which takes deepest root, and is the most difficult to eradicate:—Lady Caroline Leslie yet devotes the greatest part of her time to the card-table" (232). In addition, Lady Caroline's vicious ways are shown to be supported by romance writer Mrs. Kennedy, who "is her decided favourite, and still prospers as an authoress: she still flatters the great, and her own taste and genius ensure her success, while she administers the charming well-tempered draught of adulation" (232). Far from being punished, flatterer Mrs. Kennedy is successful in her role within vice-ridden fashionable society, and Lady Caroline is complacent in her vice. Virtue is rewarded with "a far greater degree of happiness," which Frederic is said to enjoy in domestic life with his wife Mary compared to when he mingled in fashionable society and had an affair, but the vices of gaming and flattery are shown simply as their own evil, not necessarily leading to punishment (233).

The endings to Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* have already been discussed in section I, i of this chapter to show how virtuous and vicious characters are separated into two groups by the end of their respective plots. Nonetheless, elements of these stories' conclusions complicate the moral framework, as in *Cecilia* and *Romance Readers*. In *Sense and Sensibility*, mercenary Lucy Steele is rewarded with the success which she hoped to achieve. She manages to become "a favourite child" with her rich and prejudiced mother-in-law, and "openly acknowledged" at that, which of course is gratifying to someone so invested in appearances as the character is shown to be (287). The irony present in the last sentence concerning this group of characters tells readers where our moral judgment should lie. Indeed, the superlative phrases "on the best terms imaginable" and "nothing could exceed the harmony in which they all lived together" used to describe these characters ring ironically given "the jealousies and ill-will continually subsisting between Fanny and Lucy" and "the frequent domestic disagreements between Robert and Lucy themselves" which shape this supposed harmony (287). However, just like in *Cecilia* and *Romance Readers and Romance Writers*, the incurably vicious characters are not directly punished for persevering unchanged.

The case of Lydia and Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* features a similarly tepid punishment for these characters who exhibit no moral improvement. They are shown as

much more decisively unhappy than Lucy and Robert in *Sense and Sensibility*, with continual financial troubles and little affection between them; nevertheless, Lydia "retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had given her" and still associates with her elder sisters. The narrator tells us that with her "even Bingley's good humour was overcome," which highlights the incompatibility of Lydia and the set of characters shown to be full of moral virtue throughout the novel, yet the two groups are not impermeably separated (333). The separation between virtue and vice is thus not complete at the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, which is also evident in the continued presence of socially prejudiced Miss Bingley, demonstrating that rules of sociability do not always allow for a clear-cut moral dualism. As the narrator states: "Miss Bingley was very deeply mortified by Darcy's marriage; but as she thought it advisable to retain the right of visiting at Pemberley, she dropt all her resentment; was fonder than ever of Georgiana, almost as attentive to Darcy as heretofore, and paid off every arrear of civility to Elizabeth" (333).

The ambiguity of the end of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* is all the more striking in its contrast to the prefacing words, where Edgeworth determines to have her work called a "Moral Tale" rather than "Novel" because of the "folly, error, and vice [that] disseminated in books classed under this denomination" (3). Indeed, the novel ends on Lady Delacour willfully staging a finishing tableau with the two couples engaged to be married, and her own "reconciled" family comprising her husband, her previously estranged young daughter, and herself whom she places "all in proper attitudes for stage effect" (437). Her speech directing all the characters of the play in this tableau concludes the novel, metafictionally stating "Now, lady Delacour, to show that she is reformed, comes forward to address the audience with a moral---a moral!---yes, 'Our tale contains a moral , and, no doubt,/ 'You all have wit enough to find it out'" (437). A double distance is taken with the term "moral" here. Firstly, the character who voices the moral proclaims herself "reformed," yet arranges a scene which is pointedly performative, showing the previous coquette being artful and therefore mitigating her moral reformation. Moreover, the concluding heroic couplet has Lady Delacour only teasing her projected audience, denying them—and therefore us, the actual readers—a definite moral. Although the reformations of Lord and Lady Delacour and their reconciliation does show the triumph of virtue over vice, the end of the novel is more wit

than moralism, which goes against the dryly moralistic vision of didacticism often conveyed by critics.<sup>132</sup>

In contrast, out of the seventeen novels from the reference corpus which I have already shown to engage in questions of moral virtue in their conclusions, William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* is the only one that features an equivocal ending in terms of moral rights and wrongs. Instead of finishing on Falkland's confession of murder and affirmation of the titular character's virtues, contrasting with his own vices, the autodiegetic narrator claims that Falkland was not quite as much in the wrong as he expresses, nor himself quite as much in the right. He starts his commentary on Falkland's speech by stating "I record the praises bestowed on me by Falkland, not because I deserved them, but because they serve to aggravate the baseness of my cruelty" (450). Williams appears to feel the guilt of Falkland's subsequent death, three days after the public scene, claiming "I have been his murderer," and finding that Falkland's confession does not bring the relief that he had hoped: "I thought that, if Falkland were dead, I should return once again to all that makes life worth possessing. I thought that, if the guilt of Falkland were established, fortune and the world would smile upon my efforts. Both these events are accomplished; and it is now only that I am truly miserable" (451). Williams reflects that his main fault is selfishness—"self, an overweening regard to which has been the source of my errors!"—before professing that he will now think only of Falkland and expostulating on the corrupting powers of society:

Thy intellectual powers were truly sublime, and thy bosom burned with a god-like ambition. But of what use are talents and sentiments in the corrupt wilderness of human society? It is a rank and rotten soil, from which every finer shrub draws poison as it grows. All that, in a happier field and a purer air, would expand into virtue and germinate into usefulness, is thus concerted into henbane and deadly nightshade. (451-452)

Here, Falkland's vices are stated to have been caused by "the corrupt wilderness of human society," thereby simultaneously exonerating Falkland from individual responsibility in his moral fall, and mitigating Williams' credit as the more virtuous man of the two. This completes what the autodiegetic character Williams states as his aim in writing his

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<sup>132</sup> As Andrew McInnes states, "although Lady Delacour gestures towards her new, willing subordination to her husband, she actually commands him to stay with his daughter, remaining center stage herself" and "escapes from the domestic plot of Edgeworth's finale, leaving the text's anxieties open to the reader's own interpretation" (96).



"memoirs," moving from a focus on moral right and wrong in favor of a focus on "the sovereignty of truth," which cannot accommodate clear moral dualism (448).

As we have seen, if we count Way's gleefully amoral *Learning at a Loss* (1778), there are only two novels from the reference corpus that do not feature morally unequivocal endings, whereas this is the case for five novels from its didactic counterpart, amounting to over a quarter of that corpus. It is worth noting that four out of those five novels were penned by the three most enduring novelists in terms of the literary canon from either corpus, Jane Austen, Frances Burney, and Maria Edgeworth.<sup>133</sup> This may be explained by the fate of straightforward didacticism in the two hundred years following the publication of these novels in critical and scholarly debate: as Lanser pointed out in 1992, "indirection, irony, ambiguity, and 'coherence' are privileged [today] as they were not in Austen's time" (79). While these authors were praised in their lifetime in large part—though not exclusively—for their moral didacticism, critical appraisal today tends to focus on other elements of their work, such as their subversive, rather than moral potential.<sup>134</sup>

To conclude, I argue that what we see in these corpora in terms of engagement with questions of moral virtue reflects the prevalent belief in the positive effects of education inherited from Enlightenment philosophy, as much as it shows these novels adhering to the neo-classical precept of *dulce et utile*. Although moral didacticism in literature is usually talked of in scholarly criticism as straightforward and obvious, a comparison of the endings in the two corpora shows that not only are moral concerns just as pervasive in the reference corpus as in the didactic one, but the reference corpus actually features more instances of clear moral dualism than the didactic corpus. Both corpora consequently appear to predominantly contain what may be termed closed texts, constructed to direct the reader to the appropriate response (Eco 7). We might in fact consider that closing moral commentary constitutes a fairly consistent feature of the novel genre in this period rather than a characteristic of the didactic novel as a subgenre, referring to Biber and Conrad's definition of these concepts (6, 55).

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<sup>133</sup> A detailed study of the relationship between the authors of both corpora and the literary canon is undertaken in chapter 8.

<sup>134</sup> See for instance Audrey Bilger's *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen*.

In addition, overt authoriality does not seem to be particularly correlated with the presence of an explicitly moral ending; narrative reflections and judgments about the world beyond the fiction and metafictional comments on the narrative process feature in equal proportion in both corpora, and moral considerations on the conclusions of the plots may be expressed using overt authoriality, but are most often conveyed while remaining strictly within the diegesis. This is consistent with Susan Lanser's conception of overt authoriality, which contends that while women writers did engage in the practice in the eighteenth century, their adoption of it "has usually meant transgressing gendered rhetorical roles" (17-18), as the discussion of DAR in prefatory material has likewise shown (see chapter 3, III).

## II. Lexical Features of Moral Didacticism

It is now worth looking more precisely at the use of vocabulary related to morality and instruction in the two corpora, to confirm or nuance the similarities found in the novels' endings, with statistical measures used in corpus stylistics. As Herrmann *et al* state, "one key principle of corpus stylistics is the assumption of an equivalence between frequency and significance in language data" (47). Indeed, word frequency is often used in corpus linguistics and stylistics to attribute authorship (Jockers 70, Burrows 2018: 724, Szudarski 25), and has also been used to classify novels in terms of genre (Allison *et al* 5). In addition, Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad claim that within register analysis, "topic is the most important situational factor influencing vocabulary choice; the words used in a text are to a large extent determined by the topic of the text" (47-48). Topics can be general such as "science, religion, politics, and sports, but any text will have its own *specific topics*" (Biber and Conrad 47, authors' emphasis). This section consequently explores the vocabulary related to morality and instruction in the two corpora to ascertain whether a significant difference appears in their relative engagement with these topics, in order to determine if they may be constitutive of a register specific to novels received as didactic, in opposition to a non-didactic register embodied by the reference corpus. This type of approach is referred to as "corpus-based," when occurrences are used deductively to test preexisting hypotheses (Comby *et al* 7).

The software that was used for the quantitative element of this study is again TXM. The program uses Corpus Query Language (CQL), which allows the expression of complex

queries, making it possible to combine several terms to study a particular topic (Pullin 122). When processed by TXM, the didactic corpus has 2 535 943 tokens and 45 192 types and the reference corpus has 2 683 379 and 45 525 respectively.<sup>135</sup> Rounding the values, there are therefore 6% more tokens in the reference corpus, while the didactic corpus is 5% richer than the reference corpus in terms of lexical diversity.<sup>136</sup> While these are not very large differences, they need to be taken into account in the comparison of the two corpora. As such, I use per mill to express the difference in lexical frequency between the corpora, from the absolute values which TXM produces. Care needs to be taken in the interpretation of such data, as frequency of words taken out of context is not enough to draw inferences as to the words' semantic meanings (Jockers 120). In order to overcome this limitation, the concordances and co-occurrences which TXM yields may be used to look at the context of use of the terms when the keywords do not occur more than a few thousand times in a given corpus, which is the case in this study (Jockers 121).

The tables included in this section show the absolute and relative frequencies of each lemma, with the latter expressed in per mill of the total tokens in the corpus in question. The column "Log-likelihood" shows the results of the statistical measure of the same name, which "is used to compare differences in frequency values between different sets of data. In other words, a log-likelihood (LL) test helps you determine whether differences in the frequency of words are reflective of the actual variation in language or whether they result from chance occurrences" (Szudarski 27). Paul Rayson, who has argued for the pertinence of using log-likelihood in corpus linguistics, has developed a webpage which allows a comparison of the frequencies of individual words between two corpora, which I have used to create the tables.<sup>137</sup> According to Rayson *et al*, "one million words gives sufficient evidence for mid- to high-frequency words" in corpus linguistics studies (1). Furthermore, log-likelihood should only be used with similarly sized corpora (Pojapunya and Todd 146). Since my corpora contain 2 532 943 and 2 683 379 words respectively, the log-likelihood test should yield valid results. This study uses a 0.01 significance level, preferred by Paul Rayson

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135 Tokens are all the words present in the corpus, including repetitions of the same words, and are used to measure lexical frequency; types are all the unique words present in the corpus (Szudarski 23).

136 "By dividing the number of types by the number of tokens, we arrive at a type/token ratio which is used as a measure of lexical diversity (or richness) of texts" (Szudarski 23).

137 The log-likelihood calculator can be found here: <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>.

"if a statistically significant result is required for a particular item," which translates into a critical LL value of 6.63 (Rayson cited in Culpeper and Demmen 98).<sup>138</sup>

The pertinence of the threshold of statistical significance used in the log-likelihood test has been questioned in recent years, however, arguing that the test claims to detect too large a number of significance differences when comparing two corpora (Bestgen 37). In addition, log-likelihood measures statistical significance, which "does not by itself inform us whether the difference between the frequencies [...] carries any descriptive value" (Fidler *et al* 227). Effect size metrics "focus [...] on how large the difference between the two frequencies of a word is," and may be used to complement log-likelihood (Pojapunya and Todd 145). One such metric is Log Ratio (LR), which also appears in Rayson's online calculator, and is included in the following tables to complement LL values. LR compares the difference between the relative frequency of a word in the two corpora (Zinn 343). The LR value is '0' when there is no difference, '1' when the relative frequency is two times greater in one corpus than in the other, '2' when it is four times greater, and so on (Zinn 343). Effect size statistics are not affected by the respective sizes of the corpora, and may be used to account for the impact of the 6% size difference between the didactic and reference corpora (Pojapunya and Todd 148).

Punjaborn Pojanapunya and Richard Watson Todd have shown that probability statistics such as LL and effect size statistics highlight different types of keywords, and are therefore used in corpus linguistics research to varying ends. Probability statistics highlights "fairly common words" and is as such "likely to serve the purpose of genre-oriented research, while effect size metrics give prominence to "more specialized words" and are therefore "more suited for critical research" (160). The researchers state that

Genre-oriented research usually involves identification of the typical linguistic features that characterize the corpus and so favours keywords that are relatively frequent across the target corpus. Generally, these are fairly common words. On the other hand, critically-oriented research is primarily interested in keywords that reflect the specific concerns of the texts studied focusing more on saliency than frequency, and these often involve less common words. (160)

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<sup>138</sup> Consequently, all LL values of 6.63 and over denote a statistically significant difference in the frequency of the term in one corpus over the other.

Both metrics are useful in the present case, given that they each underline topic (what Pojanapunya and Todd refer to as "aboutness") from more general and specific perspectives respectively, which is helpful to describe the linguistic features uniting the novels received as didactic, constitutive of a specific register (149, 153).

### *i. Morality*

As seen in chapter 1, morality is a concept of great intellectual and social importance in the period, including both the question of the basis for right action and the question of the social acceptability, or propriety, of behavior. In order to quantify the engagement of the novels from both corpora with these two aspects of morality, I have devised a list of terms associated with both aspects, building on the concepts of morality and virtue, using eighteenth-century texts, including Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, so as not to induce an anachronistic bias (Rastier 213).

Given the influence of Adam Smith's system of moral philosophy on eighteenth-century thought, I included Adam Smith's list of "cardinal virtues," namely prudence, benevolence, justice, and self-command, along with sympathy (Howell 7, Smith viii, xiii, xx). I added the lemma "modesty," as it is particularly associated with women by John Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and is a virtue which Mary Wollstonecraft wanted to see considered as central to both men and women (Locke 164).<sup>139</sup> "Hono(u)r" was added because of the critics' mention of it in the reviews, as will be discussed. I included "sensibility" and "delicacy" as Church of Scotland minister and literary critic Hugh Blair considered them grounds for "superior moral life" (quoted in Van Sant 5).<sup>140</sup> "Reason" and "passion" appear, as the main contentious forces at play in the exercise of virtue according to

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139 John Locke is quoted by several authors from both corpora: Lady Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village* (1778), Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), and Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814) in the didactic corpus, and George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799), Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), and Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) in the reference corpus. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft equates modesty with "soberness of mind" and claims that it is a virtue that "must be equally cultivated by both sexes" (151, 157).

140 Hugh Blair's five volumes of *Sermons* were published in the last twenty-five years of the century, between 1776 and 1801, with increasing popularity that "seems to have derived from the combination of elegant prose style, a reassuring philosophy of moral comfort grounded in Christian stoicism, and perceptive psychological insights into human nature" (Sher). See Sher, Richard B. "Blair, Hugh (1718–1800), Church of Scotland minister and literary critic." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Accessed 18 April 2022, <<https://www-oxforddnb-com.janus.bis-sorbonne.fr/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2563>>

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792: 43). "Propriety" is included based on Jane Spencer's claim that it gains importance throughout the eighteenth century and was linked to morality and modesty, particularly for women (75). The values associated with Mary Poovey's concept of the Proper Lady and Margaret Anne Doody's True Gentleman delineated in chapter 1, I, iii, 1 and 2 also appear.<sup>141</sup>

"Duty" and "conduct" were added to complement the notion of norms of behavior, along with propriety.<sup>142</sup> Only the reflexive form of the verb "conduct" was included, meaning "to direct one's actions, comport oneself, behave oneself."<sup>143</sup> "Fashion, n." appears as a synonym of "manner," indicating a way of acting as well as current social conventions relating to one's appearance, according to Johnson.<sup>144</sup> Both senses were included as they equally pertain to one's behavior. "Decorum" also appears, denoting "decency; behaviour contrary to licentiousness, contrary to levity; seemliness." "Politeness" is on the list as denoting "elegance of manners; gentility; good breeding." Finally, "piety" and "religion" were also included following Doody's association of the "true gentleman" with the "Christian man" (246). Adam Smith also claims that "religion enforces the natural sense of duty," given that if moral sense and laws come from God, "the very thought of disobedience appears to involve in it the most shocking impropriety" to the believer (198).

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141 These are chastity, modesty, self-control, self-denial, and filial obedience for the Proper Lady, and magnanimity, generosity, self-control, humility, and sensitivity to the feelings of others for the True Gentleman. "Sensibility" is used in Table 13 instead of "sensitivity" given Samuel Johnson's more fitting definition of "sensible" as "4. Perceiving by either mind or senses," and "6. Having quick intellectual feeling; being easily or strongly affected." Reason is excluded from Johnson's definition of "sensitive," and the noun form "sensitivity" does not appear in his *Dictionary*. Its meaning as "Delicate and profound appreciation of something, esp. other people's feelings or the emotional, political, or social complexities of a situation" appears to develop in the twentieth century given the examples provided in the *OED*; its inclusion in the list would therefore be anachronistic. See "sensitivity, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/175993](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/175993). Accessed 16 April 2022.

142 Samuel Johnson defines "duty" as "2. acts or forbearance required by religion or morality;" "conduct" as "6. behaviour; regular life," and considers "propriety" to be a synonym for "2. accuracy; justness," though it can also refer to property. The *OED* also defines "propriety" as "6. [...] conformity with what is required by a rule, principle, etc.," with examples taken from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources. "propriety, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/152846](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152846). Accessed 16 April 2022.

143 "conduct, v." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/38619](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38619). Accessed 16 April 2022.

144 All definitions given in this paragraph are from Johnson's *Dictionary*, unless stated otherwise. See <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/title-vi-1>, accessed 18 April 2022.

Table 13 was created using the results of CQL queries processed by TXM, using versions of the novels which exclude the prefatory materials discussed in chapter 3. Each word category includes all the grammatical forms of the lemma that pertain to the central notion. For example, the category "delicacy" includes the nominal and adjectival lemma "delicacy" and "delicate." Where the grammatical category changes the fundamental meaning of a word, that category was not included in the table. Concordance lines were used to select the relevant occurrences of polysemous words using the context in which they are used. The verbal form of "hono(u)r" was excluded from the count, since it does not directly refer to the moral value but rather to a sense of respect or "reverence," keeping only the nominal, adjectival, and adverbial forms. Similarly, only the nominal forms and verbal forms of "conduct" followed by a reflexive pronoun were included.

	Didactic corpus 2514029 tokens	%	Reference corpus 2673148 tokens	%	Log-likelihood	Log Ratio
<b>behavior</b>	475	0.19	305	0.11	48.52	0.73
benevolence	267	0.11	307	0.11	- 0.88	- 0.11
<b>conduct</b>	664	0.26	519	0.19	27.83	0.44
decorum	43	0.02	51	0.02	- 0.28	- 0.16
chastity	28	0.01	43	0.02	- 2.34	- 0.53
<b>delicacy</b>	467	0.19	401	0.15	9.89	0.31
duty	566	0.23	618	0.23	- 0.21	- 0.04
<b>fashion</b>	513	0.20	262	0.10	98.91	1.06
generosity	508	0.20	563	0.21	- 0.46	- 0.06
<b>honor</b>	1124	0.45	1047	0.39	9.50	0.19
humility	334	0.13	338	0.13	0.41	0.07
<b>justice<sup>145</sup></b>	397	0.16	523	0.20	- 10.44	- 0.31
magnanimity	39	0.02	38	0.01	0.15	0.13
<b>manner</b>	1513	0.60	1364	0.51	19.57	0.24
modesty	180	0.07	211	0.08	- 0.93	- 0.14
morality	251	0.10	287	0.11	- 0.71	- 0.10
obedience	267	0.11	298	0.11	- 0.33	- 0.07
passion	899	0.36	1014	0.38	- 1.66	- 0.09
<b>politeness</b>	360	0.14	153	0.06	99.14	1.32
propriety	823	0.33	960	0.36	- 3.81	- 0.13
<b>piety</b>	201	0.08	138	0.05	15.96	0.63
<b>prudence</b>	366	0.15	236	0.09	36.84	0.72
<b>reason<sup>146</sup></b>	1438	0.57	1335	0.50	12.76	0.20
<b>religion</b>	416	0.17	229	0.09	67.09	0.95
self-command <sup>147</sup>	78	0.03	67	0.03	1.65	0.31
<b>sensibility</b>	616	0.24	530	0.12	12.82	0.31
sympathy	239	0.10	246	0.09	0.13	0.05
vice	202	0.08	218	0.08	- 0.02	- 0.02
virtue	725	0.29	828	0.31	- 1.98	- 0.10
<b>TOTAL</b>	13999	5.57	13129	4.91	106.84	0.18

Table 13. Vocabulary Related to Morality in Both Corpora

Out of the 29 terms included in Table 13, twelve have significantly different frequencies in one of the two corpora, amounting to 41%: the didactic corpus does appear to

145 Only the noun form of "justice" and "justly" were included, due to the polysemous nature of "just, adj." and "just, adv." "just, adj." and "just, adv." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/102189](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/102189) and [www.oed.com/view/Entry/102192](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/102192). Accessed 16 April 2022.

146 "rationality, n.," "rational, adj." and "rationally, adv.," are included given Johnson's primary definition of each as "having the power of reasoning," "the power of reasoning," and "reasonably; with reason," respectively.

147 This category includes the synonyms "self-control" and "self-denial."



be materially different from the reference one in terms of topical engagement with questions of morality. Nevertheless, the overall picture is complicated when taking a closer look at the types of words which are over-represented in the didactic corpus. Although both corpora engage with the majority of words related to moral philosophy with similar frequency, the didactic corpus appears to focus much more on norms of behavior, supporting the link made by scholars between didactic novels and prescriptive rules of conduct (Havens 8, Wood 64).

In terms of lemma that indicate morals in the philosophical sense, only "honor" and "prudence" are over-represented in the didactic, and "justice" is under-represented. Whereas Margaret Anne Doody associates honor with eighteenth-century male virtues, Samuel Johnson's definition is much more gender neutral, denoting "1. dignity; high rank," "2. reputation; fame", as well as "5. nobleness of mind; scorn of meanness; magnanimity" (Doody 263). "High rank" and "reputation" are the first two definitions in Johnson's *Dictionary*, showing the importance of social class in the application of the concept. "Nobleness of mind" and "magnanimity" refer to the philosophical virtue, which characterizes the "true gentleman" according to Doody, and may therefore seem out of place in the didactic corpus, whose novels are overwhelmingly female-authored and centered on female protagonists.<sup>148</sup>

Nevertheless, the centrality of "high rank" in the eighteenth-century definition of "honor" primarily aligns the term with norms of conduct rather than with moral philosophy. The list of co-occurrences tied to "honor" supports this argument: the three most significant co-occurring words in the didactic corpus are "pon," "your," and "me," appearing respectively immediately next to, or within 3.6 and 3.4 words of the term.<sup>149</sup> The expression "pon (my) honour," which appears eighteenth times in the corpus mainly in *Evelina* and *Belinda*, is used as a phatic phrase largely serving to characterize foppishly rude gentlemen Mr. Lovel and Messrs. St. George and Rochfort, and in no way to comment on questions of moral

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<sup>148</sup> Only three novels of the didactic corpus feature a male protagonist (Bage's *Hermisprong*, Sicklemore's *Edgar*, and More's *Cœlebs*), whereas half of the reference novels do.

<sup>149</sup> See Appendix Chap. 4.1 for the first ten co-occurents. Co-occurrences in TXM are "sorted by default according to the 'co-occurrence score' (an indicator determining the probability of association). It therefore enables co-occurents of a form, a lemma, a combination of a lemma and a category, etc., to be calculated" (Pullin 89). According to François Rastier, statistical analysis of co-occurrences may be fruitfully used to study topic (202).

philosophy.<sup>150</sup> The co-occurrences with "your" and "me" are much more common, appearing in sixteen novels of the corpus. These instances occur in dialogue, where the term reflects the first of Johnson's definitions, namely high rank. The following example of young Captain Percy's addressing Lord Oldborough in *Patronage* illustrates the prevalence of "honour" as a marker of reverence to persons of rank: "Pardon me, my lord—I never had the honour of receiving any note from your lordship" (89).

The terms co-occurring with "prudence" in the didactic corpus indicate that the notion is taken in a moral sense, with "common," "delicacy," "guard," and "wisdom" at the head of the list.<sup>151</sup> For instance, Lady Jane, one of the many characters making up the social circle which Charles associates with in *Cælebs in Search of Wife*, tells her newly-wed niece "you have defeated the use of a fine understanding by the want of common prudence, and robbed society of the example of your good qualities by your total inability to resist and oppose" (425). The conversation is here undoubtedly of an ethical nature. Prudence is one of Adam Smith's cardinal virtues, suggesting that in this respect, the didactic corpus engages more in questions of moral philosophy than the reference one. However, the overrepresentation of "justice" in the reference corpus, another of Smith's cardinal virtue, restores the balance.<sup>152</sup> Lexical engagement with the topic of moral philosophy therefore does not appear to be a salient dividing criterion between the two corpora, which is in line with the discussion from part I of this chapter on the presence of terms related to morality in the concluding paragraphs of the novels.

The table also shows an overuse of the terms "religion" and "piety" in the didactic corpus, illustrating the centrality of religion as the means to develop and maintain virtue in didactic fiction of the time, from the mid-century works of Richardson to the early-nineteenth-century Evangelical novels of Brunton and More (Doody 246, Mandal 2014: xxii, Demers 107). The writings of radical authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft have also been shown to be infused with Christian ethos.<sup>153</sup> However, the distribution of the lemma

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150 See Appendix Chap. 4.1.1 for all the concordance lines of "pon (my) honour" in the didactic corpus. Lovel is explicitly called a "fop" in the first concordance (Burney 37).

151 See Appendix Chap. 4.2 for the first ten co-occurrences.

152 Smith writes that "the man who acts according to the rules of perfect prudence, of strict justice, and of proper benevolence may be said to be perfectly virtuous," directing his theory to men (279).

153 According to Barbara Taylor, Wollstonecraft's conduct book *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* is particularly "steeped in orthodox attitudes" derived from the Church of England, though the author later

"religion" and "piety" among the novels of the didactic corpus is extremely unequal, with 406 of the 616 occurrences (66%) appearing in Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), while two novels, Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801) and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) do not feature the lemma at all. Although this certainly provides quantitative support for Patricia Demers' discussion of *Cælebs* as a "religious novel-as-a-sermon," the presence of *Cælebs* in the didactic corpus also distorts the data on frequency of these terms (118). If we remove *Cælebs* from the count of the lemma "religion," the LL and LR values come to -24.48 and -0.79 respectively, actually showing statistically significant overuse in the reference corpus.

There is no comparable disparity in the distribution of the lemma "religion" in the reference corpus, its frequency ranging from 1 to 33. This table therefore shows *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* to be different from the novels of both corpora in its lexical engagement with religion, but otherwise does not indicate that the didactic corpus is more religiously inclined than the reference corpus, which calls into question early and mid-twentieth-century claims particularly linking didactic novels and religion (Hornbeak 6, Altick 100).<sup>154</sup> It may in fact be that the great—though relatively short-lived—popularity of *Cælebs* and its cultural influence in the beginning of the nineteenth swayed later criticism of didactic fiction.

"Reason" is also over-represented in the didactic corpus, although the LR value shows that the difference in relative frequency is not very high; conclusions drawn from these values can only be tentative. The contrast with the LR value of "religion" is stark, as it appears almost twice as many times in the didactic corpus compared to the reference one. Nonetheless, the slightly greater presence of "reason" may suggest that the novels of the didactic corpus tend to illustrate Anne Mellor's concept of feminine Romanticism, to which rationality is central (38). Mellor cites several novelists from the didactic corpus in her discussion of the notion, such as Jane Austen, Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth, Mary

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abandoned Christian orthodoxy in favor of "a highly personal faith" (95). Taylor also notes that Mary in Wollstonecraft's novel of the same name is portrayed as full of religious fervor, to the point where "she almost hallucinates her Creator" (98).

<sup>154</sup> Anthony Mandal calls More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* an "Evangelical novel" where the fictional form is subservient to the Evangelical purpose of the book, and argues that it is part of a "broader didactic tradition, which had existed since the eighteenth century" (2007: 95, 130).

Hamilton, Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Wollstonecraft, and argues that these writers "corrected" what Jane Spencer has called "the didactic tradition" of "reformed heroines" (Mellor 39-40, Spencer 140). The topic of rationality may therefore form part of the specificities of didactic novels as they were received by early critics, though it does not appear to be the more decisive discriminating criterion between the two corpora according to the LL and LR values.

"Sensibility" is likewise over-represented in the didactic corpus, and is associated in Johnson's *Dictionary* at least in part to "5. Having moral perception; having the quality of being affected by moral good or ill" in addition to perception by the mind or senses. The duality of the term, related at once to reason and immediate sense perception, makes it difficult to claim that the greater frequency in the didactic corpus is indicative of a more patent presence of the topic of morality, though the over-representation of "reason" does suggest that it might be the case. What is obvious from the co-occurents in both corpora, however, is that "sensibility" is clearly associated with the feminine in the didactic corpus. "Her" arrives in sixth position in the list, with a score of 7, while it is very low on the list in the reference corpus, with a score of only 3.<sup>155</sup> This supports Ann Jessie Van Sant's claim that sensibility was linked to women in the eighteenth century (115). She also states that "though belonging to all, greater degrees of delicacy of sensibility—often to a point of fragility—are characteristic of women and upper classes" (1). The portrayal of upper-class female characters will be shown to be a fundamental difference between the two corpora in chapter 5.

A much more obvious difference emerges regarding lemma related to the topic of conduct, the flip-side of the concept of morality as discussed in the General Introduction. Given the importance of propriety and norms of behavior for women at the time, as hosts of scholars have shown, we may infer that male writers are more likely to deal with moral philosophy and female writers with norms of moral behavior, and thus that the didactic

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<sup>155</sup> The first five co-occurents in the two corpora are "of," "exquisite," "was," "fully," and "heart" in the didactic corpus, and "of," "exquisite," "heart," "keen," and "acute" in the reference corpus, strikingly similar lists.

corpus, which is overwhelmingly female, will discuss norms of behavior more than the reference corpus with its relative gender parity.<sup>156</sup>

Table 13 clearly highlights an over-representation of terms related to behavior in the didactic corpus, namely "behavior," "conduct," "fashion," "manner," and "politeness." This supports the claims of previous scholars linking didactic novels with conduct literature (Havens 5, Spencer 142, Ty 1998: 87).<sup>157</sup> The gender component is obvious in these critics' discussions, with both types of publications being associated with women by the end of the eighteenth century. Mary Poovey argues that non-fictional texts aimed at women tended to be more prescriptive than those intended for men (18). Table 13 also suggests that the overwhelmingly female-authored novels received as didactic by early reviewers directly reference terms related to conduct more often than those of the reference corpus, giving credence to the association between prescriptive style and fiction written by women (Wood 64).

Of the words listed, "fashion" and "politeness" have the highest LL and LR values of any lemma, suggesting that plot lines in the didactic corpus tend to focus on social behavior in the upper-classes—"fashionable" or "polite" society—more than those of the reference corpus. And indeed, "world" is ranked second in the co-occurrences list for "fashion" in the didactic corpus with a score of 30, while it only has a score of 3 in the co-occurrences list of the reference corpus, and ranks 26<sup>th</sup>.<sup>158</sup> This adds the component of class to that of gender in determining the discriminating elements between the two corpora.

Thus, an exploration of lexical items related to morality in both corpora shows that the presence of moral philosophy as a topic is not a differentiating factor, confirming the conclusions drawn from the close analysis of concluding paragraphs in section I of this chapter. Nevertheless, a divergence emerges in the engagement with the topic of manners, suggesting a greater propensity towards behavioral prescription in the didactic novels. This supports Lisa Wood's claim that didactic fiction of the time, whether by political conservative or radicals, was "coercive" (64). Another salient characteristic of the didactic

<sup>156</sup> See for example Poovey (1984), Kowaleski-Wallace (1991), Williams (2010), Donoghue (1996), Price (2009), etc.

<sup>157</sup> Susan Fraiman even links conduct books with the development of female-authored fiction more generally (13).

<sup>158</sup> See Appendices Chap. 4.3 and 4.4 for the ten highest co-occurents in each corpus.

corpus which surfaces thanks to the Log-Likelihood and Log Ratio measures is the prevalence of vocabulary related to polite or fashionable society, a question of social class which will be taken up further in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

## *ii. Instruction*

Now that the topic of morality has been explored, that of instruction must be examined, to complete the topical study of moral didacticism. Table 14 shows the absolute and relative frequencies of the occurrences of lemma related to instruction in both corpora, using terms present in Samuel Johnson's definitions of "instruct, v." and "instruction, n." to compile the list.<sup>159</sup> Here again, various grammatical forms were included insofar as they pertained to the same meaning as the verbs and nouns from the definitions.

	Didactic corpus 2514029 tokens	%	Reference corpus 2673148 tokens	%	Log-likelihood	Log Ratio
authority	158	0.06	176	0.07	- 0.18	- 0.07
<b>direct</b> <sup>160</sup>	<b>427</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>- 7.70</b>	<b>- 0.26</b>
educate	331	0.13	257	0.10	14.43	0.45
form <sup>161</sup>	588	0.23	442	0.17	30.69	0.50
impart	55	0.02	64	0.02	- 0.24	- 0.13
inform	797	0.32	721	0.27	9.90	0.23
instruct	198	0.08	250	0.09	- 3.28	- 0.25
knowledge	431	0.17	330	0.12	20.36	0.47
mandate	8	0.00	5	0.00	0.89	0.77
model	46	0.02	56	0.02	-0.46	- 0.20
precept	62	0.02	53	0.02	1.37	0.31
<b>teach</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>- 7.73</b>	<b>- 0.45</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3234</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>3090</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>18.07</b>	<b>0.15</b>

Table 14. Lemma Related to Instruction in Both Corpora

<sup>159</sup> "TO INSTRUCT, *v. a.* 1. To teach; to form by precept; to inform authoritatively; to educate; to institute; to direct. 2. To model; to form." "INSTRUCT, *n. f.* 1. The act of teaching; information. 2. Precepts conveying knowledge. 3. Authoritative information; mandate." <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/institution?zoom=1600>, accessed 18 April 2022.

<sup>160</sup> "Direct, adj. and adv." and "directly, adv." were not included. "direct, adj. and adv." and "directly, adv." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/53293](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/53293) and [www.oed.com/view/Entry/53307](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/53307). Accessed 16 April 2022.

<sup>161</sup> Only the verbal form was included here.

Out of the twelve terms denoting the topic of instruction, four are over-represented in the didactic corpus, and two feature more in the reference corpus, amounting to 33% of such terms being more prevalent in novels received as didactic as opposed to 17% being overused in the reference novels. Much like with the topic of morality, that of instruction does seem to characterize at least in part the didactic corpus, providing textual basis for the initial reception of the corpus.

Nevertheless, a closer look at the over-represented terms also paints a more nuanced picture of the extent to which vocabulary related to instruction is a clear defining marker of the didactic novels. The concordance lines with the highest scoring co-occurent of "inform" in the didactic corpus, "that," suggests that the former term is overwhelmingly used to denote characters learning information about intradiegetic elements, such as Cecilia being "informed that [the carpenter and his family] lived in a small lodging" in Burney's novel of the same name (84). Similarly, the lemma "direct," which is over-represented in the reference corpus, is most often used in a physical sense, as the highest co-occurents "to," "towards," and "road" in that corpus underline.<sup>162</sup> Neither term allows for any claim to be made regarding the prevalence of the topic of instruction as it might relate to morality in either corpus.

"Form," the most over-represented term of the list, is also a faulty criterion, though it does retain a link with the notion of didacticism through its connection to reason.<sup>163</sup> The highest co-occurent in both corpora is "resolution," and the corresponding concordance lines show that, in both corpora, such instances portray characters reflecting and drawing conclusions pertaining to diegetic elements. For instance, in the didactic corpus, the narrator in Opie's *The Father and Daughter* tells us that fallen woman Agnes forms the "laudable resolution" to refrain from visiting her former friend (122). Similarly, in the reference corpus, Emmeline is said to have "formed" the resolution to go to trustworthy Lord Westhaven for help in Smith's novel of the same name (344). "Plan" appears in second position in both lists, again denoting intradiegetic events, with characters managing future life events such as one's marriage. For instance, Emma supposes that the man she loves, Augustus Harley, may have

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<sup>162</sup> See Appendix Chap. 4.6 for the ten highest co-occurents.

<sup>163</sup> See subsection i above for elements justifying the inclusion of "reason" in the list of terms denoting the topic of morality.

"formed a plan of seeking some agreeable woman of fortune" in Hay's *Memoirs* (didactic corpus, 123). Though there is no component of instruction in these cases given that the characters arrive at these conclusions on their own, they do illustrate characters using their reasoning faculties, a central faculty to acquire in the exercise of virtue (Locke 21, Wollstonecraft 1792: 43). Consequently, though the over-representation of "form" in the didactic corpus does not seem to be reliable indicator of the topical presence of explicit instruction, it does appear to sustain a discourse around morality, participating in a didactic register.

Co-occurents of "knowledge" and "teach" more obviously suggest some salient differences between the corpora, supporting some of the findings from the previous section. The co-occurrence lists suggest that the terms may be used as markers of the topic of instruction, as they are much less polysemous than the previous ones discussed. In addition to these lemma being more frequent in the didactic corpus, they are also used in slightly different ways. After the common highest co-occurrent "of," knowledge is connected to "world," "literature," and "character" in the didactic corpus, while it is primarily associated with acquisition, possession, and thirst in the reference corpus.<sup>164</sup> Two opposite perspectives are illustrated here: knowledge in the didactic corpus is directed outward, elements to be learned about the world, literary culture, or others, while in the reference once it is directed inward, focusing on one's attitude and position toward knowledge in general. This may be related to the propensity of the didactic corpus to focus on questions of behavior in polite society, as seen in the previous section.

The highest scoring co-occurents of "teach" also give credence to a difference between the two corpora based on the greater presence of the topic of instruction. Some of the main co-occurents in the didactic corpus are "lesson(s)," "to," "experience," and "virtue," while in the reference corpus "to," "me," "experience," and "us" make the top of the list.<sup>165</sup> The contrast between "lesson" and "virtue" on the one side and "me" and "us" on the other is striking, and suggests a dividing line in terms of point of view similar to that seen with the co-occurents of "knowledge." The presence of "virtue" in the vicinity of "teach" directly

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<sup>164</sup> See Appendices Chap. 4.9 and 4.10 for the ten highest co-occurents in the two corpora.

<sup>165</sup> See Appendices Chap. 4.11 and 4.12 for the ten highest co-occurents in the two corpora.



echoes moral didacticism, and indicates direct comments within the narration on specific moral values, as Lisa Wood claims is central to didactic fiction (66). In contrast, "me" and "us" suggest a personal rather than generalized perspective.

Finally, education is associated with "been," "liberal," and "has" in the didactic corpus, and "birth," "daughter," and "liberal" in the reference corpus, again after the shared highest scoring co-occurrent "of."<sup>166</sup> "Been" and "has" direct the emphasis to the process of education in the didactic corpus, while "birth" and "daughter" suggest a class and gendered framework in the reference corpus. This is rather unexpected given the importance of the Proper Lady ideal in the early reception of the didactic novels as discussed in chapter 1. Nevertheless, it does support the distinction between the two corpora on the basis of topical engagement with moral instruction, focusing on the activity of education rather than the outside circumstances making that activity possible.

In conclusion, the topics of morality and instruction are more prevalent in the didactic corpus than in the reference corpus, supporting claims that didactic novels directly commented on moral values. The didactic corpus is particularly associated with morality as prescriptive behavior rather than as philosophical questionings, while the latter is equally frequent in both corpora. Furthermore, the didactic corpus includes the topic of instruction to a greater degree, and in ways which draw attention to the notion itself as opposed to the more socially and individually embodied references that are found more frequently in the reference corpus.

Nevertheless, while statistically significant, these differences occur with fairly small LL and LR values, especially when taking into account the terms which upon closer inspection do not constitute reliable markers of the topics at hand. This suggests the need for a corpus-driven study, where the corpora are explored with no preconceived hypotheses, in order to determine whether other topics may be found to be more salient dividing criteria indicative of a specific fictional didactic register (Comby *et al* 7). This is done in chapter 5. Before moving on to the corpus-driven approach, however, the next section investigates specific grammatical features as potential markers of such a register.

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<sup>166</sup> See Appendices Chap. 4.13 and 4.14 for the ten highest co-occurents in the two corpora.

### III. Grammatical Features of Moral Didacticism

According to Biber and Conrad, "the pervasive grammatical characteristics of a register are mostly determined by the physical situational context and the communicative purposes" (48). The situational context of the novels of the corpora is defined by written language produced by an author intended to be read by a large number and variety of readers, as the discussions around the triangular relationship between author, critic, and reader from chapters 2 and 3 have shown (Biber and Conrad 31). As has already been stated, the main communicative purpose of didactic novels may be considered to be primarily moral instruction (Havens 5). The frequency of certain grammatical forms may consequently be analyzed as possible features of the "moralistic" and sermon-like style attributed to conduct books and linked to didactic novels in order to determine if these are indeed features of the didactic register in the context of this study (Wood 11, Poovey xi, Demers 118, Hornbeak 6, Hunter 301). TXM can be used to isolate certain grammatical forms thanks to its ability to make complex CQL queries, using the part-of-speech information provided by TreeTagger.

The expression of authority is contingent on much more than isolated linguistic markers, since language occurs in given social conditions (Raymond 373). Mere frequency of specific grammatical units may therefore not be reliable illustrations of assertiveness, especially with the tools at hand. This is the case for the study of imperative forms. Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum expressly link imperatives with "directives," and thus with authority (929-930). However, TreeTagger is unable to tag specifically imperative verbs in English, which are subsumed in the broader base form category (Santorini 5). The size of the corpora makes it unfeasible to sift through all the instances of verbal base forms to manually isolate imperatives from infinitives and subjunctives.

Modal auxiliaries are fairly easy to isolate and can be used to gain some insight into the use of assertive language in the corpora, though their different senses in context do present some problems, as is detailed in the section below. Direct addresses to readers can also be analyzed to this purpose, in order to quantify the didactic corpus's propensity to certain extrarepresentational acts indicating of overt authoriality (Lanser 16).

### *i. Modal auxiliaries*

Modal auxiliaries are defined by their formal characteristics in contrast to lexical verbs. They do not have primary forms, not agreeing with the subject, or have primary verb negation without the need for *do* (Huddleston and Pullum 106, 108). The main modal auxiliaries are *can*, *will*, *must*, *shall*, *may*, and *ought*; *need* and *dare* may be both modal auxiliaries and lexical verbs (108-109). Semantically, modal auxiliaries are generally classed as either epistemic or deontic, though other categorizations may exist (178). Epistemic modality "involves qualifications concerning the speaker's knowledge," while deontic modality describes the "matter of imposing obligation or prohibition, granting permission" (178). The latter is useful when it comes to assessing asserting language, given that it necessarily emanates from a place of authority, such as a person or a convention, referred to as the "deontic source" (178).

Jennifer Coates uses a slightly different system of categorization, defining modal auxiliaries as having either epistemic or root meanings. Root meaning involves not only "the logic of obligation and permission" central to it and covered by the concept of deontic meaning, but also the full range of the strong-weak continuum that characterizes this logic: "all the meanings of non-Epistemic MUST (for example) are related and can be shown to lie on a cline extending from strong 'Obligation' (the core) to cases at the periphery where the sense of 'Obligation' is extremely weak (where a more appropriate paraphrase would be 'it is important that...')" (Coates 21).

Coates' study of two large corpora including written and spoken language in a variety of genres shows that *must* "is unusual in having two meanings which occur with similar frequency," strong obligation and confident inference (24-5). Both the Epistemic and Root meanings of *must* therefore denote authoritativeness, and its occurrences need not be classified as one or the other to suggest the presence of a confident voice. Similarly, *ought* is overwhelmingly found to be used to denote obligation, and only rarely a tentative inference (25-26). By remaining within the realm of obligation and inference, the meanings of *ought* can be used as an indicator of the presence of a confident voice. The frequencies of *must* and *ought* are given in Table 15.

*Should* expresses most frequently a weak obligation, while *shall* overwhelmingly expresses prediction or intention (25-6). *Shall* has thus not been included in the CQL query to investigate the frequency of occurrences of modal auxiliaries in the didactic and reference corpora as a way to measure the presence of authoritativeness. *Should* less frequently expresses a hypothesis or a quasi-subjunctive, and *ought* sometimes expresses a tentative inference (Coates 26). The notion of voice here encompasses more than the authorial voice, since both dialogue and narration are taken into consideration. While Susan Lanser's concept of overt authoriality refers specifically to narrative voices, characters can also convey a sense of moral authority (16).

In contrast, *shall* overwhelmingly denotes prediction or intention, and though *should* expresses most frequently a weak obligation, it does not appear as a trustworthy indicator of confident or overt authoriality. Indeed, its Epistemic meaning to convey a hypothesis function as a quasi-subjunctive does not particularly suggest a confident stance (25-26). Moreover, the case of the occurrences of *should* followed by a past participle shows the Epistemic meaning of hypothesis to be fairly frequent in the corpora. In the examples "Had my home been more comfortable, or my previous acquaintance more numerous, I should not probably have been so eager to open my heart to new affections" (*Wrongs of Woman*, didactic corpus, 115) and "had you been so rash as to come hither, beside my fears for your safety, I should have been exposed, in the moment of my returning reason, to a conflict of passions which I could not have borne" (*Leonora*, reference corpus, 216), *should* has a hypothetical meaning which is "a first-person variant for hypothetical WOULD," which according to Coates "never expresses Root meaning" (58, 221). This syntactic structure *had* + *should* + past participle occurs at least 83 times out of the 282 instances of *should* + past participle in the didactic corpus and 79 times out of 361 in the reference corpus, respectively 29% and 22%. A quick look at the concordances with "should be" as keyword also shows hypothetical *should* to be pervasive in the corpora, such as "for I should be miserable if in ignorance of your proceedings" (*Evelina*, didactic corpus, 57) or "he knew he should be talked of" (*Emmeline*, reference corpus, 201), making *should* a fairly unreliable marker of authoritativeness.

The quasi-modal *have to* needs to be taken into consideration as well, since it is used to express obligation, like the Root meaning of *must*. However, contrary to Root *must*, *have to* is always objective: "with MUST, the speaker has authority, while with HAVE TO the authority comes from no particular source" (Coates 55). *Have to* thus cannot be related to the presence of a confident authorial voice, as the speaker in this case does not shoulder the authority. Moreover, TreeTagger does not differentiate between *to* as a preposition and *to* as an infinitival marker, which means that the instances of quasi-modal and of verb followed by preposition would have to be separated manually in over 600 concordances (241 in the didactic corpus and 355 in the reference corpus).

Finally, the notion of permission is also linked to authority, as when someone allows someone else to act. *Can*, *may*, and *could* sometimes express permission, but none of these modal auxiliaries have permission as their primary meaning, which makes the exploitation of the frequency of their occurrences in the didactic and reference corpora very difficult (Coates 26). Indeed, the didactic corpus features 13 502 occurrences of these modal auxiliaries, and the reference corpus 14 121. Table 15 therefore shows the frequency of *must* and *ought*.

	Didactic corpus 2514029 tokens	‰	Reference corpus 2673148 tokens	‰	Log-likelihood	Log Ratio
must	3214	1.27	3440	1.29	- 0.07	- 0.01
<b>ought</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>-16.00</b>	<b>- 0.33</b>
TOTAL	3737	1.49	4140	1.55	- 3.31	- 0.06

Table 15. Modal Auxiliaries Denoting a Confidence Voice in Both Corpora

In Table 15, *ought* shows a statistically significant difference between the two corpora, while *must* does not. The variation regarding *ought* is in favor of the reference corpus rather than the didactic, further suggesting that authoritativeness is not a defining feature of moral didacticism as it was received in this period.

Didactic corpus	Total of tokens	N° of OUGHT	%	Reference corpus	Total of tokens	N° of OUGHT	%
Evelina	190531	49	0.26	Learning	39319	3	0.08
Munster	65344	14	0.21	Emmeline	249181	40	0.16
Cecilia	400516	88	0.22	Simple Story	124349	21	0.17
Mary	26727	2	0.07	<b>Anna St. Ives</b>	<b>221685</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>0.67</b>
Julia	88192	7	0.08	Caleb Williams	161453	29	0.18
Memoirs	76019	15	0.20	Henry	304145	51	0.17
<b>Hernsprong</b>	<b>130879</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>0.51</b>	Nature and Art	54889	7	0.13
Edgar	30175	2	0.07	Rosamund	14472	1	0.07
Wrongs	52698	12	0.23	<b>Vagabond</b>	<b>77062</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>0.82</b>
Belinda	216970	39	0.18	Adeline	129692	27	0.21
Father	40432	3	0.07	Fleetwood	158336	32	0.20
Nobility	129715	24	0.19	<b>Leonora</b>	<b>76422</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0.43</b>
Cœlebs	159168	19	0.12	Irish Girl	120488	3	0.02
Romance	122327	11	0.09	Son of a Genius	47412	5	0.11
Self-Control	216911	25	0.12	Heroine	125300	17	0.14
Sense	140712	33	0.23	<b>Mansfield</b>	<b>187695</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>0.50</b>
Pride	143834	44	0.31	Discipline	182205	35	0.19
Patronage	282879	69	0.24	Wanderer	399043	92	0.23
TOTAL	2514029	523	0.21	TOTAL	2673148	700	0.26

Table 16. Occurrences of OUGHT in the Novels of Both Corpora

Table 16 shows the distribution of *ought* in the different novels of the corpora. In the reference corpus, George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799) and Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792) use the modal auxiliary *ought* the most often, followed by Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) and Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806). Interestingly, these four novels exemplify a large spectrum of political affiliations, from Anti-Jacobin George Walker to revolutionary Thomas Holcroft, with Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen in between. Authoritative voices therefore do not appear to be linked to a particular political ideology here. The interval between the smallest and largest per-mil in the reference corpus (0.03 and 0.82) is much greater than in the didactic corpus (0.07 and 0.51). The average of per-mil for the didactic corpus is 0.19, and the median is 0.21, while the average for the reference corpus is 0.25 and the median is 0.18, illustrating a greater deviation in the latter. The novels of the didactic

corpus consequently exhibit greater stylistic unity in their use of *ought* than in the reference corpus, though in a way which denotes a less authoritative stance.

The top five co-occurring words for *ought* are the same in both corpora, namely "to," "be," "I," "have," and "not," showing that the modal is used similarly in both sets of novels, and the difference in frequency or distribution may be meaningfully compared.<sup>167</sup> The co-occurring terms "be," "I," "not," and "what" highlight a concern for the notion of one's own behavior, further showing that this is a question which pervades both corpora. However, the fact that there is greater unity in the frequency of *ought* in the didactic corpus than in the reference corpus suggests that the question of one's behavior is a more obvious unifying feature of the corpus, even if it is not enough in and of itself to fully distinguish the corpora.

While the presence of *must* cannot be trusted to give a full indication of authoritativeness, the form *must not* "is used only for non-Epistemic meaning" according to Coates, meaning that it always denotes obligation or permission, on a continuum from strong to weak (19, 21). The didactic corpus has 186 occurrences of *must not*, while the reference corpus features 240, yielding LL and LR values of  $-3.95$  and  $-0.28$ . The kind of authoritative stance conveyed by the structure is therefore not a salient feature of the didactic corpus. The distribution of *must not* is fairly similar across the novels of the two corpora, with an average and median of per-mil in the didactic corpus of 0.07 and 0.06 and 0.08 and 0.07 in the reference corpus. As with *ought*, the novels of the didactic corpus appear to have a greater degree of stylistic unity with regards to the frequency of the form *must not*, with its smallest and biggest per-mils at 0.037 and 0.132 respectively, compared to 0 and 0.217 in the reference corpus. The novels of the didactic corpus therefore appear more consistently to include less authoritative voices than the novels of the reference corpus, further demonstrating that the early reception of moral didacticism indeed does not hinge on overt authoriality.

The use of the structure in context seems to differ from one corpus to the next, however. Quotation marks, indicating dialogue, constitute the first co-occurring element in the didactic corpus, followed by "you," and "be," with scores of 28, 24, and 16, as opposed to

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<sup>167</sup> See Appendices Chap. 4.15 and 4.16 for the ten highest co-occurrences in the two corpora.

"be," "you," and "I" in the reference corpus with scores of 22, 20, and 15.<sup>168</sup> This suggests that the didactic corpus may rely more on dialogue as sites of expression of an authoritative voice, possibly to circumvent the difficulty of asserting an authorial authoritative voice given gendered cultural constraints (Lanser 18). The fact that the two pronouns "you" and "I" appear in the top three co-occurring terms in the reference corpus might also suggest a greater degree of personal agency is expressed by characters of the novels of that corpus, who not only impose an obligation on others but also on themselves. In contrast, the novels of the didactic corpus seem to tend to feature obligation imposed on someone else, mirroring a vertical teacher-learner relationship.

For instance, Mr. Clifford tells his daughter Charlotte in *Julia* (1790, didactic corpus) "you must not indulge low spirits, my love; you must be chearful for my sake," illustrating through the family dynamic the tradition father-daughter hierarchy (92). To illustrate the greater degree of individual agency over one's conduct shown in the reference corpus, Anna St. Ives refuses rake Mr. Clifton's proposal made to her in the presence of her uncle Lord Fitz-Allen, who approves of it in the following terms: "If, sir, by the affair ending here, you understand any further intercourse between me and Mr. Clifton, I must not suffer you to continue in such an error" (358). Lord Fitz-Allen answers "Miss St. Ives, you must do me the honour to consider me as the head of our family, and suffer me to remind you of the respect and obedience which are due to that head," to which Anna retorts "as I am the person to be married to Mr. Clifton, and not you Lordship, my judgment as well as your must and ought to be consulted" (358). This exchange shows the young protagonist asserting her own agency in spite of the traditional codes of conduct of which she is so plainly reminded.

The main difference between the corpora suggested so far is that the reference corpus actually appears to include more assertive stances through their use of *ought*. This does not denote a greater adoption of overt authoriality in that corpus, however, given the prevalence of the modal auxiliary to appear in instances of dialogue in the two corpora, as suggested by the presence of "I" as the third-highest co-occurrent in both lists (see Appendix Chap. 4.15 and 4.16). Rather, we might infer that the difference lies in character portrayal, with the protagonists of the reference corpus appearing more assertive than their

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<sup>168</sup> See Appendices Chap. 4.17 and 4.18 for the ten highest co-occurents in the two corpora.



counterparts from the didactic corpus, and therefore more likely to transgress the virtues of modesty or filial obligation and the norms of behavior which these incur.<sup>169</sup>

## *ii. Direct Addresses to Readers*

Another element of syntax which can be quantified using TXM is direct addresses to readers (DAR). They were investigated within the early reviews and the novels' prefatory material in chapters 2 and 3, and constitute a measure for the presence of overt authoriality in fictional texts (Lanser 16). It seems intuitive to expect that novels received as instructive would engage in the kinds of extrarepresentational acts such as "reflections, judgments, generalizations about the world 'beyond' the fiction, direct addresses to the narratee, comments on the narrative process, allusions to other writers and texts" that make up what Susan Lanser calls overt authoriality (16). Such a stance mirrors the traditional teacher-learner relationship, and seems to align with the ways in which recent criticism has linked didacticism and in particular the novels of Hannah More and Mary Brunton to explicit moralization (Wood 66, Mandal 2014: xxi). Nevertheless, a study of direct addresses to readers in the novels of the didactic and reference corpora illustrates an uncertainty in the rhetorical conception of the reader-author relationship, mirroring the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the reviews and prefatory material in chapters 2 and 3.

Susan Lanser's claim that the extrarepresentational acts composing overt authoriality "expand the sphere of fictional authority to 'non-fictional' referents" provides a way to account for the level of authority claimed by the narrative voice in a work of fiction, which in turn gives indications on the construction of the author/reader relationship within the text (17). Indeed, as Lisa Wood argues, instances where the narrative voice apostrophizes or mentions the reader are a prime way to express "value judgments that indicate the appropriate readerly response," illustrating the presence of an authoritative narrative voice which is necessary to the function of a didactic text (66, 85). One would therefore expect there to be significantly more addresses to readers in the novels of the didactic corpus than in those of the reference one, and for these to be more authoritative in tone. However, as we will see, this is not the case, and direct addresses to readers in the narratives tend to demonstrate a difficulty for authors—and particularly for those of the didactic novels—to

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<sup>169</sup> This question is investigated further in chapter 6 through qualitative analysis.

consistently wield overt authoriality over a readership which is constructed as diverse in terms of gender and social class.

As seen in chapter 3, DAR in the prefatory material of the novels of these corpora provide indications about how authors conceive of their audience and their relationship to it, and do not necessarily indicate an assertive authorial voice. This is just as clear in the bodies of the texts of both corpora, in spite of the change in rhetorical framework, with prefatory material conjuring up a relationship between what is constructed as the actual author and readers, and the narratives working within the mediating fabric of fiction. In addition, DAR in the prefatory material showed a clear gendered difference, which is also visible in the narratives. The specific conceptions of readers clearly evoke the Proper Lady in the novels of the didactic corpus (such as "Gentle reader," "fair readers," "intelligent reader," "dear readers," or "courteous readers"), whereas the novels of the reference corpus mention a wider variety of specific readers (e.g. "over-scrupulous readers," "well-bred reader," "female readers," "unguarded reader," "impartial reader," "simple reader," "unprejudiced reader," "curious reader," "gentle reader").<sup>170</sup> Rather than particularly overt engagement with moral instruction, what the early reception of didactic novels appears to hinge on is their portrayals of female domesticity, as the investigation of the novels' reviews in chapter 2 suggested and will be further studied in relation to specific elements of plot in chapters 5 and 6.

A major difference between the DAR in the prefatory material and the narratives occurs in the proportion of occurrences in the two corpora. DAR were shown to be significantly more prevalent in the prefatory material of the didactic corpus (see chapter 3, III). However, they do not turn out to be specific to the didactic corpus, providing further evidence to suggest that authoritative tone and the conjuring of potential readers are not a prevalent feature of moral didacticism as received in novels at the turn of the nineteenth century, and cannot be used to define the fictional didactic register.

Table 17 shows the number and proportion of occurrences of direct addresses to readers in the texts of both corpora. The terms "reader"/"readers" were searched in TXM, and

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<sup>170</sup> See Appendix Chap. 4.19 and 4.20 for tables showing the epithets attached to "reader(s)" in the two corpora.

the data cleaned using the concordance lines to remove the occurrences referring to characters within the diegesis. Strikingly, the table shows that DAR is a much more common feature of the novels of the reference corpus than of the novels of the didactic corpus, though overall the numbers remain low. A statistical comparison of the total of occurrences in each corpus yields a LL value of  $-27.37$  and a LG of  $-0.95$ . The difference is statistically significant, with the reference corpus including almost twice as many DAR in relative terms. Moreover, fifteen novels of the reference corpus use DAR at least once, as opposed to only eleven in the didactic one, showing that direct addresses to readers are much more illustrative of the register of the novel in general than of moral didacticism in novels in this period, as has previously been noted (Biber and Conrad 224, Stewart 7). Very few of the direct addresses are in the second person, with twelve in the reference corpus and only two in the didactic corpus. The rest are in the third person, either left undefined with the article "the" or no article in case of the plural form, or introduced by the personal pronouns "my" or "our."

In an exploration of the changes in novels' pervasive linguistic features over time, Biber and Conrad use passages from Henry Fielding's *Amelia* (1751) as a "typical" example illustrating the widespread practice in the emerging novel genre of explicitly identifying an overt authorial voice within a heterodiegetic narration (225). The novels of both corpora consequently underscore the continuing tradition of overt authoriality in late-eighteenth-century fiction. For Baudouin Millet, Fielding's use of distancing techniques draws attention to the fictionality of his work, participating in asserting the legitimacy of fiction itself (330). DAR is an example of such distancing techniques, famously used by Fielding and Sterne. Nevertheless, as Robyn Warhol points out, DAR may also be used in earnest, "attempt[ing] to engage the actual reader, to encourage him or her to take the narrative commentary seriously and to take the novel's story to heart," pushing back against the view often expressed in scholarship that these "engaging" direct addresses are "a sign of bad writing" (17, xiii). In the didactic and reference corpora, the tone used tends to be more engaging than distancing, highlighting perhaps the ideological earnestness typical of the period's fiction—though ironic addresses do sometimes appear.<sup>171</sup> Whether engaging or distancing, taken together, the

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171 Anna Wilson states that at the end of the eighteenth century, "Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins alike saw fiction as a mode of discourse that both necessarily partook of its author's political beliefs and operated to inculcate its readers with those beliefs," noting that the novel was established as a "noninstrumental genre" in the nineteenth century (30).

together, the DAR in these corpora illustrate an often fraught attempt at defining the author-reader relationship central to the register of eighteenth-century novels as a whole, with its growing and diversifying readership, rather than emblematic of novels received as didactic, mirroring the conclusions drawn in section I of this chapter on concluding paragraphs.

Didactic corpus	Tokens in main text	N° of DAR	‰	Reference corpus	Tokens in main text	N° of DAR	‰
Evelina	190531	0		Learning	39319	1	0.03
Munster	65344	5	0.08	Emmeline	249181	0	
Cecilia	400516	0		Simple Story	124349	11	0.09
Mary	26727	2	0.08	Anna St. Ives	221685	3	0.01
Julia	88192	3	0.03	Caleb Williams	161453	15	0.09
Memoirs	76019	0		Henry	304145	87	0.29
Hermesprong	130879	25	0.19	Nature and Art	54889	9	0.16
Edgar	30175	4	0.13	Rosamund	14472	6	0.42
Wrongs	52698	0		Vagabond	77062	2	0.03
Belinda	216970	8	0.04	Adeline	129692	1	0.01
Father	40432	1	0.03	Fleetwood	158336	20	0.13
Nobility	129715	0		Leonora	76422	0	
Cœlebs	159168	11	0.07	Irish Girl	120488	3	0.03
Romance	122327	14	0.11	Son of a Genius	47412	2	0.04
Self-Control	216911	2	0.01	Heroine	125300	12	0.10
Sense	140712	0		Mansfield	187695	0	
Pride	143834	0		Discipline	182205	8	0.04
Patronage	282879	13	0.05	Wanderer	399043	1	0.003
TOTAL	2514029	88	0.04	TOTAL	2673148	181	0.07

Table 17. DAR in the Narratives of Both Corpora

Eleanor Ty has argued that authorial intervention in the form of direct addresses to the reader in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796, reference corpus) is used as a "manipulation of reader response" through the association of the reader with liberal views, allowing readers to be "psychologically prepared" to receive Inchbald's revolutionary ideas (1993: 107). She particularly cites the second-person direct address "but you, unprejudiced reader, whose liberal observations are not confined to stations, but who consider all mankind alike deserving your investigation," which indeed compels the reader to identify

with the opinions expressed by the authorial voice (439). Four out of the twelve instances of second-person direct address to the reader in the reference corpus occur in *Nature and Art*, supporting Ty's argument regarding Inchbald's conscripting use of such direct addresses to serve her political agenda in this novel.

However, the scarcity of second-person DAR in both corpora also suggests that Inchbald's use of it is not the norm. In contrast, the prevalence of third-person addresses in both corpora indicates a general anxiety over readership, both in who comprises it and in its potential reactions. Indeed, the use of third-person direct addresses puts the reader at a distance, as opposed to the more engaging second-person address (Warhol 34), and makes up almost 98% of the DAR in the didactic corpus and 94% in the reference corpus. Moreover, the tone of the third-person addresses oscillates between assertive and humble in novels of both corpora, showing that direct addresses to readers are far from being used consistently to establish a clear authoritative stance. This also illustrates the difficulty of the authors to confidently assert their authorial voice and define their authorial audience, "the hypothetical group for whom the author writes—the group that shares the knowledge, values, prejudices, fears, and experiences the author expected in his or her readers, and that ground his or her rhetorical choices" (Phelan 7).

In *Munster Village* (1778, didactic corpus), the tone used in the DAR is unfailingly deferential and respectful, in complete contrast to the assertive apostrophes found in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art*. The narrative voice in *Munster Village* for example states about secondary character Mrs. Lee: "As her character is peculiar, the indulgent reader will perhaps pardon the introduction of her story in this place" (45). The mark of modality "perhaps" along with the epithet "indulgent" serve to create the impression of the narrative voice asking permission to narrate in a particular way. A similar strategy is evident in "It may here be, perhaps, proper to inform the reader of what perhaps his own sagacity may have made him anticipate," with the repetition of "perhaps" and the use of the modal "may" demonstrating the authorial voice deferring to the constructed readership (126).

Richard Sicklemore uses the same kind of caution in addressing his readers regarding the advancement of plot elements. Two instances of direct addresses to the reader in *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798, didactic corpus) show the narrative voice tentatively

consider his readers' potential reactions to the arrangement of the narrative: "It may not be unpleasant to the reader, before we proceed any further with our history, to be made acquainted with past events" and "it may not be unpleasant to the reader to be made acquainted with [Bernardine's] person and principles" (16, 26). This concern with pleasing the reader may illustrate a consciousness on the part of the author of both the importance of readership in the growing commercialization of the literary world and the difficulty of predicting the response of "the reader" in an increasingly large and multifarious reading public.

Robert Bage's use of DAR implies an understanding of the varied nature of his potential readership in *Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796, didactic corpus). All twenty-five DAR are addressed to plural "readers", and he frequently distinguishes categories of readers, such as "some readers" (57), "lovely readers" (118), "my fair readers" (118), "most of my fair readers" (122), and "my male or female readers" (257). Bage combines cautious phrasing as to the readers' responses with a more assertive authorial voice: "I hope I shall please my readers" is similar to what we see in Hamilton and Sicklemore (258). On the other hand, "I must now carry readers back to Grondale" and "as undoubtedly most of my fair readers will think she ought" illustrate a much more assertive authorial voice in the face of the constructed readership both through the use of assertive modality and the personal pronouns "my" and "our" to introduce "reader(s)" (225, 122). Indeed, although the first occurrence suggests that the author is under an obligation to take a specific narrative step ("I must"), the phrase "carry my readers" imposes a passive attitude onto the latter, thus asserting the narrative authority of the author. Similarly, the second example confidently attributes a particular reaction to his "fair readers" with the words "undoubtedly" and "will."

It is worth noting that Bage, one of only two male writers in the didactic corpus along with Sicklemore, exhibits much more overt authoriality, in keeping with the traditional ease with which men have adopted this type of voice (Lanser 17). In addition, Bage at times uses DAR to draw attention to the fictionality of the text, in the tradition of Fielding, ironically calling on to his readers and denying them what he supposes through the narrator to be their expectations in the concluding paragraphs of the novel already discussed in chapter 4, I, i:

Pardon me, dear ladies. I knew, or thought I knew, that there must be a total conformity of conclusion in your minds respecting this great event; and my hopes were, that you would have the goodness to marry them, when and where, and how you pleased. But since otherwise is your pleasure, I, as in duty bound, submit. (340)

Bage plays with the relative roles of author and reader here, and asserts his power over his readers whom he constructs as explicitly female, emphasizing the gendered dynamic. By including this imaginary metafictional exchange on how the story should conclude, the author restricts the range of potential responses for his female readers, in a distancing direct address which Robyn Warhol associates to the masculine (17).<sup>172</sup>

The novels of the reference corpus illustrate a similar concern with potential readers' reactions in the use of DAR, whether written in an assertive or cautious tone. For instance, Barbara Hofland in *The Son of a Genius* (1812) writes "We do not wish to afflict our readers farther than absolutely necessary in this little history," demonstrating a conflict between what the author confidently deems "necessary" in terms of narrative composition and the possible adverse reactions which that may have on readers (136). Charles Lamb expresses a similar concern with how readers might respond to certain elements of the story in *Rosamund Gray* (1798): "I must not have my reader infer from this, that I at all think likely, a young maid of fourteen would fall in love without asking her grandmother's leave—the thing itself is not to be conceived" (chapter 2). Here, the autodiegetic narrator preempts a possible misunderstanding on the part of the reader by affirming what "is not to be conceived" from the young Rosamund's conduct—and by extension, from any "young maid of fourteen," approaching the prescriptive defining of "proper behavior for middle-class women" found in conduct books (Bilger 21).<sup>173</sup>

*Rosamund Gray*, the shortest novel of either corpus, is also the one with the highest proportion of addresses to readers, with all six occurrences introduced by the first-person pronoun "my." Although the phrase "my readers" creates more distance with the readers than addressing them directly as "you" or including them in a communal "we," I would argue that

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<sup>172</sup> Like Anne Mellor, Robyn Warhol dissociates the masculine/feminine binary used in their theoretical frameworks from the actual men and women navigating them, and we see that Sicklemore's DAR are much more engaging than distancing in genuinely rather than ironically and metafictionally including concerns over readers' reactions, which Warhol associates to the feminine (Mellor 4, Warhol 22).

<sup>173</sup> Though out of context the passage may seem ironic, the narrator is unfailingly earnest in *Rosamund Gray*.

the consistent use of the personal pronoun indicates a will to create a closer bond with the constructed reader than would have been established with the use of the impersonal "the reader(s)" (Warhol 34). This encourages readers to sympathize and agree with the authorial voice, which nonetheless ascribes specific opinions on readers and consequently confines them to these views.

In contrast, William Godwin alternates between caution and confidence in the relation to readers he invokes in *Fleetwood* (1805). Godwin's autodiegetic character first of all preempts possible misreading when he states that "I should be greatly unjust to myself, if I suffered the reader to suppose that the wild elevation and intellectual luxuries I indulged, had the effect to render me insensible to the miseries of man" (8). In a less confident tone however, the autodiegetic narrator again expresses concern over the potential reaction of the reader to the introduction of a particular narrative element: "A third separation which took place on this occasion, and which I hope the reader will not think it beneath the dignity of history to record, was between me and my dog" (16-17). At other points in the novel, the narrator enjoins the reader to "recollect" plot elements, which in spite of the authoritative tone highlights a certain anxiety over actual readers' potential reactions, which the author can never totally predict: "But the reader must recollect that [the advice] was addressed to me in the midst of an amiable family" and "The reader must recollect my character, as an old bachelor, as a man endowed with the most irritable structure of nerves, and who from infancy had always felt contradiction with inexpressible bitterness, to conceive how much I was disturbed with this pelting and pitiful incident" (203, 247).

Again, the direct addresses to the reader in Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814) engage with the potential reactions of several kinds of readers, illustrating a general concern over the definition of the reading public and of the responses it is likely to have. Envisioning a general reader, the autodiegetic narrator states "Before my reader comment [*sic*] on the wisdom of this reply, let him examine, whether there be any more weight in the reasons which delay his own endeavours after Christian perfection," assertively preempting a potential response (93). Several specific readers are also imagined, including "a male reader" and "such of my readers as are still in their teens," with the narrator each time ascribing a particular reaction to them: "My reader, especially if he be a male reader, will more easily



conceive than I can express, the abhorrence of rebuke which, at this period of my life, was strong upon me" and "I imagine that such of my readers as are still in their teens, and of course expect to find Cupid in ambush at every corner, will now smile sagaciously, and pronounce, 'that poor Ellen was certainly in love.' If so, I must unequivocally assert, that, in this instance, their penetration has failed them" (111, 221). In both instances the narrator asserts a confident authorial voice in the face of these responses which she imputes to these readers. While this shows more assurance in the construction of the relative positions of the author and the reader than most of the examples cited above, the variety of the kinds of readers whose reactions the narrator imagines—which also includes the "simple reader" (17)—illustrates a concern over who one's actual readers are likely to be.

In fact, whether the DAR denote a confident or uncertain authorial voice in relation to the potential readers it is addressing, they are overwhelmingly concerned with readers' responses to narrative elements in both corpora.<sup>174</sup> The only use of DAR that can be clearly linked to didacticism in the didactic corpus occurs in Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), a novel noted for unambiguously making the fictional form subservient to the Evangelical didactic purpose (Mandal 2007: 95, Wood 117, Demers 107, Stott 285). As such, *Cælebs* could be construed as the ultimate didactic novel, both engaging significantly more than the texts in the reference corpus with the topic of morality as suggested in section II, i of this chapter, and using DAR as a vehicle for its instruction.

However, in light of the early reception of didacticism in novels as seen in my didactic corpus, *Cælebs* actually appears as very different from the other novels. The importance of the topic of religion is unique in this novel compared to the other novels of both my corpora. Its narrative framework, which denies its own fictionality and stages a male autodiegetic character, already discussed in relation to its preface in chapter 2, is also far from being representative of the whole didactic corpus, where only three novels feature a male protagonist (the other two are also the only two novels of the didactic corpus written by men, Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar* and Robert Bage's *Hermesprong*). In contrast, eight novels from the reference corpus have a male protagonist. Moreover, the novels of the didactic

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<sup>174</sup> I discuss this at length in an article, showing how the novels of both corpora use what Warhol has defined as distancing strategies to actually engage the reader as a critic in an attempt to negotiate the author-reader-critic relationship (2022: 51).

corpus are overwhelmingly written in the third-person, with only one epistolary novel and three fictional memoirs, including *Cœlebs*, making it stand out further within the didactic corpus..

The DAR in *Cœlebs* illustrate the singularity of the novel both in terms of form and content. Among the eleven mentions of extradiegetic readers in the novel, ten are by a character in the context of intradiegetic dialogue:

C	however, will inevitably dazzle the feeling	reader	, till it produce the common effect of
Mr S	simplicity, as far removed from the careless	reader	of a common story, as from the declamation
	Lady Belfield, who, though not new to the	reader	or the writer, were new at Stanley Grove.
Mrs S	the omnipotence of love, that the young	reader	was almost systematically taught an
C	it may and does tire the patience of the	reader	, yet it never leaves him ignorant; and of
Mr S	human nature is corrupt; that the young	reader	is helpless, and wants assistance; that he is
Sir J	fancy, nor to extinguish a taste for them in	readers	. " " Show me any one instance of good that
C	elevation of fancy led Milton, or Milton his	readers	? Into what immoralities did it involve
C	of the living minstrel of the LAY? What	reader	has Mason corrupted, or what reader has
C	What reader has Mason corrupted, or what	reader	has Cowper not benefitted? Milton was an
Sir J	communicated, a hundred thousand	readers	caught, the infection. Sentimentality was

Table 18. DAR in *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*

Table 18 shows the concordance lines from TXM, with the initials of the characters in the first column from the left. The only occurrence which is not reported speech is grayed. C stands for Charles/Cœlebs, Mr. S for Mr. Stanley, a Reverend who was great friends with Charles' late father and whose eldest daughter Charles eventually marries. Mrs. S is Mrs. Stanley, his wife. Sir J stands for Sir John, also a close friend of Charles' late father and of the Stanleys' who visits Stanley Grove with his wife Lady Belfield. The couple are shown as having sounds morals in need of slight refinement, which they find on their visit to the Grove. Charles's opinions have been noted to closely mirror Hannah More's, and he describes Mr. Stanley as having "the talent of making the most ordinary topics subservient to instruction, and of extracting some profitable hint, or striking out some important light, from subjects, which in ordinary hands would have been unproductive of improvement" (Stott 274, More 98). Mrs Stanley is equally praised as being

distinguished for her judgment in adapting her discourse to the character of her guests, and for being singularly skillful in selecting her topics of conversation. I

never saw a lady who possessed the talent of diffusing at her table so much pleasure to those around her, without the smallest deviation from her own dignified purity. (100)

All the characters who comment on readers are therefore ones whose moral value is firmly established in the novel.

In table 18, the first two mentions of "the reader" are subservient to comments on writers rather than on readers and the third serves to position the authorial reader within the narration much like many of the examples from the other novels previously discussed. However, the remaining eight occurrences directly address the question of moral improvement through various kinds of reading material. Sentimentality is deemed by Sir John an "infection" caught by the popular "sentimental school" of novels in the eighteenth century, while poetry is defended by Charles as beneficial to readers (235, 234). Mr. Stanley concurs, arguing that "It is not romance but indolence; it is not poetry, but sensuality, which are the prevailing evil of the day" (235). Charles also defends "tedious" over "superficial" reading material, for "though it may and does tire the patience of the reader, yet it never leaves him ignorant" (171). It is within dialogue that a normative theory of reading according to its moral and intellectual benefits is constructed in the novel, using a distancing technique similar to the one discussed in relation to the novel's preface. This also illustrates the view of its *Monthly* reviewer, who claimed that the story "consists more of delineations of characters and of discussions than of surprising incidents," placing it on the outskirts of the novel genre and the centrality that entertainment has in the definition of the latter at the time (*DBF* 1808A081).<sup>175</sup>

While the concordance lines indeed illustrate *Cælebs'* use of its male protagonist as "the conveyer and legitimizer" of the conservative and normative messages of the text which a female voice would have not been able to express within "the boundaries of appropriate feminine knowledge" and submission, the authoritative voice in these cases is not straightforwardly directed at the authorial reader, but is instead mediated by the intradiegetic dialogue (Wood 84, 87). As a result, even in the novel most often described as

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<sup>175</sup> See for example the preface to Anna Laetitia Barbauld's anthology *The British Novelists* (1810), and the discussion on the importance of composition for the reviewers of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* in chapter 2.

overtly moralistic in comparison to the other novels of the corpora, narrative authority in relation to the reader is not completely straightforward.

In contrast, the only explicitly didactic instances of DAR expressed through the authorial voice occur in Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795), in the reference corpus. The novel, comprised of twelve books each starting with a theoretical chapter on novel-writing, emulating Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), features 87 of the 181 occurrences of direct addresses to readers in the reference corpus (48%). These are particularly representative of the overall anxiety found in the novels of both corpora regarding the relationship between author and reader, as I have previously argued (Misset 2022: 56). However, the authorial voice also addresses readers in a straightforwardly didactic tone, taking on the role of instructor in a way which is unique to this novel:

But here let me insert one caution to my youthful readers how they surrender themselves to the indulgence of that dangerous propensity called pity, which, if it is not love itself, is yet so closely allied to it, that wherever the interests of the one can be served, there is no safety in committing yourselves to the other. (Book 4: 76)

The authorial voice directly dispenses moral advice for the benefit of his "youthful readers" in an unambiguously authoritative voice illustrated by the phrase on pity which resembles a maxim.

Elsewhere in the novel, the authorial voice offers moral advice as a suggestion rather than an assertion, showing the difference in treatment reserved for different kinds of readers by the narrative voice, mirroring the conclusions about critics' construction of their relationship to their readership in chapter 2:

If any of my female readers has been taught to think hypocrisy a virtue, by the necessity she has been under of resorting to it, I will not argue against her prejudices for a friend that has been so useful to her, I can only say it is not a virtue I am studious to bestow upon the character of Isabella. (Book 11: 105)

While the authorial voice makes clear that hypocrisy is to be considered a vice by linking it to "necessity" rather than moral obligation and stating that "it is not a virtue I am studious to bestow upon the character of Isabella," the tone is less overtly authoritative than in the

address to "youthful readers," accounting for the fact that "female readers" may be of any age, and therefore not to be as easily conceived of as pupils to be taught.

This is all the more apparent in an address to parents: "WE have now closed the history of the amiable but unhappy Lady Crowbery, and we would fain hope that such of our readers as are parents, will think the moral of her fate not unworthy of their consideration and reflection" (Book 9: 281-2). Rather than using the tone of moral maxim or suggesting the right way of thinking through invoking his own choices as to the moral virtue of his characters, the authorial voice here respectfully "would fain hope" that parents might consider and reflect on the morality expressed through the fate of Lady Crowbery. The double negative "not unworthy" emphasizes the respectful tone of the suggestion, bringing the authorial voice far from the straightforwardly authoritative seen when addressing "youthful readers." These examples again show that direct addresses to readers are not an easy didactic tool to wield given the variety of readers a work may have and the degree of respect due to their respective stations. Moreover, the most clearly didactic address to young readers in the novels of both corpora is found in a novel of the reference corpus, which further calls into question the linguistic basis for the early reception of didacticism in these novels as it has been described by several scholars.

This is also evident in the second-person direct address found in Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814, reference corpus), which enjoins the reader to pass moral judgment on the autodiegetic character: "Detest me, reader. I was worthy of your detestation! Throw aside, if you will, my story in disgust. Yet remember, that indignation against vice is not of itself virtue. Your abhorrence of pride and ingratitude is no farther genuine, than, as it operates against your own pride, your own ingratitude" (118). Brunton here projects a response which is constructed as at least partly instinctive, and immediately follows it up with a moral lesson on the nature of virtue, given in authoritative statements directly directed at the reader with the use of the imperative "remember" and the use of the personal pronoun "*your* abhorrence and pride" (my emphasis).<sup>176</sup> Brunton has been compared to More in terms of overt

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<sup>176</sup> The *OED* defines "disgust" as "Strong repugnance, aversion, or repulsion excited by that which is loathsome or offensive, as a foul smell, disagreeable person or action, disappointed ambition, etc.; profound *instinctive* dislike or dissatisfaction" (my emphasis). See [www.oed.com/view/Entry/54422](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/54422), accessed 4 June 2022.

didacticism which this example would support (Mandal 2007: 100, Wood 118). However, this novel is not part of the didactic corpus because it was not deemed successful in its intent by the reviewers of the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, further showing that the early reception of moral didacticism as good or successful was not necessarily linked to the presence of an overtly authoritative authorial voice.

## Conclusion

While some differences do appear in the textual study of the narratives making up both corpora, the majority of the criteria used in this chapter largely invalidate the hypothesis that novels received as didactic are more likely to be closed texts engaging explicitly with the topic of moral instruction using an authoritative tone than their counterparts from the reference corpus (Eco 7). Section I demonstrates the inclusion of direct moral commentary in the plots' concluding paragraphs to be pervasive in both corpora, and cannot be understood to be a defining rhetorical feature of a possible didactic subgenre of novels. Concluding moral commentary may in fact be an expected feature constitutive of the novel genre as a whole in this period, using Biber and Conrad's definition of the concept (6, 223). This recalls Marilyn Butler's claim that "if [Edgeworth's] controlled actions and contrived endings seem didactic to us now, it is because the novels of her day, of all shades of opinion, *are* didactic" (1987: 53, author's emphasis).

In addition, section I shows that overt authoriality is not more prevalent in the closing paragraphs of the novels of the didactic novels than in those of the reference corpus, suggesting that the didactic register does not hinge on such linguistic characteristics. Given the conclusions drawn from the study of prefatory material on the greater difficulties female authors face in asserting a confident voice, these results are not surprising (see chapter 3, III). It is worth noting, however, that the gendered divide is not as visible in the narratives, with some female-authored novels showing high levels of overt authoriality, while some male-authored works include a much less assertive authorial voice. This may illustrate a greater ease for authors to evade gendered expectations within the bounds of fiction, contrasting with prefatory material where the figure of the author is rhetorically much less removed from the text produced.

Sections II and III also indicate a clear similarity between the corpora through the lexico-grammatical features studied, suggesting that questions of moral philosophy and direct addresses to readers negotiating the author-reader relationship may be pervasive features of the register of late-eighteenth-century novels rather than specific characteristics of didactic novels—though a similar study including a wider spectrum of fiction from the period, such as Gothic or historical novels, would need to be conducted to confirm this conclusion. Strikingly, some novels of the reference corpus are revealed to be more overtly authoritative and even morally didactic in tone than the novels of the didactic corpus, especially Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795). In addition, the terms and expressions studied are unevenly distributed among the novels making up the corpora in both of the latter, suggesting that early reception of the didactic mode does not hinge on a homogeneous set of lexical features related to morality or instruction. In fact, Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, often cited as emblematic of the didactic genre in the period, is shown to differ in important ways from the novels of both corpora, and far from illustrates the norm in terms of didactic register.

Nevertheless, a difference does emerge, notably in the didactic novels' propensity to include the topic of morality as norms of behavior in addition to questions of moral philosophy, as exemplified in section II. Section III also highlights the more restricted types of readers addressed in that corpus. Combining these findings suggests that the didactic register within novels may hinge on the narrower portrayal of norms of conduct than in the reference corpus, directed to a more specific audience largely consisting of young ladies tied to the gentility. Chapter 5 explores these avenues taking the opposite approach to the corpus-based methodology used in this chapter. It aims to find the elements that indicate the most salient differences between the two corpora, in order to progress toward a more precise characterization of the register present in the didactic novel, and whether this type of novel may be said to constitute a distinct subgenre of eighteenth-century fiction.

## Chapter 5. The Register of Moral Didacticism: A Corpus-Driven Approach

### Introduction

Although the results from chapter 4 point to some characteristics of moral didacticism as a register in terms of vocabulary use—most notably anchoring it in questions of gender and social class rather than moral instruction—much of the corpus-based analysis highlights similarities rather than differences among the corpora. I consequently conducted a corpus-driven study, exploring the ways in which the two sets of novels might differ, allowing conclusions to emerge as opposed to testing pre-established hypotheses (Comby *et al* 7).

AntConc was used to determine what the main differences between the two corpora may be. AntConc is a concordance tool which generates keyword lists showing "which words are unusually frequent (or infrequent) in the corpus in comparison with the words in a reference corpus. This allows you to identify characteristic words in the corpus, for example, as part of a genre [...] study" (Anthony 2019: 7). The keyword list ranks words according to their "keyness," which is measured using log-likelihood (LL)—the higher the keyness score, the more characteristic the word in the corpus in comparison to the reference corpus. Log Ratio (LR) is also included as a complementary statistical measure; a combination of high LL and LR scores indicates a particularly striking difference in vocabulary use. AntConc takes into account the difference in size of the corpora it compares, normalizing the number of tokens in order to compare corpora of different sizes. The texts were lemmatized using TreeTagger, grouping together the occurrences of the different inflections of the same lemma.

The LL values calculated based on the TXM data in chapter 4 and the ones produced by AntConc do not quite coincide, which is a common phenomenon when using different tools to study the same corpora (Anthony 2013: 149). TXM and AntConc are complex software which are programmed differently, and may calculate in slightly different ways—this is a drawback of using ready-made software, where the user does not easily have access



to all the settings (Gries 2). In addition, AntConc can only count one lemma at a time, whereas I combined different lemma derived from the same notion where applicable when working on the TXM data (eg. "moral" and "morally" or "self-control" and "self-denial"), and was able to clean the data when faced with polysemous terms such as "conduct, n." and "conduct, v." However, the different LL and LR values calculated using the two sets of tools do not materially impact the overall results, and the findings support each other.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, the two programmes have complementary strengths which may be fruitfully combined.

For instance, AntConc allows us to quickly visualize the distribution of a term among the novels of the primary corpus, which is useful to see whether the over-representation of a word is representative of a trend throughout the corpus or whether it is to be attributed to one or a few novels only. This is achieved through the "concordance plot" tool, which

shows concordance search results plotted in a 'barcode' format, with the length of the text normalized to the width of the bar and each hit shown as a vertical line within the bar. This allows you to see the position where search results appear in target texts. The tool also allows you to see which files include the target search term, and can also be used to identify where the search term hits cluster together. (Anthony 2019: 4)

The tool represents the distribution and relative importance of frequency of a term in each of the text of a corpus, although care still needs to be taken to avoid spurious interpretations based on visuals (Anthony 2019: 4). Each keyword list comparing two sets of novels features proper names at its top, which the concordance plot clearly shows results from the overuse of certain names in just one novel, and does not represent the style of the corpus as a whole: "Cecilia" is the first keyword when the didactic corpus is set as the primary corpus, with LL and LR values of 2992.77 and 6.2, which reflects the length and third-person narration of the longest novel in the corpus *Cecilia*, not that the individual novels of the didactic corpus feature "Cecilia" particularly frequently. While it is easy to attribute the high keyness of characters' names to the presence of a single novel, the concordance plot tool allows us to determine whether the keyness of a term which is not immediately linked to a particular novel is representative of the whole corpus or not. For instance, the concordance plot for

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<sup>177</sup> For future research, learning how to use the programming language of the software R would be preferable, as it allows the researcher to define their own calculation settings, leading to "maximally replicable" data (Gries 2).

"religion" (rank 370, LL 38.12, LR 0.87) in the didactic corpus clearly shows that its place in the keyword list is due to the presence of Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) (see Figure 2).<sup>178</sup> Concordance plots can therefore help interpret keyness. Through keyword analysis, this chapter corroborates the findings from chapter 4 and highlights the clear importance of gender and class as a dividing line between the corpora (section I), as well as the narrower range of topics broached through a study of the novels from authors featuring in both corpora (section II). It also confirms textually the distinction in the early reception between perceived overt authorial intent and morally didactic effect suggested by the analysis of the reviews' discourse in chapter 1, by combining the novels into different sets of corpora along these criteria (section III).

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<sup>178</sup> Figure 2 is only an extract to illustrate the clear disparity in distribution of "religion," and does not show the bars for every novel.



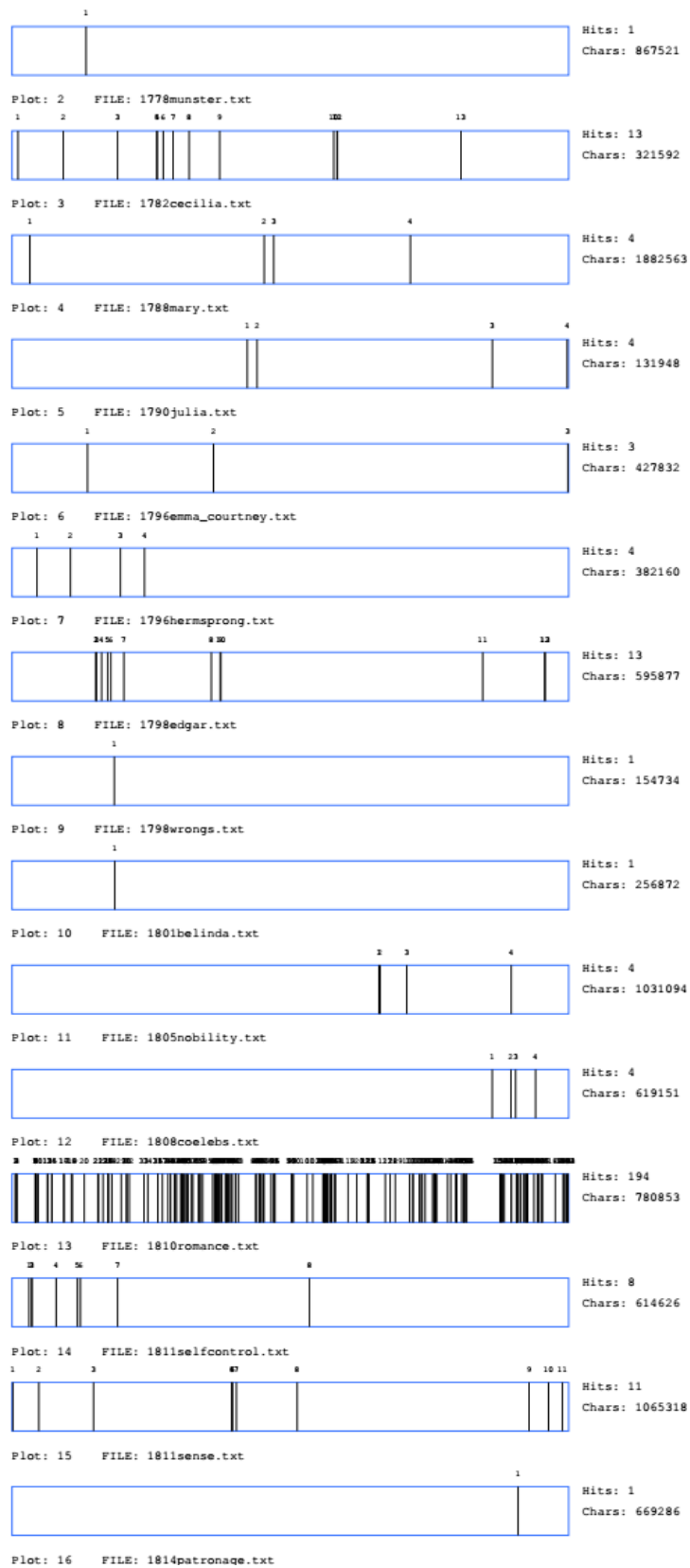


Figure 2. Concordance Plot for "Religion" in the Didactic Corpus

## I. The Vocabulary of Didactic Novels

The results found using the corpus-driven method corroborate those from the corpus-based approach. First of all, most of the terms studied in chapter 4, II do not appear in the keyword lists.<sup>179</sup> Those found to be overused in one corpus or the other are present in the keyword lists, but they do not make up the higher tier of keywords, corroborating the conclusion that though the topic of moral instruction, and particularly of conduct, partly defines the didactic corpus, it is not the central dividing criterion. For instance, "conduct" (rank 417, LL 31.29, LR 0.42) "prudence" (rank 481, LL 26.09, LR 0.79) appear in the keyword list when the didactic corpus is set as the primary corpus, and "justice" (rank 299, LL 36.3, LR 0.60) is in the keyword list with the reference corpus set as the primary corpus.

Nevertheless, taking a closer look at the way these lemma are distributed and used in conjunction with terms points to the narrower range of their application in the didactic than in the reference corpus. The results confirm textually that the question of gender is central to the early reception of moral didacticism, with a greater focus on femininity in the didactic corpus, which is unsurprising given the proportion of female-centric story-lines in these novels in comparison to those of the reference corpus.<sup>180</sup> The uses of "conduct," "prudence," and "justice" also suggest that the didactic corpus tends to present primarily paragons of virtue, while the reference novels display a wider range of vicious behavior, even though they ultimately side with virtue.

The term "conduct" is problematic since it is also polysemous, and I was able to extract the nominal forms and the verbal occurrences followed by a reflexive pronoun thanks to TXM to assess the frequency of recurrence of the concept of conduct as one's behavior in both corpora. According to the calculations done with TXM regarding part of speech, 672 out of the 832 occurrences of the lemma "conduct" in the didactic corpus refer to behavior, which amounts to 81%. The percentage is very similar to that found in the reference corpus: 521 out of 660 occurrences of "conduct" refer to behavior, amounting to

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179 See Online Appendices 1 and 2 for the full keyword lists: <https://seafle.unistra.fr/d/>. The list from Online Appendix 1 was generated with the didactic corpus set as the primary corpus, and Online Appendix 2 shows the keywords when the reference corpus is positioned as the primary one.

180 As a reminder, the didactic corpus includes fourteen novels centering female protagonists, three featuring a male hero, and one, *Patronage*, with a mixed set of main characters. In contrast, ten novels of the reference corpus primarily focus on female characters, and eight portray male protagonists.

80%. This suggests that the terms are used similarly in both sets of novels, and that the concordance plots generated by AntConc may be used to compare the distribution of the term across the two corpora.

The concordance plot for "conduct" shows the term to be pervasive in the didactic corpus, although with some disparities. Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) has the highest concentration, while Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796), Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798), and Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801) have the lowest.<sup>181</sup> The concordance plot for the same term applied to the reference corpus shows a similar disparity of distribution among the novels.<sup>182</sup> Looking at co-occurrences in TXM may help us see whether and how the term "conduct" as behavior is used differently in the two corpora. The top three co-occurring terms in the didactic corpus are "his," "of," and "her," with respective scores of 29, 20, and 20. In the reference corpus, the top three co-occurring terms are "her," "propriety," and "of," all with a score of 12.<sup>183</sup> The presence of the feminine pronoun "her" in both lists suggests that the question of conduct is particularly linked to women in the novels of both corpora, reflecting James Fordyce's statement from the middle of the eighteenth century:

The world, I know not how, overlooks in our sex a thousand irregularities, which it never forgives in yours; so that the honour and peace of a family are, in this view, much more dependant [*sic*] on the conduct of daughters than of sons; and one young lady going astray shall subject her relations to such discredit and distress, as the united good conduct of all her brothers and sisters, supposing them numerous, shall scarce ever be able to repair. (12)

Furthermore, the presence of the masculine pronoun "his" at the top of the didactic co-occurrences list—whereas it appears in 28<sup>th</sup> position in the reference list with a score of 4—indicates a greater concern with gender relations as they pertain to modes of behavior in the novels of the didactic corpus than in the novels of the reference corpus. The higher scores of 29 and 20 for "his" and "her" at the top of the co-occurrence list of the didactic corpus as opposed to 12 for both "of" and "propriety" in the list of the reference corpus also shows the gendered concern to be more pronounced in the novels of the didactic corpus.

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181 The concordance plot is provided in Appendix Chap. 5.1.

182 The concordance plot is provided Appendix Chap. 5.2.

183 See Appendices Chap. 5.3 and 5.4 for the ten highest co-occurents in both corpora.

This suggests that while both corpora engage with questions of moral virtue, the didactic corpus demonstrates a greater concern with norms of behavior, providing support for the tentative findings from chapter 4.

The concordance plot for "prudence" shows a clearer distinction among the novels of the didactic corpus than in the case of "conduct." While Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and *Patronage* (1814), Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) and to a lesser degree Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) show the highest concentration of the term, its occurrence is much more sporadic in the other novels, and does not appear at all in Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801).<sup>184</sup> In contrast, the concordance plot for the same term in the reference corpus shows less disparity in the frequency of its occurrence.<sup>185</sup> *Belinda*, *Patronage*, *Self-Control*, and *Cecilia* are all firmly domestic novels according to Lisa Wood's definition, as they are "based upon a plot of courtship that makes explicit some of the text's central lessons" with the heroines' success in marriage proving their "moral fitness," and focus on women as subjects (69-70, 117). The virtue of prudence, which Adam Smith defines as "the care of the health, of the fortune, of the rank and reputation of the individual, the objects upon which his comfort and happiness in this life are supposed principally to depend," constitutes, according to Knud Haakonssen, the foundation for political economy in Smith's philosophy, as mentioned in chapter 4 (x). Smith's definition appears applicable to both sexes, and Haakonssen links it to the then masculine world of government. However, in these four novels, which all end in a morally sound marriage in genteel domestic life, prudence seems to be associated with the feminine and domestic. Indeed, Smith's definition of "superior prudence" as "the best head joined to the best heart" sounds like the ideal attained by the (mostly) female protagonists of these four novels (253-4).<sup>186</sup>

Furthermore, Anne Mellor associates the virtue of prudence to the growing cultural importance of the rational woman in novels of the Romantic period written by women,

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184 The concordance plot is provided in Appendix Chap. 5.5.

185 The concordance plot is provided in Appendix Chap. 5.6.

186 Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* focuses on the growth and development of five siblings, two young women and three young men, in a departure from the strictly female main protagonist of the other three novels here. While the two young women's trajectories follow the marriage plot, the male plot lines focus primarily on the professional achievements of the young men. Nevertheless, the same virtues of prudence, benevolence, and self-reliance are needed for all five young people to secure an enviable place in society through marriage and/or professional success, which they all do.

citing Maria Edgeworth and Mary Brunton, but also Helen Maria Williams, Mary Hays, and Jane Austen as proponents of this idea (40). This gendered view seems to be corroborated by the different terms which co-occur with prudence according to TXM. For the didactic corpus, the top three co-occurring terms are "common," "wisdom," and "delicacy" with respective scores of 8, 7, and 7, while for the reference corpus they are "necessity," "cold," and "fortitude," all with a score of 4.<sup>187</sup> The two sets of terms are strikingly different, and suggest contending representations of the virtue.

In the didactic corpus, prudence is associated with positive terms, implying right, rational and proper behavior reminiscent of the Proper Lady. As evidenced in Appendix Chap. 5.9, "virtue," "generosity," "integrity," and "propriety" all feature among the top co-occurrences, further underlining the connection with positive moral values. In the reference corpus, however, the top three associated words together convey a sense of hardship to be endured (fortitude and necessity) or imply that prudence can lack humanity (cold).<sup>188</sup> Prudence is connected to coldness by characters of murky morality, such as artful Fitz-Edward defending his friend's relentless pursuit of the titular character in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, or The Orphan of the Castle* (140), rake Coke Clifton in Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (224), neither decidedly wicked nor decidedly virtuous Mary Crawford in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (217), or overly passionate Elinor in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (181).<sup>189</sup> The fact that these statements are made by characters who are portrayed as morally flawed at best and wicked at worst shows that the view of prudence conveyed in these novels is not materially different from that conveyed in the novels of the didactic corpus, but it suggests that the two sets of novels portray moral virtue in distinct ways, with a greater amount of negative examples in the reference corpus, whereas the didactic corpus appears to primarily depict paragons.

According to Adam Smith, justice, as opposed to beneficence, is a virtue "of which the observance is not left to the freedom of our own wills, which may be extorted by force, and of which the violation exposes to resentment, and consequently to punishment" (93). Justice provides the basis for jurisprudence, which clearly associates the term to the

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187 See Appendices Chap. 5.7 and 5.8 for the ten highest co-occurrences in both corpora.

188 In fact, "unfeeling" appears as the fourth highest co-occurrences in the reference corpus.

189 Appendix Chap. 5.9 provides the concordance lines including "prudence" and "cold" as co-occurrences.



foundations of social structures (Haakonssen xx). Punishing disobedience to a rule, whether that of law or that of a parent, requires a position of authority which the predominantly female protagonists of the predominantly female-authored novels of the didactic corpus seldom have. Almost half of the novels of the reference corpus are male-authored, and indeed the concordance plot for justice clearly shows Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1796), and George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799) to have the highest concentration of the term in the reference corpus.<sup>190</sup> *Henry* is heavily concerned with the question of social justice, since the titular main character, the illegitimate child of a noblewoman, constantly has to prove his moral value in order to prove that he deserves respect in spite of his dubious birth. The characters of *Caleb Williams* and *The Vagabond* have regular run-ins with the law, and *Anna St. Ives* also features an originally undervalued young man who proves himself to be morally worthy of the titular character Anna, and marries her.

In the didactic corpus, the novel with the highest concentration of the term "justice" is Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814).<sup>191</sup> The novel is among three in the corpus not to center wholly on female protagonists, along with Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796) and Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798). *Patronage* features a young man who pursues a career in law, which accounts for the greater frequency of the use of the term "justice." It also supports the argument that the virtue of justice tends to be associated with the masculine in the novels of both corpora.

Examining the highest keywords beyond the ones related to morality further contextualizes the early reception of didacticism, showing it to be tied to the depiction of gendered ideals of gentility, which provides a textual basis for the reviewers' discourse on virtues and prospective readers analyzed in chapters 1 and 2. The highest keywords when the didactic corpus is compared to the reference corpus in AntConc which are not characters' names indicate that gender is a major dividing line between the two corpora: the positions of "lady" (rank 12, LL 968.62, LR 0.89), "she" (rank 25, LL 708.62, LR 0.35), "her" (rank 32, LL 555.65, LR 0.26), "ladyship" (rank 64, LL 332.43, LR 1.66), and "daughter" (rank 163, LL 106.28,

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<sup>190</sup> The concordance plot is provided in Appendix Chap. 5.10.

<sup>191</sup> The concordance plot is provided in Appendix Chap. 5.11.

LR 0.64) show that the novels of the didactic corpus focus on female characters more than the novels of the reference corpus. "Lady" and "ladyship" also indicate that the novels of the didactic corpus tend to be set in genteel life more often than the novels of the reference corpus, which is corroborated by the presence of "gentleman" (rank 174, LL 100, LL 0.62) on the same list. These keywords have dramatically higher LL scores than the terms related to moral instruction investigated in chapter 4, making the question of gender a much clearer dividing criterion between the two corpora. In addition, the high LR scores of "lady" and "ladyship" suggest that the genteel narrative setting is a central feature of didactic novels. "Fashionable" is also present as keyword of the didactic corpus (rank 202, LL 80.93, LR 1.54), with a LR value that shows it to appear three times more often than in the reference corpus. Taken in conjunction with the LL and LR scores of "lady" and "ladyship," the over-representation of the term further underlines the importance of female gentility as narrative background in these novels. This confirms that the novels of the didactic corpus tend to include story-lines with a narrower range of representation than those of the reference corpus.

When looking at the concordance plot for "lady," it is apparent that Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798), the only novel of the corpus to almost exclusively focus on male characters, is unsurprisingly also the one that features the least amount and concentration of the term.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, the other novels with small concentrations in the didactic corpus are Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) and *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), Mary Hay's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), and Amelia Opie's *The Father and the Daughter* (1801). Although the heroines of each of these novels are members of the gentry, the stories do not revolve around genteel social life. *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* details the hardships of genteel Maria in a tyrannical marriage as well as those of her working-class jailer turned friend Jemima. *Mary, A Fiction* focuses on the internal life of the heroine, highlighting her dissatisfaction at the few choices that are available to her as a woman, and *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* details the personal struggle of the protagonist to conquer with reason her passion for a young man. *The Father and Daughter* centers on the relationship between runaway and deserted young mother

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<sup>192</sup> The concordance plot is provided in Appendix Chap. 5.12.

Agnes and her father who has gone mad upon losing his previously virtuous daughter. These last four novels deal less with the social life of the gentility than the rest of the corpus, although they do focus on female experience, which supports the interpretation of the frequent presence of "lady" in the other novels as an indicator of an emphasis on genteel life.

In contrast, the reference corpus appears more multifarious in terms of gendered points of view and social settings. Indeed, while novels such as Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, or The Orphan of the Castle* (1791), Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791), Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795), Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806), Eaton Barrett Stannard's *The Heroine* (1813), Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814), and Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) widely feature the term "lady" and are all set in genteel life, others such as Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812), Gregory Lewis Way's *Learning at a Loss* (1778), George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799), Sidney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *Fleetwood* (1805), and Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) mention it much more rarely.<sup>193</sup> The novels from the latter group all focus on male protagonists, as *The Son of a Genius*, *The Vagabond*, *Caleb Williams*, and *Nature and Art* follow protagonists from lower walks of life represented in the other novels, characters in poverty who must work for their bread, whether as dependents in a wealthy household (*Caleb Williams*) or in trade (*Nature and Art*, *The Son of a Genius*, *The Vagabond*). The reference corpus thus includes novels of more variety in terms of social setting and gendered perspectives than the didactic corpus, highlighting female genteel experience as a defining feature of the didactic corpus—with the exception of Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798), which centers on male genteel experience.

Moreover, "boy" (rank 90, LL 158.89, LR 1.38), "lad" (rank 103, LL 132.7, LR 3.49), and "fellow" (rank 155, LL 84.82, LR 0.86) are over-represented in the reference corpus. The lemma have high LR values, particularly "lad," highlighting them to be quite specific to reference novels. Taken together, these three terms suggest the portrayal of a wider social spectrum in the reference corpus than in the didactic one, in addition to a greater presence of male characters. Denoting first and foremost "1. A male child" and "2. One in the state of

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<sup>193</sup> The concordance plot is provided in Appendix Chap. 5.13.

adolescence," "boy" for Johnson can also be "3. A word of contempt for young men, as noting their immaturity." "Lad" also means "1. A boy," either in "familiar" or in "pastoral language."<sup>194</sup> Though "fellow" primarily refers to "1. A companion" or "2. An associate," implying a measure of equality, it is also "7. A familiar appellation used sometimes with fondness; sometimes with esteem; but generally with some degree of contempt." All three terms imply a measure of superiority on the part of the person who uses them, whether it be in terms of age for "boy," social standing for "lad," or moral value for "fellow."

The following examples illustrate the propensity of the novels of the reference corpus to incorporate male protagonists of different walks of life. In Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791), we hear of Mr Rushbrook, who is Lord Elmwood's "nephew, and his adopted child—that friendless boy whom poor Lady Elmwood first introduced into his uncle's house and by her kindness preserved there," and is later adopted as his heir (230). Servant Caleb Williams is repeatedly referred to as a "lad" in William Godwin's novel of the same name (1794), for instance when Mr. Raymond, a Captain who takes the protagonist in, says when defending him publicly: "The poor lad's story is a long one, and I will not trouble you with it now" (308). The eponymous heroine in Eaton Stannard Barrett's novel (1813) condescendingly talks of her makeshift group of domestics as "These poor fellows, who, I suppose, had never read even an alphabet, much less a romance, in their lives, stood gaping at each other in silent wonder" (227-228). In these examples, a character of a relatively high social standing interacts with or talks of one or several men in more precarious positions, emphasizing the difference in status. The question of the representations of class in the two corpora is explored qualitatively in more detail in chapter 6.

In addition, "conversation" (rank 186, LL 89.84, LR 0.66), "company" (rank 188, LL 86.17, LR 0.72), "opera" (rank 200, LL 81.13, LR 2.34), "fashionable" (rank 202, LL 80.33, LR 1.54), "party" (rank 228, LL 70.75, LR 0.68), "acquaintance" (rank 236, LL 68.45, LR 0.76), "politeness" (rank 238, LL 67.73, LR 1.50), "dance" (rank 326, LL 46.32, LR 0.83), "agreeable" (rank 328, LL 46.17, LR 0.82), "behaviour" (rank 335, LL 44.92, 0.83), "taste" (rank 345, LL 43.13, LR 0.60), "wit" (rank 346, LL 42.84, LR 1.00), "domestic" (rank 378, LL 36.51, LR 0.85), "engagement"

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<sup>194</sup> Johnson defines "pastoral, adj." as 1. Rural; rustik; beseeming shepherds; imitating shepherds." See <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/passover?zoom=1600>, accessed 4 June 2022.

(rank 409, LL 32.29, LR 0.76), and "conduct" (rank 417, LL 31.29, LR 0.42) are over-represented in the didactic corpus—although not all terms feature in all novels. The prominence of genteel sociability and manners in the novels of the didactic corpus is thus emphasized, complementing the picture sketched in chapter 4, II, 1.<sup>195</sup> The over-representation of "tea" (rank 624, LL 18.41, LR 0.69), though further down the keyword list, corroborates this interpretation, as the beverage "remained strongly marked by its association with the women's socializing, with polite behavior and with the domestic or private sphere" in the eighteenth century (Ellis 70). In contrast, "my" (rank 17, LL 587.8, LR 0.35), "I" (rank 32, LL 415.97, LR 0.2), "me" (rank 71, LL 218.42, LR 0.27), "our" (rank 163, LL 78.12, LR 0.38), and "myself" (rank 170, LL 73.98, LR 0.39) suggest greater prevalence of the first-person experience in the novels of the reference corpus when compared to the didactic corpus, highlighting by contrast the focus on the protagonist's experiences within her social circle in the latter, epitomized for instance by the subtitle of Burney's *Evelina, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*.

In addition, the keywords from the reference corpus highlight a difference in narrative structure between the corpora. Although dialogue may explain the presence of personal pronouns, the difference here is in accordance with the greater variety of narrative structure in the reference corpus, with five epistolary novels, three novels written in the first person, and ten in the third person, as opposed to one epistolary novel, three written in the first person, and fourteen in the third person in the didactic corpus. The prevalence of first-person voices appears at least in part linked to the greater number of male protagonists in the reference corpus, since out of the eight epistolary or first-person novels, only *Leonora* (1806) and *Discipline* (1814) are female-authored and center on female protagonists. The other novels are either male-authored with a male main protagonist (*Learning at a Loss*, *Caleb Williams*, *Fleetwood*), male-authored with a female protagonist (*The Heroine*, *Anna St. Ives*), or female-authored with a male protagonist (*The Son of a Genius*). Early reception of moral didacticism in fiction consequently appears to favor heterodiegetic narration focused

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<sup>195</sup> Karen Lipsedge notes that over the course of the eighteenth century, "as the independence and wealth of the polite elite grew, the practice of entertaining one's social equals, rather than one's inferiors, increased in popularity and fashion" (9). This is reflected in the novels of the period with a narrative focus on "the domestic life of the protagonist and her experiences in the town and country houses of the polite elite," as Lipsedge demonstrates through an analysis of mid to late-century works, including Burney's *Evelina* (13).

on a female protagonist over first-person accounts, used to home in on a social ecosystem within which the heroine is located rather than focusing more on the character's inner life.

It should be noted that the epistolary form, for instance, may be used narratively in various ways, as a site where psychological growth takes place or merely as a way to present the story, as Janet Altman argues Richardson does in his novels (9). Nevertheless, the epistolary form has been associated with the creation of a sense of authenticity in eighteenth-century narrative fiction, when the public was still distrustful of the genre, mirroring real-life correspondence which, depending on the recipient, could be a site where marks of intimacy and shared confidences might be expressed (Altman 6, 48, Kerhervé 124-125). Lisa Wood associates narrative emphasis on individual experience and subjectivity with radical writers, implemented for example through epistolarity, while antirevolutionary novels' use of voice is one of community consensus (74). In the didactic corpus, however, *Evelina* is the only epistolary novel, and the work's structure emphasizes the protagonists' experiences in society. These are told almost exclusively to Mr. Villars, Evelina's guardian and father figure, who may be seen as an embodiment of the Lockean patriarch, "naturally benevolent" with "natural affection, even leniency" in order to create filial obligation, acting as the voice of community consensus (Kowaleski-Wallace 1991: 18).

The two novels of the didactic corpus which use autodiegetic narration are Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and More's *Cœlebs*.<sup>196</sup> The former does draw attention to the protagonist's subjectivity, in line with Wood's description of radical novels (74), while the latter, a famously antirevolutionary work, provides a counterexample to this association between form and political affiliation. Both novels were found to be lacking in significant ways by the reviewers of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* as discussed in chapter 1, II, which their form may have contributed to, especially given that the three novels deemed fully successful are heterodiegetic narratives.

Aside from a greater variety in narrative form, the terms over-represented in the reference corpus also illustrate very different plots from the overwhelmingly genteel and domestic setting of the didactic corpus. "Menace" (rank 162, LL 78.6, LR 2.90), "prison" (rank

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<sup>196</sup> Bage's *Hernsprong* also features a first-person narrator, but he is not the protagonist of the story and his subjectivity is seldom highlighted.

183, LL 69.83, LR 1.93), "sea" (rank 190, LL 66.97, LR 1.32), "vengeance" (rank 193, LL 64.58, LR 2.18), "murder" (rank 216, LL 57.52, LR 1.40), "France" (rank 228, LL 52.59, LR 1.34), "villain" (rank 252, LL 45, LR 1.58), "thief" (rank 257, LL 43.8, LR 2.65), "prisoner" (rank 265, LL 42.63, LR 1.65), "blood" (rank 281, LL 39.2, LR 0.87), "inn" (rank 287, LL 38.38, LR 1.22), "insult" (rank 297, LL 36.4, LR 0.97), "undertaking" (rank 301, LL 36.21, LR 2.15), and "impediment" (rank 302, LL 36.06, LR 2.80) all suggest plot lines of masculine adventure rather than feminine genteel sociability, although again not all terms appear in all novels.<sup>197</sup> The LR values are high, indirectly showing the circumscribed nature of the plot lines featured in the didactic novels.

As it is, a confrontation of the keyword lists generated by AntConc with the didactic and the reference set in turn as the primary corpus highlights that the main difference between the corpora seems to have to do with plot elements and narrative framework more so than with the presence or absence of vocabulary linked to moral instruction. These features suggest that in addition to giving more prevalence to the topic of morality as proper conduct, the novels of the didactic corpus tend to foreground genteel femininity as a diegetic backdrop for the inclusion of this topic.

## II. The Case of Authors Featured in Both Corpora

Five authors appear in both the didactic and the reference corpora: Jane Austen, Frances Burney, Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth, and Amelia Opie. Analyzing their novels as sub-corpora is illuminating in highlighting the differences between the didactic and reference corpora, especially given the fact that they have all been associated with didacticism in one way or another and that the types of story they tell share many narrative components. Table 19 lists the novels involved.

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<sup>197</sup> See for example Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Lady* (1773), which associates men to "active" and women to "passive" courage (letter IV).

Author	In the Didactic Corpus	In the Reference Corpus
Austen, Jane	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1811)	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814)
	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)	
Brunton, Mary	<i>Self-Control</i> (1811)	<i>Discipline</i> (1814)
Burney, Frances	<i>Evelina</i> (1778)	<i>The Wanderer</i> (1814)
	<i>Cecilia</i> (1782)	
Edgeworth, Maria	<i>Belinda</i> (1801)	<i>Leonora</i> (1806)
	<i>Patronage</i> (1814)	
Opie, Amelia	<i>The Father and Daughter</i> (1801)	<i>Adeline Mowbray</i> (1805)

Table 19. Authors Appearing in Both Corpora and Corresponding Novels

These works illustrate the prevalence of didactic novels to include prefatory material, which chapter 3 showed to be a possible generic marker, but they are otherwise strikingly similar, more so than the wider corpora: they were written by women, they all center on a largely genteel female protagonist's social, romantic, and moral life, fitting the definition of domestic novels (Mandal 2007: 23, Wood 69), they had some measure of commercial success in the years following publication, and each of their authors has been associated with moral didacticism in one way or another.<sup>198</sup> Given these similarities, the differences brought to light by keyword lists stand out all the more, underlining as central to the early reception of moral didacticism in fiction the more circumscribed narrative framing of the questions of morality and behavior in the novels received as didactic than in their counterparts from the reference corpus.

Of these five authors, the first three are the most canonical, although Burney and Edgeworth to a much lesser degree than Austen.<sup>199</sup> All three have been noted for their use of subversive comedy in spite of not being clear radicals, and Austen is of course famous for her seminal use of verbal irony (Bilger 192). Austen and Burney tend to be associated with the domestic novel, and while Edgeworth is mostly famous as an "Irish writer," the three novels that appear in this study are set in Britain (Armstrong 37-38, ÓGallchoir 6). She is also more closely associated with "crippling didacticism" than Austen or Burney, especially for *Patronage* (ÓGallchoir 107), and is the only one of these five novelists to have written an

<sup>198</sup> See Tables 21 and 22 in chapter 8 which list the number of further editions for each novel by 1850.

<sup>199</sup> Matthew Grenby expressly excludes Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth from his study on the Anti-Jacobin novel, choosing to focus instead on more obscure works (xii).



educational work, perhaps making her more likely to be associated with didactic literature. Nevertheless, Austen has been noted for her focus on morals in her novels, though it tends to be associated with ethical questioning rather than moralistic prescription (Page 148, Rigberg 2).<sup>200</sup> Similarly, Burney tends to be considered more subversive than overtly didactic because of her pervasive use of satire, which is the reason given for not including *Evelina* and *Cecilia* in the collaborative work *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing, 1790-1820*, but their engagement with didactic themes is highlighted (Havens 8).

Mary Brunton and Amelia Opie, although present in many works on fiction of the period, have had few monographs devoted solely to them, contrary to Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth.<sup>201</sup> Both authors were popular in their day, with several reprintings of the works featuring in my corpora in the fifty years following their original publications.<sup>202</sup> Brunton is both associated with regional literature and overt didacticism, as the titles of these two monographs devoted to her illustrate: Mary McKerrow's *Mary Brunton: The Forgotten Scottish Novelist* (2001) and R. P. Fereday's *Mrs. Mary Brunton: A Moralising Novelist* (1987). She is also tied to Evangelical literature (Mandal 2014: xxi), generally strongly associated with Hannah More (Altick 75, Mandal 2014: xxxix, Waldron 1999: 84, Wood 117), and therefore to coercive didacticism (Wood 118). Amelia Opie has been seen as an Anti-Jacobin writer and linked to didacticism while also exhibiting ambiguity in the way she both empowered women and reinforced the established limitations weighing on them (McInnes 62, Ty 1998: 9).<sup>203</sup> Though these five authors represent a range of political and religious affiliations, they have all been described as didactic in some way.

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200 A notable exception is Marilyn Butler's 1987 *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, which stresses the presence of didacticism in Austen's novels as evidence of the importance of taking into account cultural context in studying any author, including canonical ones who tend to be decontextualized by the critical tradition.

201 A search for the authors' names in titles on [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org) shows that Brunton has been the subject of three biographies, one in 1859, another in 1987, and a more recent one in 2001. A biography on Opie was published in 1937 and another in 2014. Monographs on Austen are too numerous to count, and Burney and Edgeworth have both been the subject of several literary biographies, especially since the 1970s, with eight and thirteen titles respectively, including seven and nine in the last fifty years. The trajectories of these authors within the canon is detailed further in chapter 8.

202 See chapter 8 for a precise breakdown of these authors' later reception.

203 Kelly, Gary. "Opie [née Alderson], Amelia (1769–1853), novelist and poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Accessed 6 May, 2022. <<https://www-oxforddnb-com.janus.bis-sorbonne.fr/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-20799>>. The title of the 2014 biography of her, *Amelia Opie: A Quaker Celebrity*, stresses her connection to religious dissent.

In addition, early reviewers note a clear didactic intent in Edgeworth's *Leonora*, Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, and Brunton's *Discipline*, and the *Critical* reviewer of Burney's *The Wanderer* wishes that the novel were more "didactic" (see quote and discussion in chapter 1, I, ii). This suggests that these novels, all of which are in the reference corpus, are lacking in didactic effect for the reviewers, for reasons which can be investigated textually. The analysis focuses primarily on the novels of Burney, Brunton, Edgeworth, and Opie, since Austen's *Mansfield Park* was not reviewed by the *Monthly* or the *Critical* when it was first published. None of the three novels by Austen appearing in the didactic and reference corpora have a preface, which also differentiates them from the novels by Burney, Brunton, Edgeworth, and Opie under study, and thus warrants a separate discussion.

Four separate sub-corpora were compiled for analysis: DidacticBBEO, with the novels written by Burney, Brunton, Edgeworth, and Opie from the didactic corpus, ReferenceBBEO, with the novels by the same authors from the reference corpus, and DidacticABBE0 and ReferenceABBE0, adding Austen's novels to each. A comparison of DidacticBBEO and ReferenceBBEO shows that the most striking difference in terms of vocabulary frequency pertains to gender. When DidacticBBEO is set as the primary corpus, "he" (LL 1453.15, LR 0.87) and "his" (LL 907, LR 0.74) appear extremely high up on the keyword list, with a rank of 3 and 7 respectively. When ReferenceBBEO is set as the primary corpus, female pronouns "she" (rank 158, LL 38.14, LR 0.12) and "her" (rank 131, LL 48.32, LR 0.11) are shown to be overused.<sup>204</sup> The overuse of feminine pronouns is less dramatic than the overuse of masculine pronouns in DidacticBBEO, which can be explained by the fact that all of the novels feature female heroines. However, the difference underscores that the novels of DidacticBBEO tend to focus on relationships between men and women, whereas the novels of ReferenceBBEO center more on the personal and internal journeys of the female protagonists. This difference is also illustrated by the greater recourse to the third-person narrative in the novels of the former (5 out of 6), as opposed to a greater variety of narrative frameworks in the latter, though the numbers are small: two novels are heterodiegetic narratives, while one is homodiegetic, and one uses the epistolary form. Both results mirror those from the comparison of the full didactic and reference corpora in section I.

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<sup>204</sup> See Online Appendices 3 and 4 for full keyword lists.

The greater implication of male characters in the novels of DidacticBBEO may explain the presence of the virtue of "honour" (rank 204, LL 34.89, LR 0.57) in the keyword list.<sup>205</sup> The presence of "gentleman" (rank 93, LL 97.22, LR 1.08) in the keyword list with DidacticBBEO as the main corpus, and of "gentlewoman" (rank 123, LL 51.63, LR 2.67) in the list with ReferenceBBEO as the main corpus show both sets of novels to focus on genteel life, illustrating all the more strongly the gender divide between the two corpora.<sup>206</sup> The concordance plots below show that the over-representation of the gendered pronouns in one corpus or the other is not due to the presence of one particular novel (Figures 3 and 4).

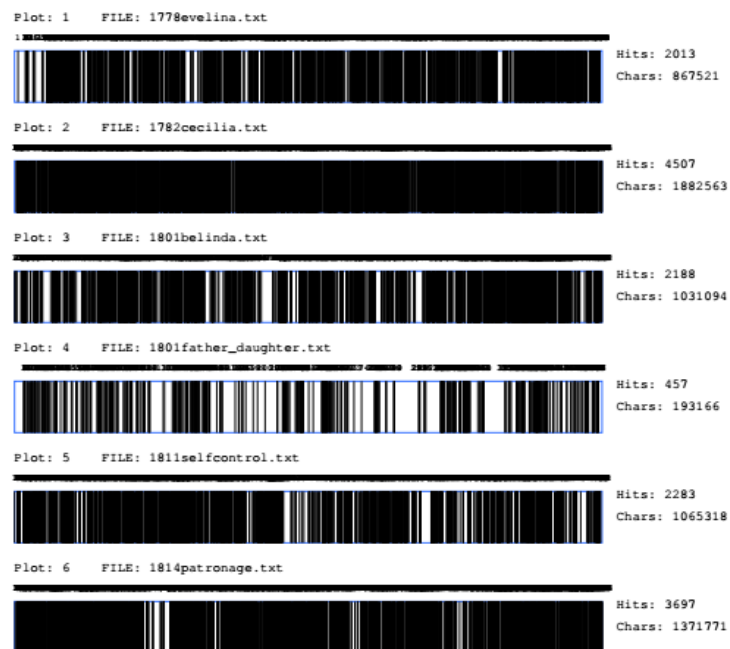


Figure 3. Concordance Plot of "He" in DidacticBBEO

<sup>205</sup> As mentioned in chapter 4, II, I, though Johnson's definition is gender neutral, honor has also been associated with masculinity (Doody 263). The concordance lines of the highest co-occurents of the "honor" in the didactic corpus corroborate this link. For instance only male characters use the expression "pon (my) honor" (see Appendix Chap. 4.1.1). Though the expression is an idiom more than a serious comment on moral virtue in the novels, its exclusively male use suggests professing one's honor participates in the performance of masculinity for the usually foppish and silly characters who deliver this line.

<sup>206</sup> The position of "gentlewoman" in the ReferenceBBEO keyword list illustrates the comparison, but is in itself misleading. The term gentlewoman is much less frequent than "gentleman" in either corpus, and in fact does not appear in *Leonora*, which is however decidedly set in genteel and aristocratic society.

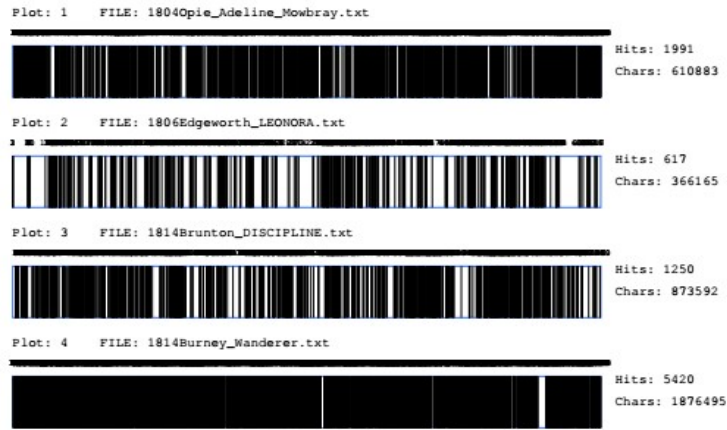


Figure 4. Concordance Plot of "She" in ReferenceBBEO

The over-representation in DidacticBBEO of terms such as "say" (rank 20, LL 430.48, LR 0.67), "conversation" (rank 101, LL 85.85, LR 1.21), "company" (rank 134, LL 59.77, LR 1.05), "behaviour" (rank 197, LL 36.36, LR 1.53), and "please" (rank 220, LL 30.61, LR 0.67) further highlights the centrality of the representation of social behaviors of genteel life in these novels. In contrast, the over-representation of "my" (rank 20, LL 379.1, LR 0.46), "self" (rank 98, LL 63.76, LR 1.04), and "feeling" (rank 106, LL 56.9, LR 0.74) in ReferenceBBEO, fairly evenly distributed among the novels of the corpus, suggests a greater focus on the personal experiences of the female protagonists in these novels compared to DidacticBBEO.<sup>207</sup> Here again, the results echo those from section I involving the full didactic and reference corpora, further solidifying these elements as cogent criteria differentiating, according to the early reception, moral didacticism from other fiction set in contemporary Britain.

Adding the Austen novels to the comparison does not significantly change the results. For instance, when ReferenceABBEO is set as the primary corpus, "she" drops in rank from 158 to 177 (LL 7.67, LR 0.10) as does "her," from 131 to 174 (LL 38.48, LR 0.09). When DidacticABBEO is set as the primary corpus, the term "behaviour" moves up in rank from 197 to 171 (LL 29.15, LR 0.52). None of these alterations materially affect previous interpretations.<sup>208</sup>

The results also support a distinction to be made between "domestic" and "didactic" fiction, in spite of the greater focus on genteel femininity in the didactic corpus demonstrated in section I which implies these to overlap at least in part. Though an author's

<sup>207</sup> See Appendices Chap. 5.14, 5.15, and 5.16 for the concordance plots.

<sup>208</sup> See Online Appendices 5 and 6 for the full keyword lists.

style is not necessarily similar across their works, as has been shown using digital methods (Jockers 93), the thirteen novels studied here all largely fall under the broad category of the domestic novel. In the reference corpus, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Mary Brunton's *Discipline* and Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* adhere quite precisely to the conventions of the domestic novel, following a genteel young female protagonist whose journey ends in a marriage as a reward for her moral uprightness (Wood 69-70). Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806, reference corpus) defies one aspect of Lisa Wood's definition of the domestic novel by staging a married couple rather than their courtship, yet the novel's trajectory still involves showing her success in marriage, which "proves her moral fitness" and illustrates that "the existing system of gender relations can be shown to be appropriate, only dangerous to those who are badly educated" (Wood 70). Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801, didactic corpus) and *Adeline Mowbray* (1804, reference corpus) show negative examples of marriage, with fallen women who repent and die by the end of their respective stories.<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, the novels do reinforce the prevailing gender norms within marriage and larger social order through a story of (morally reprehensible) courtship, and therefore fall within the parameters of the domestic novel.

In spite of their similarities with DidacticBBEO, the novels from ReferenceBBEO illustrate the difference in focus among the corpora, with the former focusing on the protagonists' relationship to men more clearly within the narration than the latter. The heroine of *Discipline* undergoes tremendous moral change before the match is seriously considered, however, and that individual change is much more central to the plot than her relationship to men. In *The Wanderer*, the quest for the social recognition of the protagonist's genteel identity and the trials she endures until light is shed on her birth take precedence over her relationship to Mr. Harleigh, who nonetheless becomes her husband at the end, which is the reason for a large proportion of terms related to adventure being over-

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<sup>209</sup> The figure of the fallen woman is analyzed in chapter 6, II. *The Father and Daughter* differs from the others in that its plot centers on the relationship between a fallen young mother and the father she left to elope with a man who instead of marrying her keeps her as his mistress. The novel is part cautionary tale part redemption story, with Agnes realizing how she misjudged her libertine lover's character. She strives to earn the recognition and forgiveness of her father who went mad following her departure, caring for him upon her return with her infant son. She receives both, and she and her father consequently die almost simultaneously. Much like the other novels of DidacticABBEEO, this one centers on the relationship between a young genteel woman and a man, although the link is filial rather than one of courtship.

represented in ReferenceBBEO. For instance, "horror" appears 77 times, all in *The Wanderer*, and the same goes for "incognita," mentioned 43 times. 167 out of the 271 instances of "stranger" are also found in that novel (60 %). In Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, the protagonist's relationships with men, which include a loving but immoral and socially condemned free union as well as an unhappy but virtuous marriage, are crucial to her moral development, but it is that development which remains central to the story. Finally, Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* stages the struggle between Lady Leonora and Lady Olivia, the latter of whom seduces the former's husband to prove that Leonora's attachment to him stems from duty rather than love (72). While the plot revolves around the two women's relation to Leonora's husband, he is a pretext for their rivalry, which serves to showcase the moral battle between right and wrong. Olivia's banishment and Leonora's reconciliation with her husband illustrates the former's vice and the latter's virtue. Leonora's husband is therefore more a plot device that supports the moral battle between the two women than a central protagonist in the story.<sup>210</sup>

These novels are undeniably similar in narrative content and trajectory, yet keyword analysis has shown that a focus on the moral conduct of a genteel female protagonist is not enough for a novel to be received as explicitly morally instructive, suggesting that domestic and didactic fiction are distinct (though overlapping) categories. The comparison of the two sub-corpora also confirms the results from the comparison of the full corpora in section I, indicating that the typical heroine's range of action is more circumscribed in the didactic corpus, with a greater emphasis on her relationship to genteel men within proper spheres of mixed sociability. This difference in the types of action undertaken by female protagonists in the two wider corpora is explored further using close reading in chapters 6 and 7.

### III. Beyond the Didactic and Reference Corpora

Before delving in detail into the narrative representations of gender, class, and the range of action associated with these social categories in the novels of both corpora using qualitative means, it is useful to explore the texts quantitatively from a different angle. Going

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<sup>210</sup> This distinction is less obvious between *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* on the one hand and *Mansfield Park* on the other. Nonetheless, elements aligning *Mansfield Park* with the early reception of the reference novels that were reviewed by the *Monthly* and the *Critical* are discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

back to the early reviews, the novels can be grouped into other corpora to analyze their linguistic differences, to conclude the discussion on the relationship between reception of moral didacticism and the presence of "moralizing," defined as including "intrusive" moral comments which are separable from the "artistic product" (Doody 11, Rosenthal 4).

This section examines the lexical characteristics of the novels perceived by early reviews to exhibit authorial intent, compared to those only noted for their effects (i). A discussion then follows on two subsets of novels from these corpora, one comprising works exhibiting overt authorial intent in prefatory material, contrasted to the texts noted for their effects that either do not include a preface, or do not express specific intent in it (ii). Keyword analysis establishes a connection between early reviewers' reception of authorial intent and the perception of didacticism in fiction as intrusive moralization found in more recent scholarship, but only in the case of a few specific novels. While the results provide evidence to support the association of certain authors such as Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth, and Hannah More with "crippling didacticism," they also underline this to be only a possible component rather than a central feature of moral didacticism as it was received in the early reviews, confirming the results from chapter 4 (ÓGallchoir 107).

### *i. Intent vs. Effect*

Two smaller corpora of novels may be created on the basis of received intent or effect, in a reconfiguration of the original "didactic" and "reference" divide. Table 20 lists the novels comprising the Intent<sub>15</sub> corpus; novels from the didactic corpus are highlighted in bold. These novels were noted by their reviewers to exhibit authorial intent, whether or not that intent is didactic or explicitly stated by the authors. For instance, the *Critical* reviewer of Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814, didactic corpus) states that "*the object of the Novel is to inculcate the value of personal and political independence*" (DBF 1814A020, my emphasis), indicating the reception of a morally didactic authorial intent. In the reference corpus, the *Critical* reviewer of George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799) discusses the "end" as well as the "intention of the author" to expose the pernicious nature of the new philosophy, which indicates the reception of a (political) authorial intent.

1788	<b>Mary</b>	<b>Mary Wollstonecraft</b>
1794	<i>Caleb Williams</i>	William Godwin
1795	<i>Henry</i>	Richard Cumberland
1799	<i>The Vagabond</i>	George Walker
1801	<b>Belinda</b>	<b>Maria Edgeworth</b>
1804	<i>Adeline Mowbray</i>	Amelia Opie
1805	<i>Fleetwood</i>	William Godwin
1806	<i>Leonora</i>	Maria Edgeworth
1806	<i>The Wild Irish Girl</i>	Sidney Owenson
1808	<b>Cœlebs in Search of a Wife</b>	<b>Hannah More</b>
1811	<b>Self-Control</b>	<b>Mary Brunton</b>
1813	<i>The Heroine</i>	Eaton Stannard Barrett
1814	<i>Discipline</i>	Mary Brunton
1814	<i>The Wanderer</i>	Frances Burney
1814	<b>Patronage</b>	<b>Maria Edgeworth</b>

Table 20. Novels Comprising the Intent15 Sub-Corpus

Conversely, the Effect19 corpus, detailed in Table 21, includes the novels whose reviews do not note a particular authorial aim, with those from the didactic corpus also in bold. What the reviewers discuss is consequently taken to be the effects of the novels on them as readers. For example, the description of Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) from the didactic corpus as "amusing and instructive" denotes the critic's own perception (CR 1778, vol. 46: 203). The reviews of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) likewise only describe the perceived effect of the work, including comments on its entertaining nature or the assertion that "the most delicate feelings are continually excited" (CR 1791, vol. 1: 207). Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812) and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) do not feature in either sub-corpus, as they were not reviewed by the *Monthly* or the *Critical* upon their first publication.



1778	<i>Evelina</i>	Frances Burney
1778	<i>Munster Village</i>	Mary Hamilton
1778	<i>Learning at a Loss</i>	Gregory Lewis Way
1782	<i>Cecilia</i>	Frances Burney
1788	<i>Emmeline</i>	Charlotte Smith
1790	<i>Julia</i>	Helen Maria Williams
1791	<i>A Simple Story</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
1792	<i>Anna St. Ives</i>	Thomas Holcroft
1796	<i>Hermisprong</i>	Robert Bage
1796	<i>Memoirs of Emma Courtney</i>	Mary Hays
1796	<i>Nature and Art</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
1798	<i>Rosamund Gray</i>	Charles Lamb
1798	<i>Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle</i>	Richard Sicklemore
1798	<i>Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman</i>	Mary Wollstonecraft
1801	<i>The Father and Daughter</i>	Amelia Opie
1805	<i>The Nobility of the Heart</i>	Elizabeth Spencer
1810	<i>Romance Readers and Romance Writers</i>	Sarah Green
1811	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	Jane Austen
1813	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen

Table 21. Novels Comprising the Effect19 Sub-Corpus

What is immediately apparent in the distribution of the novels in Intent15 and Effect19 is that novels of the reference corpus make up over half of the former, and novels of the didactic corpus make up the majority of the latter. The presence of so many novels from the didactic corpus in Effect19 was to be expected since perceived didactic effect was a central inclusion criterion in the corpus' creation. Nevertheless, it is striking that only five didactic novels were described as both having such an effect and exhibiting didactic authorial intent. The reference corpus, which was built on the basis of a lack of didactic effect, is largely comprised of novels which were actually noted to display explicit intent, whether didactic or otherwise.<sup>211</sup> This suggests that not only is overt discussion of morals not a particularly defining feature of the didactic corpus (see chapter 4, I and II), but explicit

<sup>211</sup> See chapter 1, II, iv for a discussion of the reference novels' early reception.

expression of ideology—of a moral but also of a political nature—actually characterizes to a much greater extent the novels of the reference corpus.<sup>212</sup>

The keyword lists generated by AntConc support this conclusion. When Intent15 is set as the primary corpus and Effect19 as the reference corpus, "the" is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> (LL 935.76, LR 0.2) and "a" 63<sup>rd</sup> (LL 236.85, LR 0.16), signaling a propensity to use nominal structures in the novels of Intent15.<sup>213</sup> These elements reinforce the idea that novels noted for their authorial intent use language associated with theorizing and generalizing, which the high use of nominal structures suggests (Biber and Douglas 157).<sup>214</sup>

Moreover, the high positions of "my" (rank 68, LL 223.84, LR 0.22) and "our" (rank 88, LL 159.16, LR 0.55) in Intent15 shows a tendency to use the first-person voice, whether through the narrator or characters. This creates a confident voice, whether it is used by the narrative voice or characters, which Susan Lanser argues was more acceptable in male writers of the dominant class than in "marginal or suppressed communities" such as women (21). Nonetheless, the novels which received overwhelmingly positive reviews are all in the Effect19 corpus, whether male or female-authored. This suggests that these critics viewed what Lanser calls "personal voice," characterized by "narrators who are self-consciously telling their own stories," less favorably than narrative situations where individualized points of view are less overt, as in "authorial voice," defined by simple heterodiegetic narration and defined as "the oldest and most basic mode" (15, 18, 22). The results regarding the prevalence of heterodiegetic narration in novels received as didactic from sections I and II are here confirmed, underlining the difference between early reception of moral didacticism as a register and more recent understandings of the term within scholarship.<sup>215</sup>

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212 The term ideology is used here in Terry Eagleton's sense of exhibiting in writing "the values and 'tastes' of a particular social class" (13). As such, neither Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) nor Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) were included in the Intent15 corpus since the intent expressed in their respective prefaces pertains to aesthetics rather than social and cultural values.

213 The LL to LR ratio is much greater here than it is in the noun and verb forms discussed so far. This is explained by the status of "the" and "a" as stopwords, widely used "non-discriminating words" that are often filtered in corpus-based studies (Wohlgenannt 83). Given their pervasiveness, a comparatively small frequency overuse is statistically significant, and in our case does indicate a stylistic difference between the corpora. John Burrows also uses very common words, such as "the," "of," or "I" as valuable data in his study on Austen's style (1987: 3).

214 See Online Appendix 7 for the full keyword list: <https://seafire.unistra.fr/d/>

215 This reflects the greater presence of novels featuring heterodiegetic narration in Effect19 (14 novels out of 19, or 74 %) than in Intent15 (9 novels out of 15, or 60%).

Several keywords cannot be used to determine common traits which differentiate between these two corpora; the concordance plots show that they are specific to one novel or a few novels rather than common to all within one corpus. For instance, nouns such as "priest" (rank 90, LL 156.34, LR 2.85) and "religion" (rank 102, LL 142.47, LR 1.9) in Intent15 largely owe their high position in the list to Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806, reference corpus) and Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808, didactic corpus) respectively, much like "heroine" (rank 95, LL 146.95, LR 2.83) and "hero" (rank 108, LL 125.01, LR 1.8) owe theirs to Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813, reference corpus) and Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795, reference corpus). "Human" (rank 127, LL 116.56, LR 0.95), "character" (rank 129, LL 115.72, LR 0.68), "nature" (rank 134, LL 114.58, 0.71), "habit" (rank 146, LL 99.3, LR 1.26) and "justice" (rank 232, LL 60.62, LR 0.79) are more evenly distributed, although with some disparities. "Justice" is for instance particularly prevalent in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794, reference corpus), Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795, reference corpus), Charles Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799, reference corpus), and Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814, didactic corpus), which can be explained by plot lines involving trials and the legal profession.<sup>216</sup>

Nonetheless, the keyword list comparing Effect19 as the primary corpus to Intent15 as the reference corpus shows that novels not noted for exhibiting clear authorial intent tend to emphasize narrative development over theoretical commentary. For instance, they feature more third-person pronouns such as "he" (rank 24, LL 631.28, LR 0.33), "him" (rank 25, LL 623.69, 0.5), "her" (rank 41, LL 477.11, LR 0.25), and "she" (rank 84, LL 231.21, LR 0.2).<sup>217</sup> "Sister" (rank 35, LL 515.48, LR 1.59) and "brother" (rank 39, LL 489.81, LR 1.64) also rank on the list, although they are unevenly distributed among the novels and therefore do not represent a trend in this corpus.<sup>218</sup> The position of deictics such as "soon" (rank 149, LL 130.37, LR 0.58), "after" (rank 168, LL 117.77, LR 0.45), "since" (rank 207, LL 89.26, LR 0.62), and "before" (rank 208, LL 88.95, LR 0.39), and of verbs such as "go" (rank 108, LL 168.81, LR 0.42), "think" (rank 125, LL 153.69, LR 0.38), and "walk" (rank 133, LL 143.43, LR 0.87) further suggests that these novels tend to focus on character and plot development with less interference from an

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<sup>216</sup> Appendix Chap. 5.17 provides the concordance plots.

<sup>217</sup> See Online Appendix 8 for the full keyword list: <https://seafire.unistra.fr/d/>

<sup>218</sup> Appendix Chap. 5.18 provides the concordance plots.

explicitly authoritative voice than in the Intent<sub>15</sub> corpus, providing textual basis for their reception which did not include any comment on perceived authorial intent.

The novels that were recognized by reviewers as exhibiting clear authorial intent therefore have different features from those that were not. Unsurprisingly, the difference is linked to the prevalence of departure from basic authorial voice toward more explicit expression of authority, going hand in hand with greater recourse to nominal structures, associated today with informational writing.<sup>219</sup> This section has also demonstrated that the majority of the novels of the didactic corpus do not share these features conducive to the inclusion of explicit authorial commentary, further suggesting that the register of moral didacticism as it was received by the *Monthly* and the *Critical* often diverge from what has been considered characteristic of didactic fictional writing in more recent scholarship. Instead, language associated with the inclusion of "overt social commentary" is shown to be a common feature of novels *not* received as particularly didactic by early reviewers, supporting Biber and Conrad's assertion that such features characterize the wider category of eighteenth-century novels, when compared to later fiction (225).

Given that four out of the five novels from the didactic corpus present in Intent<sub>15</sub> fall on the average and failed end of the spectrum of early reception delineated in chapter 1, II, the early reception of moral didacticism appears to single out novels that are distinct from their contemporaries in foregrounding covert rather than overt expressions of moral instruction, whose features are investigated in more detail below.

## *ii. Overt vs. Covert Style*

To confirm these findings, a smaller subset of novels can be created, combining reviewer comments and findings from the study of prefatory material in chapter 3. Lexical comparison of the corpora using keyword analysis corroborates and supplements the tentative conclusions drawn from the work on the larger corpora, much like examining the novels from authors featured in the didactic and reference corpora did in section II of this chapter following the analysis of section I. The novels which were noted to exhibit authorial

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<sup>219</sup> According to Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad, novels since the eighteenth century have retained the vast majority of their textual conventions as well as lexical and grammatical features, making the comparison to another contemporary genres valid, though anachronistic (223, 226).

intent by reviewers *and* include a statement of ideological intent in a preface were grouped into one corpus, called Overt<sub>5</sub> (see Table 22). The novels which were only noted for their effects on the reviewers and which do *not* include an explicit statement of ideological intent were grouped into another corpus, called Covert<sub>10</sub> (see Table 23).<sup>220</sup>

1799	<i>The Vagabond</i>	George Walker
1808	<b><i>Cœlebs in Search of a Wife</i></b>	<b>Hannah More</b>
1811	<b><i>Self-Control</i></b>	<b>Mary Brunton</b>
1814	<i>Discipline</i>	Mary Brunton
1814	<b><i>Patronage</i></b>	<b>Maria Edgeworth</b>

Table 22. Novels Comprising the Overt<sub>5</sub> Sub-Corpus

1778	<i>Evelina</i>	<b>Frances Burney</b>
1778	<i>Learning at a Loss</i>	Gregory Lewis Way
1788	<i>Emmeline</i>	Charlotte Smith
1791	<i>A Simple Story</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
1796	<b><i>Hermesprong</i></b>	<b>Robert Bage</b>
1798	<b><i>Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle</i></b>	<b>Richard Sicklemore</b>
1801	<b><i>The Father and Daughter</i></b>	<b>Amelia Opie</b>
1810	<b><i>Romance Readers and Romance Writers</i></b>	<b>Sarah Green</b>
1811	<b><i>Sense and Sensibility</i></b>	<b>Jane Austen</b>
1813	<b><i>Pride and Prejudice</i></b>	<b>Jane Austen</b>

Table 23. Novels Comprising the Covert<sub>10</sub> Sub-Corpus

The first striking element about these sub-corpora is that the Covert<sub>10</sub> corpus is twice the size of the Overt<sub>5</sub> corpus, with seven novels out of ten and three out of five respectively sourced from the didactic corpus. This illustrates how multifarious the didactic corpus is in terms of the reception and statement of authorial intent, corroborating the conclusion from chapter 4 that the reception of moral didacticism does not particularly hinge on authorial intent, although it is not impervious to it. These smaller groups of novels

<sup>220</sup> Ideological intent is here understood as the will to make a point, whether moral or political. This excludes Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary* from Overt<sub>5</sub>, since the advertisement expresses purely aesthetic intent, as shown in chapter 3, II. Novels such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which do not have a preface, and novels such as Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story*, which have a preface that does not state an explicit intent to promote or prove a point to readers, were grouped together to create the Covert<sub>10</sub> corpus. See chapter 3, I for a discussion of authorial intent in prefatory material from the didactic and reference corpora. Novels from the didactic corpus are highlighted in bold.

starkly highlight the divide in terms of success and failure of moral didacticism as received by early critics, the didactic novels' distribution almost exactly illustrating the successful versus adequate and failed didacticism spectrum (see Figure 1). This confirms the trend observed in the comparison of Intent<sub>15</sub> and Effect<sub>19</sub> in the previous section.

The comparison of the Overt<sub>5</sub> and Covert<sub>10</sub> corpora highlights stylistic differences that may be associated with the use of authorial authority or the lack thereof, further supporting the findings from section III, i of this chapter. For instance, the first term on the keyword list with Overt<sub>5</sub> as the primary corpus and Covert<sub>10</sub> as the reference corpus that is not the name of characters is the definite article "the" (rank 9, LL 714.66, LR 0.23), and the indefinite article "a" appears in 36<sup>th</sup> position (LL value of 197.34, LR 0.22).<sup>221</sup> This shows that the five novels of the Overt<sub>5</sub> corpus disproportionately use nominal structures in comparison to the ten novels of the Covert<sub>10</sub> corpus, much like the novels of Intent<sub>15</sub> in comparison to those of Effect<sub>19</sub>. The particularity of this linguistic feature is further illustrated by the amount of nouns that appear in the keyword list, many of which denote concepts.

While the term "religion" (rank 27, LL 238.12, LR 3.01) holds such a high rank in the list because of the presence of *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, nouns denoting concepts are shown to be ubiquitous in the Overt<sub>5</sub> corpus.<sup>222</sup> However, the distribution of terms such as "principle" (rank 34, LL 207.79, LR 2.13), "truth" (rank 76, LL 102.27, LR 1.17), "nature" (rank 99, LL 80.34, LR 0.97), "right" (rank 134, LL 58.91, LR 0.80), "moral" (rank 148, LL 54.88, LR 1.95), "sense" (rank 179, LL 46.68, LR 0.79), "value" (rank 298, LL 30.49, LR 1.02), "virtue" (rank 305, LL 30.23, LR 0.79), "passion" (rank 331, LL 28.44, LR 0.59), "justice" (rank 337, LL 28.17, LR 0.81), while they of course vary from novel to novel, shows just how widespread theoretical concepts are in these novels.<sup>223</sup> These terms are also heavily related to questions of moral philosophy, suggesting that the novels of the Overt<sub>5</sub> corpus discuss these much more directly than the novels of the Covert<sub>10</sub> corpus.

The novels of the Overt<sub>5</sub> corpus vary in terms of the concepts that they engage with the most, showing a clear difference between *The Vagabond*, the only novel of this corpus

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221 See Online Appendix 9 for the full keyword list: <https://seafire.unistra.fr/d/>

222 Appendix Chap. 5.19 provides the concordance plot.

223 The concordance plots are provided in Appendix Chap. 5.20.

written by a man, and the other four. The contrast illustrates the common gender divide in Anti-Jacobin novels, with men's plots being more political and women's more domestic (Wood 56). Indeed, *The Vagabond* appears much more concerned with questions of political philosophy, with an over-representation of terms such as "equality" (rank 152, LL 53.57, LR 3.47), "liberty" (rank 98, LL 83.44, LR 2.35), and "philosopher" (rank 64, LL 112.87, LR 3.23).<sup>224</sup> In contrast, *Cœlebs*, *Self-Control*, *Discipline*, and *Patronage* have a clear focus on questions of moral behavior, which tend to be associated with the domestic and the didactic novel (Sharpe and Ty 95). This is illustrated by the over-representation of terms like "habit" (rank 61, LL 125.17, LR 2.03), "character" (rank 80, LL 99.72, LR 0.93), "domestic" (rank 118; LL 67.89, LR 1.75), "useful" (rank 207, LL 41.65, LR 1.55), and "duty" (rank 390, LL 25.25, LR 0.64).<sup>225</sup> These four novels, criticized by early critics for not integrating seamlessly enough moral instruction and plot, illustrate the more recent conception of moral didacticism as intrusive moralizing.<sup>226</sup> This result is unsurprising given the prevalent association of Brunton, Edgeworth, and More with overt didacticism in recent scholarship.<sup>227</sup> These five works therefore conform to recent expectations of didactic novels, whereas the others from the didactic corpus express moral didacticism less overtly.

Conversely, the significantly lower frequency of "a" and "the" in *Covert10* suggests that these novels rely more heavily on verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, implying a greater importance of narrative plot advancement than theoretical discourse. Moreover, calculating the keyword list with *Covert10* as the primary corpus and *Overt5* as the reference corpus, pronouns are over-represented, indicating a greater focus on characters over theoretical discourse. For instance, "him" and "her" appear in 19<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> position respectively (LL 452.3, LR 0.66 and LL 369.1, LR 0.33).<sup>228</sup> "You" is also very high up on the list (rank 43, LL 266.62, LR 0.37) followed by "he" (rank 44, LL 264.63, LR 0.32). "She" appears slightly further down the

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224 The concordance plots are provided in Appendix Chap. 5.21.

225 The concordance plots are provided in Appendix Chap. 5.22. Charity, usefulness, and duty are often cited in conduct books from the period as virtues which women should cultivate within the domestic sphere (see for example Chapone 85-87, Green 6, or Savile quoted in Jones 21).

226 See chapter 1, II.

227 This is particularly true for Brunton and More; see for example Mandal (2007: 95) and Wood (66, 75). There is greater variety and ambivalence in the perception of Edgeworth, who is viewed as a moralist but also recognized as an important Irish writer as well as a more subversive figure than her Evangelical counterparts (Bilger 121, 125, ÓGallchoir 107).

228 See Online Appendix 10 for the full keyword list: <https://seafire.unistra.fr/d/>

list (rank 85, LL 120.95, LR 0.22), and its distribution in the ten novels of the Covertio corpus unsurprisingly shows a clear divide between the novels with a male protagonist and the ones with a female protagonist, with the exception of Robert Bage's *Hermesprong* (see Figure 5).

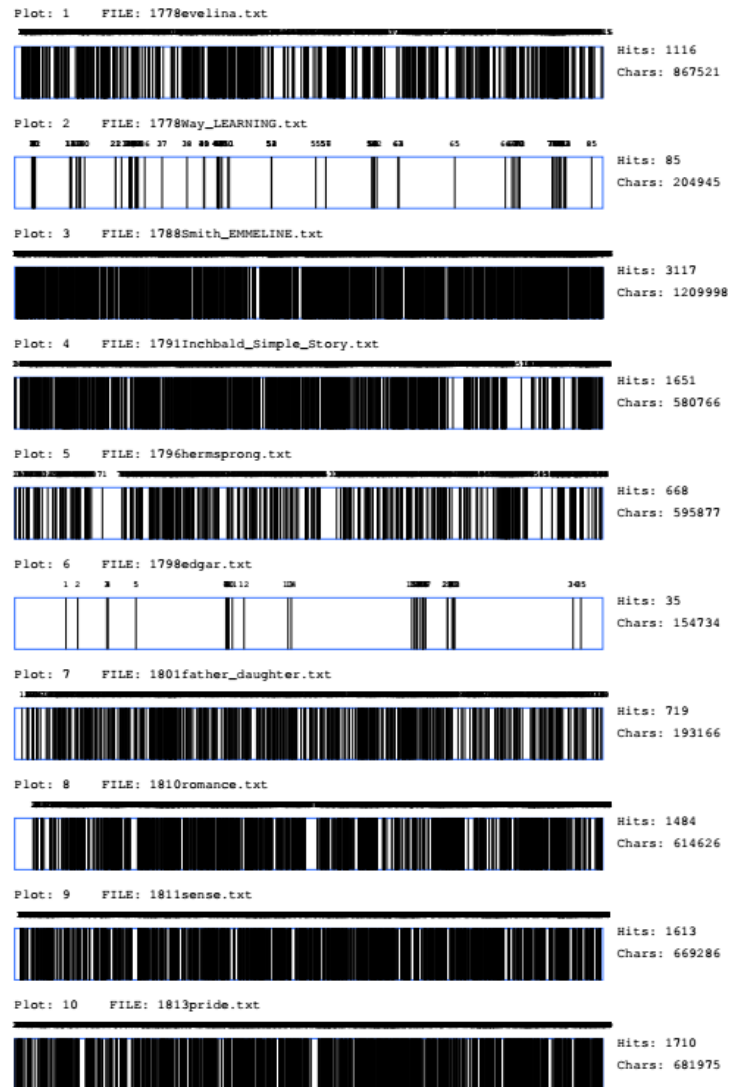


Figure 5. Concordance Plot of "She" in Covertio



However, the distribution of "he" is much more even, as illustrated in Figure 6, suggesting that plots revolving around women tend to include male characters almost as much, while plots centering on men are more likely to deal very little with female characters, mirroring Anne Bandy-Scubbi's findings (2015: 8).

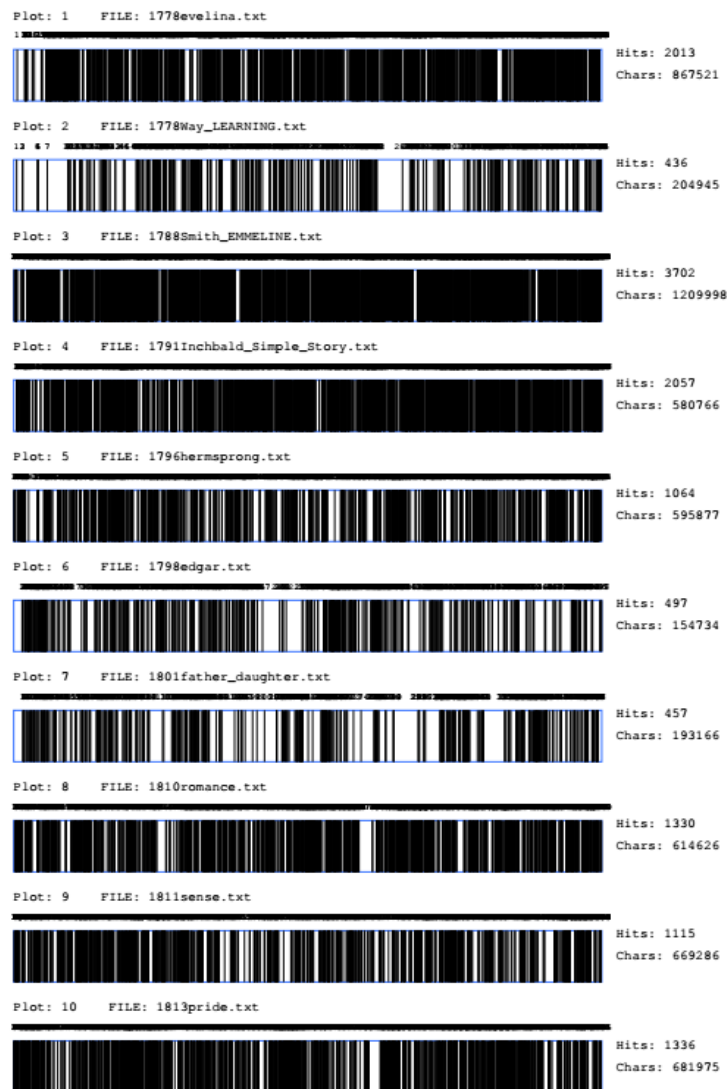


Figure 6. Concordance Plot of "He" in Covertio

The only exception here again is Robert Bage's *Hermsprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796, didactic corpus), which focuses on male and female characters equally, in spite of the male protagonist. In any case, the novels of the Covert<sub>10</sub> corpus appear to focus much more on character than theoretical discourse through the prevalence of these pronouns, regardless of the question of gender.

High up on the list also appear the conjunctions "so" (rank 65, LL 161.69, LR 0.42), "and" (rank 72, LL 136.71, LR 0.15), and "then" (rank 87, LL 118, LR 0.57). In contrast, "which" ranks in 47<sup>th</sup> position with LL and LR values of 165.19 and 0.35 in the Overt<sub>5</sub> corpus. The conjunctions which are over-represented in the Covert<sub>10</sub> corpus evoke plot advancement, while "which" may be associated with more theoretical discourse. The Covert<sub>10</sub> corpus also disproportionately features the verbs "go" (rank 74, LL value 136.68, LR 0.57) and "do" (rank 76, LL 132.58, LR 0.37), "suppose" (rank 77, LL 130.78, LR 1.21), "walk" (rank 101, LL 105.36, LR 1.08), "know" (rank 117, LL 95.26, LR 0.42), "come" (rank 122, LL 89.74, LR 0.57), and "see" (rank 127, LL 85.28, LR 0.39), and adverbs such as "very" (rank 35, LL 326.1, LR 0.89), "much" (rank 90, LL 115.06, LR 0.57), "extremely" (rank 92, LL 112.31, LR 1.97), "again" (rank 96, LL 109.48, LR 0.76), "before" (rank 139, LL 77.39, LR 0.54) and "soon" (rank 140, LL 76.55, LR 0.64). The first nouns that appear on the keyword list are related to family and social relationships, as with "lord" (rank 13, LL 503.57, LR 1.07), "miss" (rank 21, LL 414.12, LR 0.9), "sister" (rank 26, LL 391.65, LR 1.87), "uncle" (rank 68, LL 140.85, LR 2.16), and "brother" (rank 70, LL 138.81, LR 1.28). Taken together, these words further illustrate the focus on plot and character in these novels. In this context, the terms evocative of morals, "behaviour" (rank 89, LL 116.54, LR 2.23) and "honour" (rank 147, LL 71.68, LR 0.88) are likely to be more fully integrated to the plot in these novels than in those of Overt<sub>5</sub>, rather than be part of theoretical discourse including "reflections, judgments, [and] generalizations about the world 'beyond' the fiction" which are examples of extrarepresentational acts that denote overt authoriality (Lanser 16).

The comparison of these sub-corpora gives credence to the statements equating some didactic novels with linguistic features including digressive pauses to directly comment on specific moral values, often seen as intrusive by modern readers (Wood 66, Doody 11). Nevertheless, this section also highlights the reductive nature of such a definition

of didacticism in fiction when confronted with its early reception, given that the majority of the novels of the didactic corpus do not include such characteristics.

## Conclusion

The findings in this chapter corroborate those from chapter 4 in underlining that the main lexical differences between the didactic and reference corpora do not revolve around the explicit discussion of moral values. Instead, vocabulary related to gender and class, relating particularly to women of the upper echelons of society, are over-represented in the didactic novels. These novels also appear to include a more restricted range of topics than their reference counterparts, linked to genteel sociability within the domestic space, told primarily through heterodiegetic narration. In addition, comparative keyword analysis approached from different angles reinforces the conclusion that the early reception of didacticism in novels did not hinge on a moralizing style, or indeed on a particularly authoritative style.

The focus on moral didacticism as intrusive moralization seems to have developed in the scholarship of the second half of the twentieth century, with a focus on Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth, and Hannah More, which have been shown to feature linguistic characteristics later associated with overt moralizing. These features were in fact already decried by early reviewers on the basis of such digressive pauses not integrated well enough to the plot. The evolution of the reception of the didactic mode throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries presented in chapter 8 will further explore this question.

The results also indicate that narrative framing of gender and class should be analyzed in more detail to determine what constitutes the core of a novel received as didactic by early critics, especially when reception was warm. Consequently, chapters 6 and 7 investigate more closely the particular elements of plot that differentiate the novels of the didactic corpus from the novels of the reference corpus, focusing on the representations of gender and class.

## Conclusions from Part 2.

The past three chapters have investigated the textual basis for the early reception of moral didacticism in novels set primarily in the British Isles, in relation to the characteristics cited by several scholars to be prevalent language features of didactic fiction. Moral didacticism has previously been associated with generalizing comments within the narration making the instructive intent clear. Consequently, chapters 3 and 4 examined specific elements likely to be sites of overt authorial expression, through qualitative and quantitative means. The analysis of prefatory material showed that while novels received as didactic are more likely to include such elements of text to introduce the story, these are not a clear space of authoritative expression of didactic intent. They mirror reviews as sites of negotiation of the relationship to readers rather than unambiguous spaces of authorial affirmation (see chapter 2), with female novelists tending to exhibit more humility than their male counterparts, in line with established gender roles.

These conclusions were corroborated by the study of direct addresses to readers within the narratives proper in chapter 4, and the comparison in chapter 5 of the novels noted for their intent by reviewers and those whose reviews center on effect, mixing the original didactic and reference corpora. Combined, the results provide some textual basis for the discourse on didacticism in fiction found in recent scholarship, which often highlights specific authors as overtly didactic, especially Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth, and Hannah More. Nevertheless, the majority of the novels of the didactic corpus cannot be defined by such features of register, showing this conception of moral didacticism to be reductive in light of its early reception.

In addition, chapter 4 showed that closing commentary on morals and engagement with the topics of morality and instruction are not discriminating criteria between the didactic and reference corpora. These features of genre and register respectively are instead found to be pervasive across the two sets of novels, suggesting them to characterize more generally eighteenth-century fiction set in the British Isles. Nonetheless, novels received as didactic were shown to include the topic of conduct, which constitutes part of the definition of "morality," suggesting that these works are at least in part unified by their distinct focus on

behavior. The corpus-driven comparison of the corpora from chapter 5 confirmed this conclusion, and demonstrated in addition that the topics pervasive to the didactic corpus are more limited than in the reference novels. The latter features a larger range of characters and action, highlighting by contrast the focus on genteel femininity and its attending modes of domestic sociability in the novels received as didactic. Furthermore, the reception of moral didacticism was shown to elevate heterodiegetic narration over other types of narrative framework centering such as autodiegetic narration or the epistolary form, implying a greater importance of community consensus over individualized experience in the way these stories are told.

These three chapters, by different means, point to the centrality of proper genteel femininity in the novels of the didactic corpus, mirroring the conclusions drawn from chapters 1 and 2 on the early reviews' discourse. Chapters 6 and 7 consequently examine the contours of this moral ideal as it is depicted in these novels compared with those from the reference corpus, to further define the unifying features of the didactic corpus in terms of register and genre.

# Part 3: The Didactic Novel and the National Ideal

The textual analysis conducted in the previous three chapters has shown the two corpora to be distinct largely in terms of topic related to gender and class, corroborating the reviewers' favoring of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman ideals, as delineated in chapter 1. Narratively, the didactic corpus was suggested to include a more limited range of protagonists and action than in the reference corpus, which includes a wider spectrum of character types and plot elements.

Consequently, chapters 6 and 7 analyze the narrative portrayals of gender and class in relation to morality, circling back to close reading in order to contextualize more precisely within the narratives the quantitative data analyzed in chapters 4 and 5.<sup>229</sup> Chapter 6 investigates the representations of gender and social class in the novels of the two corpora, showing the centrality of gentility and its attending gendered moral ideals in the works received as didactic. Chapter 7 then focuses on the narrative depiction of space and the role it plays in delimiting the contours of proper behavior in these novels, in comparison with those of the reference corpus. Part 3 ends on a definition of the didactic novel as a subgenre of narrative fiction, its coherence hinging on the depiction of the ideal of genteel Englishness as a structuring feature of the texts.

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<sup>229</sup> Mixing quantitative and qualitative analysis is a common approach in corpus stylistics, especially when the body of texts under study is relatively small, which mine is. See Anne Bandry-Scubbi's 'Chawton Novels Online, Women's Writing 1751-1834 and Computer-Aided Textual Analysis' for an overview of the different methodological approaches taken by scholars within the growing corpus stylistics field (2).

## Chapter 6. Moral Didacticism and Gentility

### Introduction

As we have seen in Parts I and II, the novels of the didactic and reference corpora engage in notions of morality and instruction to a comparable degree, irrespective of the early reception which divides them into the explicitly didactic and the merely moral (or much less often, immoral). The corpus stylistics study conducted in chapters 4 and 5 suggested that the ways in which questions of morality are presented narratively differ from one corpus to the other and may be the reason why certain novels were received as instructive and not others, including novels written by the same author. Looking at different aspects of narration such as characterization and plot elements, the novels of the didactic corpus appear to overwhelmingly stage characters who embody the values of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman delineated in chapter 1, I, iii, while the novels of the reference corpus tend to feature protagonists who venture beyond the strict confines of this gendered, moral, and social ideal.<sup>230</sup>

This chapter suggests that the difference between both corpora hinges on their engagement with gendered ideals of gentility through the novels' main protagonists, linking the early reception of moral didacticism with a certain representation of genteel moral and social behavior. Given the size of the corpora, this study focuses mostly on the portrayals of the novels' protagonists, with only sparse discussions of secondary characters. Recurring portrayals of genteel women and men behaving in morally upright ways unify the novels of the didactic corpus, in spite of the differences in terms of narrative framework or political affiliation. Section I focuses on the representations of the Proper Lady and the True Gentleman as moral ideals strongly anchored in social class, constituting a defining feature of the didactic corpus. Section II delves into the ways in which moral failings are portrayed in relation to class and gender in the novels of both corpora, further illustrating the divide between the two.

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<sup>230</sup> This method mirrors Patrick Parrinder's, who proposed paying "more attention to the ostensive signification and cultural coding of plot elements than to the rhetorical and formalist aspects" of novels in order to investigate the link between novels and English nationhood, which is the topic of chapters 6 and 7 (4).

## I. The Proper Lady, the True Gentleman and Gentility

According to the *OED*, the gentry refers to "people of gentle birth and breeding; the class to which they belong; in modern English use *spec.* the class immediately below the nobility," and until the beginning of the nineteenth century meant "the quality or rank of gentleman." "Gentry" is a relatively fluid term whose contours have changed over time and have always been difficult to pinpoint. As Peter Coss points out, "nobility" and "gentry" were once synonymous, and gradually came to mean separate strata of upper-class society throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the former referring to peers and the latter including knights, esquires, gentlemen, and baronets (2). At the turn of the nineteenth century, *gentry* came to mean largely untitled landed proprietors, in opposition to the rising middle class which may come to acquire land but often did so "more as an investment or asset to produce income for enlarging a business or a farming operation" (Davidoff and Hall 20).

For the purposes of this study, the gentry will be primarily defined according to the scale which G. E. Mingay provides and situates as effective from the seventeenth century and into the nineteenth century. The scale includes, in descending order, baronets, knights, esquires, and gentlemen (3). Mingay notes that the "lowest level of the gentry was distinguishable from the yeomen or landowning farmers by the elusive quality of gentility, a distinction acquired principally by birth, education, and the wealth and leisure to follow gentlemen's pursuits" (3). The gentry is tied to other ways of making money, being "constantly replenished and revitalised by the arrival of new families from office, trade, finance, farming and the professions (especially the law)" (5-6). However, "of these newcomers many were already related to existing landed families by marriage or by birth, being younger sons, sons-in-law or nephews" (5). In spite of intermarriage between landed and merchant families being common, "hostility to the pretensions of merchants" continued throughout the eighteenth century, which we can link to the continued differentiation between the gentry and the middle class in Davidoff and Hall's work on the nineteenth century (6-7).

The so-called "middling sort" illustrates the porosity between the landed and the merchant class. This social category includes the "professions," which Lawrence and Jeanne



Stone describe as "semi-genteel occupations," referring to "clerks, doctors, apothecaries, or schoolmasters" who would claim for themselves the status of gentleman (23).<sup>231</sup> The term more largely encompasses "many different situations and occupations and covers income ranging from some £50 to about £800 per annum," including men engaged in trade (Sippel 29, Black 2015: 50). Jeremy Black argues that the "middling sort" provided "a robust, self-reliant image of Englishness," in opposition to the elite and much more cosmopolitan "people of fashion," whose interests in continental art were for example accused of illustrating "crypto-Catholicism" or "effeminacy" (48-49). In this opposition, the "middling sort," as representative of "the nation," embodied a moral ideal, including "the values of sense, reliability and patriotism" (42).

The fluidity of the term "gentry," while problematic, may actually serve the novels of the didactic corpus, bridging the gap between the middling sort and the aristocracy. According to Davidoff and Hall, "the revival of Puritan doctrine within the Evangelical movement, many of whose early adherents came from the margins of the gentry, encouraged forms of domesticity which had much in common with middle-class practices. However, while for the landed family, this might be a choice, for the middle class it was mandatory" (21). The didactic potential of the novels of that corpus may thus have been heightened for reviewers by virtue of featuring a genteel man or woman consciously making the moral choice to lead a domestic life. Without overturning the status quo of the social hierarchy, the relative indeterminacy of the gentry as a class—closer to the peerage in the case of knights and baronets but tending toward the middle class when the land owned is not enough to sustain the entire family and children are forced to seek employment—makes protagonists of this rank potentially relatable to members of the aristocracy and of the rising middle class.<sup>232</sup> Consequently, moral values associated with the "middling sort" but embodied in characters from a more elite class may accrue cultural power. This section aims to

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231 Male members of the landed gentry were more likely to enter government service, the law, or the army, considered to be "entirely genteel pursuits" (Stone 225).

232 We may recall the *Critical* reviewer of Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) who deplored the ubiquitous presence of aristocrats in novels, arguing that it created impossible hopes for readers in "the temperate zone of middle life" (*CR* 1778, vol. 46: 204). The social origins of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* also reflect this social porosity, given that the former was founded by businessman Ralph Griffiths, and the latter by younger son trained as a doctor and author Tobias Smollett, and as seen in chapter 2, the vast majority of their reviews of the didactic novels concur (Donoghue 23, 25).

demonstrate the social anchoring of the protagonists in the didactic novels within the gentry as a means for the dissemination of such moral ideals, illustrating not only the porosity of the two social categories but also a certain cultural ambivalence toward the "middling sort," whose values only are represented. An investigation into the figure of the Proper Lady is first of all proposed (i), followed by a study of the True Gentleman (ii).

### *i. The Proper Lady and Social Class*

As mentioned in chapter 1, I, iii, Mary Poovey's concept of the Proper Lady defines women as agents of salvation, confining their moral worth to their chastity, modesty, self-control, self-denial, and filial obedience. Poovey explicitly links these values to the ethos of the growing middle-class society at the turn of the nineteenth century in Britain, where female infidelity was seen as a threat to the social order given the rising importance of men's property in an increasingly capitalist society (5). The rules of primogeniture also render the certainty of lineage paramount to the rightful inheritance of estates, and was the defining practice in the aristocracy, making female chastity a central virtue in both social classes (Davidoff and Hall 205). In the novels of the didactic corpus, the female protagonists overwhelmingly embody the domestic ideal of the Proper Lady, and their social status is conspicuously genteel rather than clearly noble or middle-class as they tend to be daughters and wives of neither businessmen nor noblemen.<sup>233</sup> In addition, social strata are portrayed as fairly static and thus secure in the didactic corpus. In contrast, female heroines in the reference corpus inhabit a wider range of social classes and illustrate their permeability, drawing attention to the relative arbitrariness of the social hierarchy.

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<sup>233</sup> See Catherine Stimpson's foreword in Poovey's *The Proper Lady* where she links the concept of the Proper Lady to the "decorous and domestic" (vii).

NOVEL	PROTAGONIST	SOCIAL CLASS
<i>Evelina</i> (1778)	Evelina Anville	Titled gentry (confirmed as a baronet's daughter by the end); marries a nobleman
<i>Munster Village</i> (1778)	Lady Frances	Nobility
<i>Cecilia</i> (1782)	Cecilia Beverley	Gentry, heiress to a large fortune
<i>Mary</i> (1788)	Mary	Gentry
<i>Julia</i> (1790)	Julia	Gentry
<i>Hernsprong</i> (1796)	Hernsprong	Of noble English descent on father's side and middle-class French descent on mother's side; brought up with an Indian tribe in America
<i>Memoirs of Emma Courtney</i> (1796)	Emma Courtney	Gentry, though mother was a rich trader's daughter; is briefly a tutor and companion, but marries instead of pursuing work
<i>Edgar</i> (1798)	Edgar	Nobility
<i>Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman</i> (1798)	Maria	Born into the gentry, marries a merchant's son
<i>Belinda</i> (1801)	Belinda Portman	Gentry with little money
<i>The Father and Daughter</i> (1801)	Agnes	Middle-class; daughter of a "respectable country merchant" (1)
<i>The Nobility of the Heart</i> (1805)	Angelica	Born into nobility, brought up by cottagers, passes as gentry until noble birth is ascertained; marries a nobleman
<i>Cœlebs in Search of a Wife</i> (1808)	Charles	Gentry
<i>Romance Readers and Romance Writers</i> (1810)	Mary and Margaret	Gentry, daughters of younger son and curate, brought up on their uncle's estate and farm
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1811)	Elinor and Marianne	Gentry, impoverished through the laws of primogeniture
<i>Self-Control</i> (1811)	Laura Montreville	Gentry; tries to earn money by selling her pictures
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)	Elizabeth Bennet	Gentry; "I am a gentleman's daughter" (306)
<i>Patronage</i> (1814)	Percy family	Gentry; daughter Caroline marries into European aristocracy; sons Godfrey, Alfred, and Erasmus respectively become a soldier, a barrister, and a doctor

Table 24. Social Classes of the Novels' Protagonists—Didactic Corpus

As shown in Table 24, 80% of the female protagonists of the novels of the didactic corpus belong to what may be termed the *gentry*. They may come in contact with the nobility, such as Cecilia Berverley and her silly noble suitors in *Cecilia* (1782), Belinda Portman and her socialite chaperone Lady Delacour in *Belinda* (1801), or Elizabeth Bennet and preposterously proud Lady Catherine de Burgh in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); but the majority of the female protagonists' social circle is untitled, and more often than not the members of the aristocracy are shown as foolish and/or immoral in some way, such as Lord and Lady Delacour before Belinda facilitates their reconciliation and moral reformation, or Lady Catherine de Burgh. Novels received as didactic therefore appear to hinge on genteel female protagonists, who become the canvas for the portrayal of the Proper Lady domestic ideal.

Agnes, in Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801), is the only protagonist whose father is explicitly said to be in trade ("respectable country merchant in a town," 1). She has nonetheless been educated at great expense and is described as possessing "every accomplishment that belongs to her own sex," suggesting an affinity with gentility, even if Agnes cannot be said to belong to the gentry (2).<sup>234</sup>

The only novel with a noblewoman for a main character which takes place unambiguously in the aristocratic world is *Munster Village*, the earliest novel of the corpus along with *Evelina*, both of which were published in 1778. The turn of the century saw a large shift in England's social makeup, with the aristocratic ethos of inherited wealth lavishly spent losing ground in favor of the joint belief in the free market and domestic moderation of the rising middle class (Davidoff and Hall 21). *Munster Village* appeared at a time when this shift had not completely taken place, which may explain why the almost exclusively aristocratic characters were not cited as a fault by the reviewers.

The novel portrays an ideal village set up by Lady Frances on her estate in the country, for "she sought, in the beauty of nature, in science, and the love of order, that satisfaction, which in the world (where people are the *slaves of apology, and the dupes of*

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<sup>234</sup> Amanda Vickery makes a distinction between "the genteel" and the gentry, and includes in the former group "commercial, profession and gentry families" (1). She articulates the difficulty of situating the literary construction of domestic femininity in either the middling ranks or the landed class, which we can see in the example of Agnes (3).

*caprice*) is eagerly pursued, but *never found*" (20, author's emphasis). This implies a moral high ground for the aristocracy based in the country as opposed to those living in town, linking Lady Frances' way of life with that of the country gentility and its increasing focus on domesticity (Davidoff and Hall 21). In *Munster Village*, moral excellence found in the country rests on the belief that "*virtue and abilities* can only procure us real happiness, and nothing but *doing good*, in that sphere of life in which we are placed, can afford the true felicity of a noble soul" (21, author's emphasis).

Consequently, Lady Frances uses her considerable inherited wealth to build an "academy" which "receives two hundred scholars, affords them a liberal support, and leads them through a perfect course of education," and includes a library open to "all strangers," an astronomical observatory and "contiguous apartments where all the liberal sciences are read and taught, as logic, physic, ethics, metaphysics, astronomy, geography, geometry, etc." (23-4). The scholars are "young gentlemen," but twenty "young gentlewomen" are also educated in a separate building: "These young ladies are not instructed to declaim with grace, or sing with taste; but if they are less amusing, they are infinitely more useful and interesting companions to those they afterwards associate with, whether in the character of wives or friends" (26). Domestic usefulness is here opposed to accomplishments, portrayed as void of utility, which firmly places this plan of education on the side of the growing focus on domesticity in the gentry over the "lavish display and consumption" associated with the aristocracy (Davidoff and Hall 21).

Mary Wollstonecraft takes up this notion in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which is chiefly concerned with women of the middle class (13). Wollstonecraft indeed deplors that strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty because of a system of education which has been focused more on making women "alluring mistresses than rational wives" (11). *Munster Village* and *A Vindication* both portray domestic usefulness as acquired virtues valuable for noble and middle class women, suggesting, as Nancy Armstrong has argued in relation to the creation of the ideal of the domestic woman, that "neither birth not the accoutrements of title and status accurately represen[t] the individual; only the more subtle nuances of behavior indicat[e] what one [is] really worth" (4).

But Lady Frances's plan of education also stresses the importance of the stability of the existing social divides. The narrator in *Munster Village* discusses the "foible of too many parents, who all expect their daughters are to fill exalted stations in life, and by educating them with that view, disqualify them for their after lot," recalling the discourse found in *Evelina's* review from the *Critical* (26). We are told that among the young gentlewomen educated at the academy, "several of them have married very well in the neighbourhood," suggesting that a good match does not equal filling "exalted stations in life," such as marrying into the nobility. Mary Wollstonecraft echoes the sentiment ten years after the publication of *Munster Village*, asserting that "few men seriously think of marrying an inferior," rendering middle-class parents' desire that their daughters be "*genteelly educated*" a "thoughtless extravagance," leading at best to disappointment, and at worst to seduction (quoted in Jones 111-112, author's emphasis). Though Wollstonecraft frames her argument in terms of female well-being, the education of daughters is here ultimately portrayed as an agent of social stability. The nobility are depicted as champions of this fixed hierarchy in Hamilton's novel, and of the moral values ascribed to the Proper Lady, applicable to the aristocracy, the gentry, and the middling ranks.<sup>235</sup>

Three novels of the didactic corpus see at least one of their female protagonists enter the ranks of the nobility by the end of the story, illustrating *Evelina's* reviewer's complaint mentioned above regarding such narrative portrayals of upward social mobility. In *Evelina*, the titular character is brought up as a country gentlewoman and eventually ascertains the legitimacy of her birth as a baronet's daughter—a liminal rank of the upper gentry, immediately below the peerage (Mingay 3)—and marries an earl, Lord Orville. Angelica in Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* (1805) is originally brought up as a lower-class cottager, learns of her high birth as a teenager, and marries a nobleman of equal rank. Finally, Caroline Percy, from Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814), whose genteel but by no means noble birth is neither obscure nor questioned, marries a German Count and thus enters the rank of the European aristocracy. Nevertheless, rather than showcasing the permeability of social classes and reinforcing the cultural dominance of the titled elite and its cosmopolitan

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<sup>235</sup> The traditional social hierarchy is likewise reinforced by Hannah More several decades later even as she similarly advocates for all Christians to be educated "not only as rational but accountable beings" (*Strictures* 62-69).

values, the novels ultimately stress through these characters' social mobility the importance of domestic moral worth over mere title and fortune, illustrating the tenets of the Proper Lady.

Evelina is the daughter of a rich baronet, which places her on the outskirts of aristocracy by birth, but she does not owned as a lawful daughter until the end of the novel. She is raised deep in the country, in a "retired place, to which Dorchester, the nearest town, is seven miles distant" (21). Her education has been conducted according to her expected lot in life, as her guardian Mr. Villars explains in the same letter:

this deserted child, though legally heiress to two large fortunes, must owe all her rational expectations to adoption and friendship. Yet her income will be such as may make her happy, if she is disposed to be so in private life; though it will by no means allow her to enjoy the luxury of a London fine lady. (20)

Never anticipating Sir John Belmont to own his child or Evelina to socialize with the high born in London, Mr. Villars raises Evelina for a modest private life in the country—which of course creates the disconnect between Evelina's education and the world she enters in town, upon which much of the plot relies. Evelina is not just a rejected baronet's daughter, however; she is also the grandchild of a former "waiting-girl at a tavern" who married genteel and rich Mr. Evelyn (15). Madame Duval is shown throughout the novel to be vulgar and rude, in "total ignorance of propriety" associated with genteel life, highlighting the focus on the upper classes as the guardians of social propriety (165).

In spite of this socially mixed heritage, Evelina is described by her guardian as "innocent as an angel, and artless as purity itself" when she is about to leave his house and eventually mix with sophisticated London high society, recalling the chastity and modesty of the Proper Lady (22). She also exhibits "a natural desire of obliging" according to her late mother's friend Lady Howard, which suggests self-control and self-denial, as well as obedience to figures of authority (23). She proves to defer to the authority of her guardian to the last, the penultimate letter of the novel being Mr. Villars' explicit consent for Evelina to marry Lord Orville. Having been raised away from both the vulgarity of the working class and the artful sophistication of the town nobility, Evelina is the embodiment of the Proper Lady, to whom readers of any social class may identify, given her parentage.

Angelica's birth in *The Nobility of the Heart* is similarly fraught in the beginning of the novel. It shows the four-year-old protagonist left to be raised by cottagers after being brought by a postilion with her expiring father, and the only information the cottagers have about him before he promptly dies is that he is a "gentleman" (Vol. I, Chapter 1). Angelica is raised by the goodhearted cottagers until she is fourteen, when she is recognized as the niece of the earl living in the nearby castle. Angelica is henceforth brought up as an heiress, although her title and inheritance have not yet been legally ascertained.

In her childhood, she is described as naturally noble, both morally and socially, emphasizing the divide between the working class and the upper class, without any reference to a middle rank, as "the superior graces of her mind shone, uncultivated as they were, in every action of her life":

she was indebted to her own capacity in the early taste she discovered for music and drawing. With a naturally lively disposition, blended with infinite good humour, she was unlike other children of her age; for she disliked mixing in their sports. There was a barbarity in their manners, which, without being able to account for, shocked her greatly; and she was happier alone in cultivating a small garden she had planted with flowers, in watching their growth, in decorating her chamber with them, in running after butterflies, in rearing young birds, than in all the amusement any playmates could afford her. But her chief delight consisted in sitting under the shade of some of the old trees in a retired part of the forest, to peruse the different little books she got Gerard to purchase for her from the neighbouring town. He had a few in his possession, consisting of an odd volume or two of the Spectator, the same of Shakespear's plays, Pilgrim's Progress, and some magazines, which were sufficient to encourage her partiality for reading. (Vol. I, Chapter 2)

Angelica's taste and manners are purported to be naturally genteel and domestic, as shown by her interests in music, nature, and reading, which go beyond what her guardians can teach her and against the behavior of the lower-class children around her.

The conflation of her personality traits with her inherited nobility reinforces the rightful and natural essence of social classes and inherited title and wealth, insofar as these are united with a moral imperative to be charitable and benevolent to the lower orders, which is also the case in *Munster Village*.<sup>236</sup> This moral imperative manifests itself in a life of

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<sup>236</sup> Again, this view is explicitly endorsed by Hannah More in her *Strictures*, where she claims that the differences in "superior" and "inferior" ranks are part of the Providential plan, without which "the virtues of



domesticity in the country as opposed to the vacuous socialization of town life, illustrated for instance by Lady Alecia, a shallow and silly young noblewoman who dismisses the country as "rustic" (Vol. I, Chapter 10). Angelica and Lord Vallency, instead of living a life of noble splendor befitting their rank and fortune once married, retire to live a life of "as much domestic retirement as their elevated rank, and magnificent fortune permitted" (Vol. III, Chapter 21), illustrating the portion of aristocrats who had begun in the eighteenth century to "elevate a domesticated lifestyle" (Davidoff and Hall 21).

In *Patronage*, Caroline's marriage to Count Altenberg, German by his father and English by his mother, starts on the continent with the Count serving as a minister to the Prince in Germany, none of which is described in the novel. The couple moves back to England after the Prince dies and an unscrupulous one takes his place, whom Count Altenberg refuses to serve in order to enjoy "the blessings of real liberty and of domestic tranquility and happiness" (604). Caroline's newfound status as a Countess is never referred to in the first edition, and only once in the third edition, as an afterthought, by an elderly servant who has seen her and her sister Rosamund grow up and muses upon the latter's wedding that a better person, "except, perhaps, Miss Caroline—I should say *the countess*—never breathed" (161, author's emphasis).<sup>237</sup> The italics reinforce the disconnect between Caroline's official noble status and the retired life which she and her husband choose to live in the English countryside. Indeed, rather than Caroline accessing fashionable cosmopolitan circles through her union, Count Altenberg is shown to marry into the domesticity of the genteel Percy family—shown as the epitome of high moral life. This counters and criticizes the gentry hankering after the patronage of peers, as illustrated by the fate of the various members of the Falconer family. The Falconers operate as the Percy's negative doubles, forever aiming to position their children in higher stations than they morally deserve. Relying on manipulation and patronage for social advancement, all their plans eventually fail.<sup>238</sup>

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both classes" would have had "little exercise" (123).

<sup>237</sup> The emphasis put on the word "countess" in italics shows the distance between the title and the servant's vision of Caroline, whose rank she appears to forget.

<sup>238</sup> I discuss the failure of Cunningham Falconer's career as an envoy when he is found to have been conspiring against the crown in a forthcoming article to be published in *XVII-XVIII*.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) proves to be a liminal case, illustrating its ambivalent position in the corpus in terms of its early reception, as delineated in chapter 1, II. Instead of venturing beyond the porous border of the gentry into the class of the nobility, a significant portion of the novel is devoted to the tale of Jemima, Maria's working-class and unchaste warden at the asylum where she is wrongfully imprisoned by her husband. In spite of her class, her illegitimate birth, and her past as a prostitute and kept mistress, Jemima is portrayed sympathetically, as a victim of the tyranny of men—starting with her father, who seduced her mother, neglecting her until she let herself die a few days after giving birth, and likewise neglected Jemima as a child. Jemima's tale is one of poverty and sexual violence, a far cry from the ideal of the Proper Lady.

Nonetheless, when Jemima, Maria, and Maria's lover Darnford escape the asylum, the former insists on "being considered as [Maria's] house-keeper, and to receive the customary stipend. On no other terms would she remain with her friend" (167). This mitigates the radical nature of the friendship, especially as it is Jemima who insists on remaining in her inferior place, legitimizing the social hierarchy in which she is at a disadvantage. The uniqueness of the inclusion and sympathetic depiction of a working-class character in this novel may form part of why its reception was ambivalent, earning a positive review from the *Critical* and a damning one from the *Monthly*. Other possible reasons for such ambivalence among the reviews will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. The novels of the didactic corpus thus overwhelmingly feature female genteel protagonists, and those that branch out of this class are shown to nevertheless uphold the social hierarchy in place as they somewhat paradoxically affirm a moral ideal of femininity associated with middle-class values.

In contrast, as Table 25 illustrates, the novels of the reference corpus feature protagonists from a wider range of social background than those of the didactic corpus, from the lower class, through the middling ranks, the gentry, and the aristocracy. Out of the nine novels featuring a female protagonist, six are set in the gentry, but only Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* portrays a genteel female protagonist who conforms to the moral ideal of the Proper Lady. Since it was not reviewed upon first publication, it is difficult to say with

certainty how early critics would have described it.<sup>239</sup> Nevertheless, *Mansfield Park* is filled with genteel characters whose moral flaws transgress the ideals of the Proper Lady and Gentleman, especially but not only regarding chastity, while Fanny Price, whose background on her father's side does not qualify as genteel, is a beacon of female modesty and morality, which does mitigate the link between female gentility and the ideal of the Proper Lady.

Moreover, several novels of the reference corpus set within the gentry showcase the permeability of social classes. Anna St. Ives, the titular heroine of Thomas Holcroft's novel, is the daughter of a baronet but marries Frank Henley, whose father is employed by Sir Arthur and heads the improvement schemes on his estate. Juliet Granville, from Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814), is the child of a nobleman with an "insolvent" merchant's daughter (613). Her claim to English gentility is in question for the vast majority of the novel, as she successively appeals to strangers for help, crosses borders from France to England, works for her bread, and even stays overnight with highwaymen before her (partial) noble birth is finally ascertained and a stable place in society secured. These two examples illustrate the precariousness of the social hierarchy, in stark contrast to the greater sense of stability conveyed by the trajectories of the heroines in the didactic corpus.

This wider array of social classes portrayed in the reference corpus explains the presence of "lady" as an important keyword of the didactic corpus (see chapter 5, I). Samuel Johnson defines "lady" primarily as "1. A woman of high rank," referring specifically to "the wives of knights, of all degrees above them, and to the daughters of earls, and all of higher ranks." Though the female protagonists in the didactic corpus tend not to be addressed as "Lady" themselves, their social circles very often include some women of higher rank, such as Lady Randolph (*Julia*), Lady Delacour (*Belinda*), Lady Belfield (*Cælebs*), Lady Isabella (*Romance Readers*), Lady Catherine de Burgh (*Pride and Prejudice*), etc. Much like "gentleman," the term may also more broadly denote "2. An illustrious or eminent woman" and be defined as "4. A word of complaisance used of women," illustrating in the novels the focus on female characters treated with respect by society, which genteel status demands.<sup>240</sup>

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239 It is worth noting, however, that in Richard Whately's 1821 review of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, all of Austen's novels are said to convey "innocent amusement" and "good sense and instructive example" (quoted in Southam 93).

240 The same reasoning may be applied to the keyword "gentleman" in the didactic corpus, the portrayals of which are discussed in sections I, ii and II, iii in this chapter. Analyses conducted in chapter 7 also serve to

In addition to the main characters' much more varied and often dubious social ranks in the reference corpus, the genteel female protagonists in these novels violate at least one fundamental moral tenets of the Proper Lady. This will be discussed in the second section of this chapter, to further illustrate by contrast the continuity between the social and the moral ideal in the early reception of moral didacticism in fiction.

NOVEL	PROTAGONIST	SOCIAL CLASS
<i>Learning at a Loss</i> (1778)	W. Easy	Gentry
<i>Emmeline</i> (1788)	Emmeline	Nobility from Catholic mother and Protestant father
<i>A Simple Story</i> (1791)	Lord Elmwood	Nobility
<i>Anna St. Ives</i> (1792)	Anna St. Ives	Titled gentry; marries below her rank
<i>Caleb Williams</i> (1794)	Caleb Williams	Working class
<i>Henry</i> (1795)	Henry	Illegitimate son of a nobleman and noblewoman
<i>Nature and Art</i> (1796)	William and Henry	Working class vs. Nobility
<i>Rosamund Gray</i> (1798)	Rosamund	Gentry
<i>The Vagabond</i> (1799)	Frederick Fenton	Gentry
<i>Adeline Mowbray</i> (1805)	Adeline	Gentry
<i>Fleetwood</i> (1805)	Fleetwood	Gentry
<i>Leonora</i> (1806)	Lady Leonora	Nobility
<i>The Wild Irish Girl</i> (1806)	H. M.	Nobility
<i>The Son of a Genius</i> (1812)	Ludovico	Poor urban gentry <sup>241</sup>
<i>The Heroine</i> (1813)	Cherry Wilkinson	Middle class (daughter of "honest farmer," 13)
<i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814)	Fanny Price	Poor urban gentry dependent on titled gentry
<i>Discipline</i> (1814)	Ellen Percy	Gentry
<i>The Wanderer</i> (1814)	Juliet Granville	Titled gentry/Working class

Table 25. Social Classes of the Novels' Protagonists—Reference Corpus

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further explain the discrepancy in the frequency of "gentleman" within the corpora.

241 See G. E. Mingay's classification of the gentry (3).

## *ii. The True Gentleman*

Before discussing the representations of moral behavior which the novels' protagonists embody, we must first determine whether male protagonists also illustrate a striking divide between the corpora. An analysis of the male protagonists from the didactic corpus shows that the novels tend to display a masculine ideal based on moral qualities rather than fixed characteristics of social class, showing a gendered difference in the portrayal and reception of the "proper lady" and the "true gentleman." Nevertheless, the same tendency remains, insofar as male protagonists in didactic novels illustrate and embody a precise moral ideal, while their counterparts from the reference corpus tend to diverge from this model in order to reinforce its superiority.<sup>242</sup>

While Mary Poovey and Nancy Armstrong focus their research on the female ideal present in novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a male exemplar may also be found. Much like "gentry," "gentleman" is a rather porous term which is linked to several elements, social and moral. According to Samuel Johnson, "gentleman" refers first and foremost to "1. A man of birth," but it can also mean "2. A man raised above the vulgar by his character or post" and can even be "used of any man however high."<sup>243</sup> The first definition is exclusively one of social class, and indicates that a gentleman is a man who belongs to the gentry, as defined according to the same terms. However, the other senses go beyond social rank, echoed in one of the definitions found in the *OED*: "2. a. A man having the characteristics traditionally associated with high social standing; a chivalrous, courteous, or honourable man."<sup>244</sup> The notion of rank remains part of this definition, but virtuous attributes take precedence, giving a primarily moral dimension to the term.

According to Philip Mason, the term "gentleman" gradually lost its social meaning attached to landed property over the course of the nineteenth century, embodying a moral ideal of conduct that should be found in the ruling class but was attainable by the middle class through a proper—and expensive—education (12). Mason cites canonical literature from Chaucer to Trollope to trace the evolution of the concept of the gentleman and

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<sup>242</sup> The second part of this argument is developed in section II of this chapter.

<sup>243</sup> "gentleman, n. f." Johnson, Samuel. *A Dictionary of the English Language*. London, W. Strahan, 1773, <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755page/genius?zoom=1600>, accessed 16 May 2022.

<sup>244</sup> "gentleman, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/77673](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77673), accessed 16 May 2022.

determine stable traits. In his discussion of Austen's gentlemen, he claims that the author "belongs in spirit to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. She writes from the point of view of a lady of the lesser gentry at the end of that century and, embedded in her novels, are pictures which illustrate to perfection the ideas which that century bequeathed to the Victorians as to the proper behaviour of a gentleman" (71). In the novels of the didactic corpus which prominently feature male protagonists, this ideal is certainly anchored in the upper classes, although the moral conditions of the "gentleman" take precedence over those of social rank, setting the stage for the Victorian insistence on the former at the expense of the latter.

For Mason, Austen's gentleman exhibits qualities close to what Chaucer termed "*gentillesse*"—courtesy to women, generosity, openheartedness, and magnanimity, recalling Doody's definition of the "true gentleman" (Mason 71, 12, Doody 246). The moral qualities portrayed as constitutive of a gentleman in the novels of the didactic corpus, which include Austen's first two published novels, also illustrate the Lockean ideal of the gentleman, which can be seen as the male pendant to Poovey's Proper Lady. Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* is explicitly aimed at "young Gentlemen" of "our *English Gentry*" to influence the moral conduct of that social group (lxiii, author's emphasis). Locke emphasizes virtue as a guide to proper action, which he claims is developed through a man's ability "to *deny himself* his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, tho' the appetite lean the other way" (21, author's emphasis). He also stresses the importance of a child's obedience to his parents, as a necessary step to him becoming an "affectionate friend" to his older kin as an adult (27). Habitual good nature and kindness are also paramount, as is modesty—taught through self-denial, fortitude, and industry (29-30, 35, 43, 95)<sup>245</sup>.

Genteel male virtue is thus defined in terms very similar to those used to outline the concept of the Proper Lady—albeit without the explicit demand of chastity. This supports Locke's claim that boys and girls should in most things be brought up similarly and along the same principles (6-7, 9), and aligns the Proper Lady with the more obviously positive concept of the "rational woman," developed according to Anne Mellor as part of a

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<sup>245</sup> This moral definition of the gentleman comes in opposition to Lord Chesterfield's largely amoral view of the concept, almost a century after the publication of Locke's treatise; Mary Wollstonecraft decries it as an "unmanly, immoral system" (*Vindication*, section 5.5). Samuel Johnson was of the same opinion, insisting according to his biographer James Boswell that Chesterfield's letters "taught the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master" (114).

"revolutionary feminine Romanticism," which stressed "the education of the rational woman, rational love and the politics of domestic responsibility, woman's relation to nature, and the feminine construction of subjectivity (39). Although the novels of the didactic corpus are clearly particularly concerned with standards of genteel femininity, a complementary ideal of genteel masculinity also emerges, suggesting that moral didacticism was not solely directed at young women.<sup>246</sup>

Four novels of the didactic corpus center chiefly on genteel masculinity, or at least to the same extent as they focus on genteel femininity, through their central protagonists—Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796), Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar, or The Phantom of the Castle* (1798), Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), and Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814). Strikingly, only *Cæleb's* Charles clearly fits the definition of a gentleman in both its social and moral aspects, as the virtuous and pious son of a landed gentleman (see Table 24). The young male protagonists of the other three novels, who embody the moral virtues of the gentleman, all have ties with either the aristocracy, the middle class, or both. This suggests that for male protagonists, moral quality takes precedence over social rank, granting the term more social versatility than genteel femininity. This is consistent with the historical conception of the gentleman and its relation to social class, since a younger son of the landed elite going into business did not lose his status of gentleman (Stone 228-9).

*Hermesprong* questions the notion of gentleman through the titular character, who is of noble English descent on his father's side and of middle-class French descent on his mother's side, mixing both rank and religion, as his mother was a Catholic (245). In addition to this already murky heritage, *Hermesprong* was largely brought up on the American frontier, with a Native tribe, which highlights just how far removed he has been from English high society. This peculiar backstory allows the author to question the foundations of the concept of gentleman through this character. *Hermesprong* and a young man of (moderate) birth and fortune argue about the definition of "gentleman" when said young man, Mr. Fillygrove, suggests that they should duel in the name of a woman, Miss Wavel, who has felt insulted by

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<sup>246</sup> This is consistent with the discussion on the early reviewers' construction of didactic novels' intended readership in chapter 2.

Hernsprong's frankness. When Hernsprong states that dueling is a "species of folly" better left to "gentlemen born," he distinguishes the question of birth from that of manners and morals. The following dialogue ensues:

"That," says Miss Wavel, "is as much as to say you [Fillygrove] are no gentleman; though it's well known your father has above a hundred a-year in land."<sup>247</sup>

"Yes, Sir; do you say I'm no gentleman?" added Fillygrove.

"I allow your title, Sir, as far as your father's hundred a-year can give it you. It does not seem to be due to you by your manners, or your morals, if this enterprize is to be taken as a specimen." (86)

Hernsprong's claim to an English high birth, mitigated by his middle-class Catholic lineage on his mother's side and by his having been brought up beyond the borders of English or European society, allows the character to voice and enact the distinction between two conceptions of male gentility: the first as mere birthright (which he nonetheless is entitled to through his paternal lineage) and the second as acquired morals and manners.

Hernsprong's own gentlemanly manners were instilled in him during his childhood with a Native tribe, with whom he received an education of the body: "the active part of my life was spent like that of other young Indians, whose very sports are athletic; and calculated to render man robust, and inure him to labour and fatigue" (252). He claims that he was never able to equal the young men he trained with, not because of a supposed natural difference between "Indians" and white men, but because of "the sedentary portion of my life, spent with my father in learning languages, in mathematics, in I know not what. My father, always thinking of Europe, was desirous I should have a taste, at least, of the less useful, but more ornamental parts of knowledge" (239). Although favor is given to physical activity in this description—intellectual education being defined as "less useful"—this upbringing mirrors the Lockean principle of "sound Mind in a sound Body," which starts with physical activity that will render young gentlemen "able to endure Hardships and Fatigue" (1-

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<sup>247</sup> According to G. E. Mingay, this is indeed below the average income of gentlemen as members of the lower gentry, which he places at 400 £ a year in 1790, questioning Fillygrove's bid of gentility on monetary grounds (11). Fillygrove's father's 100 £ a year appear to situate the family within the rather low middle class or middling ranks, illustrating young men below the gentry striving to attain gentility (Davidoff and Hall 23, Sippel 29).



2). Locke establishes a link between this plan of cultivating physical endurance and good principles of the mind, as the former for instance instills "the Custom of forbearing" (5).

Hernsprong also takes issue with the notion of gentlemanly accomplishments, which Miss Sumelin, whom Miss Wavel chaperones, defines as "everything that is elegant and genteel" (83). Hernsprong regrets that this does not seem to include what he hopes such accomplishments would be made of, namely "of honour and honesty, of learning, of knowledge, of virtue, of integrity" (83). This exchange highlights the rift between the conception of male gentility as socially inherited customs or habits on the one hand, and as a code of moral values on the other, which for Hernsprong does not seem to be inherently tied to a social class. Nevertheless, by the end of the novel Hernsprong marries into the nobility and is presented as the ideal gentleman, worthy of the demure and ever obedient Caroline Campinet, a paragon of genteel femininity. Although Hernsprong turns out to be the son of an aristocrat himself, he is called by his alias until the end, emphasizing that moral worth trumps high birth—but not going as far as completely separating the two, suggesting instead that both should go together.

In *Edgar*, the titular character is a nobleman, the nephew of a tyrannical baron. As the narrator describes him, his "form was strikingly handsome, nor was his mind less accomplished: he had early imbibed almost every requisite that distinguishes the gentleman" (8). What these requisites are is left unclear, as Edgar is merely said to have developed "virtues" in the course of the expensive education meant to make him "an ornament and a blessing to society" (8).<sup>248</sup> It is away from high society that Edgar is inspired with specific virtues reminiscent of Locke's, when he meets with a hermit while on the run from his uncle's persecutions. The benevolent recluse immediately inspires Edgar with gratitude and "reverential awe, resignation, and patient endurance," all virtues which according to Locke are paramount to a young gentleman's character (46). Just like in *Hernsprong*, true gentlemanly manners are found beyond the confines of high society, emphasizing that noble birth and noble character often clash, which serves to elevate the protagonists who embody both to

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<sup>248</sup> Interestingly, the notion of ornament brings to mind the feminine ideal of genteel virtue as discussed for example by Hannah More (*Strictures* 105), Hester Chapone (132), and Mary Hays (*Appeal* 160), although Lord Chesterfield also uses the word to refer to a gentleman's learning (378), and Sarah Green uses the term to refer to both young women and men (*Mental Improvement* 1, 111).

the level of ideal. Nonetheless, the moral definition of "gentleman" prevails in the two novels, as the young male protagonists of noble lineage are never called by their last name or their title when they inherit it, effectively separating the gentlemen from their noble birth.

In contrast, Edgar's inhumane uncle is almost always referred to as "the Baron," emphasizing his noble rank. In *Hermesprong*, the protagonist's love interest Caroline Campinet is the daughter of tyrannical Lord Grondale, who actually turns out to be Hermesprong's uncle. In both cases, older men whose high rank is repeatedly mentioned are characterized as cruel and unfeeling, illustrating the ungentlemanly gentleman. Their positive double is the ideal gentleman whose moral virtues take precedence over his birth and whose name in the story never draws attention to the latter, making it possible for men of lower lineage to identify with the virtues he exhibits. This ideal of genteel masculinity also emphasizes modesty and industry in acquiring moral worth as central to the very nature of the gentleman, which actually brings it closer to middle-class values (Davidoff and Hall 21).

The young male protagonists in *Patronage* illustrate most clearly this choice on the part of some aristocrats and landed gentry to engage in "forms of domesticity which had much in common with middle-class practices" (Davidoff and Hall 21). The Percy family which is at the center of the novel is comprised of Mr. and Mrs. Percy, landed proprietors whose moral integrity hinges on personal independence from patronage, and a firm belief that a modest rural existence is always preferable to the turmoils of a city life.<sup>249</sup> The marriage of their eldest daughter Caroline to Count Altenberg has already been discussed. It shows the Count choosing a life of domestic bliss in the country over one of political intrigue at the European court, symbolized in the novel by his engagement to Countess Christina, contracted on his behalf by his father among the ladies appearing at court in an unnamed country on the continent as an alliance "eagerly desired by the lady's friends" and "in every respect honorable for his whole family" (393). Count Altenberg has never met Countess Christina when this occurs, and in the meantime has fallen in love with Caroline thus:

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<sup>249</sup> See for example the discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Percy and their friend Lady Jane on romantic attachments made in the country or in town (151-152). The Percys are reminiscent of the Percivals from Edgeworth's earlier novel *Belinda*, firmly believing in their own moral sense over what people in fashionable London circles may opine.

Count Altenberg, in common with every man of sense and knowledge of the world, knew that it is in her own family, in domestic life, he should judge of a woman's real disposition and temper—and that from the manner of her friends towards her he can form an estimate of the past, and, consequently, the best augury of the future.

In that near examination in domestic life, so dangerous to many women of the highest pretensions, Caroline shone superior. His love approved by the whole strength of his reason, and exalted by the natural enthusiasm of his temper, was now at the highest. (393)

Domesticity is presented as the best setting for people to find their proper partner in marriage based on the reality of one another's temper, in stark contrast to the contractual nature of alliances made at court, where the concerned parties may never have even met.

Moreover, the Percy sons, Godfrey, Alfred, and Erasmus, embody the increasing porosity between the gentry and the middle class professionals, if we take the former to refer to landowners living on rents from the laborers on their property and the latter to professionals who work for their fortune (Mingay 2).<sup>250</sup> Godfrey and Alfred are respectively in the army and the law, both of which were traditional careers for sons of the gentry (Mingay 5, 117, Stone 225). Erasmus, the third son, becomes a physician, a profession which became more immediately associated with the middle class in the beginning of the nineteenth century, rather than a clergyman, which was also a common avenue for younger sons of untitled landed gentlemen who might not expect to inherit much on account of the rules of primogeniture (Stone 229)—although young men from the middle class could increasingly aspire to a career in law or the clergy by the beginning of the nineteenth century (Davidoff and Hall 197).

Livings in the clergy were largely held and distributed by the affluent country gentry, tying the profession to an almost feudal system (Mingay 134). Conversely, the medical and legal professions were undergoing modernizing reform in the early nineteenth century, when

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<sup>250</sup> As G. E. Mingay notes, there had been porosity between landowners and wealthy merchants and professionals for quite some time already by the early nineteenth century, through marriage or for the subsistence of younger sons, but always with the maintenance of a clear distinction between the merits of landed property over business (6). By the end of the nineteenth century however, with the increasing importance of commerce over agriculture, younger sons of the gentry "more readily found their occupations in the expanding professions," illustrating a shift in the relationship to paid work (14). The stress of meritocracy over patronage in Edgeworth's last novel thus appears to be looking toward those important societal changes reshaping the English social elite.

*Patronage* was first published (French and Wear 1, Davidoff and Hall 205). As Mr. Percy states, he gave "Alfred and Erasmus such an education, as shall enable them honestly to work their own way to eminence," refusing to rely on the patronage of connections to secure a place for his youngest sons (130). Honesty is associated with having a paid profession in this statement, evoking a middle-class conception of work based on morality and emphasizing the importance of this ethos in the novel, in spite of these professional men having been brought up on a country estate.<sup>251</sup>

Davidoff and Hall stress the importance of the development of Evangelicalism at the turn of the nineteenth century, which helped form the ethos that "work was not to be despised, rather it was to be seen as doing God's duty in the world. Work was dignified, serious and a properly masculine pursuit. Such a concept was necessary to the growing middle class, whose livelihood so often derived from the despised activities of commerce" (111-2). Although Alfred and Erasmus do not become tradesmen, the way that Mr. Percy stresses the importance of work as an honest means of developing and showing one's personal merit as opposed to relying on the unearned privileges of patronage rings of the growing middle-class ethos. This is illustrated in the novel by a positive comment on merchant Mr. Gresham, described by Caroline to her brother Erasmus as "a well-bred, well-informed gentleman," again showing the relative social versatility of the notion of male gentility (254). The Percy sons and Count Altenberg also embody the moral virtues of Locke's conception of the gentleman, combining rationality, kindness, modesty, fortitude, and respect and obedience to their parents, as well as those of Doody's "true gentleman."

Although the relationship between the qualities of a gentleman and the gentry as a social class are less obvious than for genteel ladies, the novels of the didactic corpus stress the true gentleman as a moral ideal of largely upper-class masculinity. The same comparison between the treatment of female protagonists in relation to class among the two corpora may be made for male protagonists. As shown in Table 25, the nine novels of the reference corpus which center on male heroes display a wider range of positions within society than

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<sup>251</sup> Lawrence and Jeanne Stone associate the increase of men of the gentry involved in the professions to morality when they claim that "[t]he drift of the landed elite into the professions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, was also stimulated by the reviving moral concerns of the age. Parents were now anxious to protect their children from the temptation of idleness" (228).

their didactic counterpart, from working class to the nobility through the petty urban gentry and the landed gentry. For instance, William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, shown to include one of the few ambiguous endings in the reference corpus (see chapter 4, I, iii), stages a servant as male protagonist, who disobeys the order not to look into his master's past, who is implied to have murdered a man in his youth. The narrative focus on a man of the lower echelons of society and the relentless pursuit he suffers at the hands of a gentleman by status who is essentially portrayed as a villain or at least an antagonist completely subverts the established order and in no way supports the ideal of the True Gentleman, reflecting Godwin's radical politics.

Another male hero in the reference corpus significantly upsets the social hierarchy. As discussed in chapter 4, I, ii, the protagonists in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* embody opposite values, in a way which upsets the social hierarchy: penniless laborer Henry is portrayed as the virtuous brother, and the novel ends on his contented family life on the rural coast, on the literal and symbolic outskirts of English society. William, who has attained the status of gentleman, embodies vice, including cruelty and selfishness, in complete contradiction with the values of the True Gentleman. In fact, male protagonists in the reference corpus often infringe on the qualities of this masculine ideal in significant ways, as analyzed below in section II, iii, illustrating the dividing line between the two corpora in terms of early reception.

## Conclusions

The novels of the didactic corpus, in spite of the difficulty highlighted in chapters 1-5 to define them as a unified group ideologically and stylistically different from those of the reference corpus, have been seen to be united in the way they engage with the figure of the Proper Lady and its masculine counterpart in terms of social rank and moral ideal. The young female protagonists are overwhelmingly part of the gentry, and those that belong to the aristocracy embody a moral ideal associated with the growing middle-class ethos. The novels with male protagonists underscore the importance of moral virtue over rank, as the main characters with noble lineage ultimately align in values and conduct with the domestic

values epitomized narratively by genteel country life,<sup>252</sup> and contrast with more vicious noblemen who use their superior status for perverse ends.<sup>253</sup> Importantly, though the male protagonists show more varied and complex social backgrounds than their female counterparts, none of them are from the merchant class or lower. Thus, gentility in the didactic corpus is elevated as a moral ideal anchored in class, both elements of which constitute its eighteenth-century definition.<sup>254</sup>

Arguably, the porous nature of the concept of the gentry allows for a wide range of readers to relate to the novels, from the rising middle class to the titled nobility, while not entering in conflict with the status quo of social hierarchy which tended to look down on tradesmen.<sup>255</sup> This answers the wish expressed by the *Critical* reviewer of *Evelina* of reading novels set in more modest walks of life than the aristocracy, so as to avoid giving false hope to young middle-class readers. Moral didacticism as it was received by the early reviewers of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* therefore appears to hinge on the representation of virtuous characters in specific spheres of life. In contrast, the novels of the reference corpus all venture beyond the confines of the moral ideals of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman, as will be made clear in the following section.

## II. Moral Failings: Delineating the Contours of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman

As we have seen, the majority of the protagonists in the novels of the didactic corpus may be classified as genteel, with a strong focus on members of the lesser gentry and professional families associated with that rank. As Amanda Vickery has argued, the eighteenth century saw a "compelling dramatization of [the] traditional predicament" of what has long been considered to be a good woman, which hinges on chastity and obedience

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252 This is also evident in Edgeworth's *Belinda* through the relationship between young genteel and morally upright Belinda and her noble chaperone Lady Delacour, whom the former helps to reform in spite of their difference in age, marital status, and rank. For a more in depth discussion of the inner-workings of this unusual teacher-learner relationship, see my article on the subject (Misset 2018, 69-70).

253 Several novels centering on female protagonists in the didactic corpus also contrast virtuous and vicious young men of noble birth, such as *Evelina* and *The Nobility of the Heart*, though this is not developed here as the focus is on main characters.

254 See the discussion of Johnson's definition of "gentility" in chapter 1, I, iii.

255 It is worth noting that several novels of the didactic corpus, such as Mary Hay's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), include positive secondary characters who work in trade, which further illustrates my point.

(6). These elements are paramount to Mary Poovey's concept of the Proper Lady.<sup>256</sup> The novels of the didactic corpus also feature a masculine moral ideal which can be seen as the male counterpart to Poovey's Proper Lady, and illustrates the Lockean ideal of the gentleman, and what Margaret Anne Doody calls the True Gentleman.

Although the novels of both corpora have a strong focus on morality, and generally uphold similar sets of values as chapter 4 has shown, the novels of the reference corpus venture beyond the confines of these gendered and social ideals much more often and explicitly than those of the didactic corpus, making this a cogent criterion for the difference in the early reception of the works of these corpora. As discussed in the previous section, the female protagonists of the novels of the reference corpus have a more ambiguous relationship to gentility as a social class, in contrast to the novels of the didactic corpus. In addition, several novels of the reference corpus stage a genteel female protagonist who transgresses the imperatives of chastity and/or filial obedience. The reference corpus also portrays male characters significantly upsetting the social order, proving similarly disobedient as well as selfishly disregarding the feelings of others, contrary to the demands of the True Gentleman.

Looking at deviations from the Proper Lady and True Gentleman ideals in the novels of both corpora sheds light on the moral constraints imposed on these figures, specifically in the didactic corpus. Though the novels of both corpora have similar moral tendencies overall, the ways in which these are enacted in the narratives differ greatly, with the novels received as didactic largely staging paragons of virtue, and their counterparts in the reference corpus portraying counter-examples not to be followed. In order to study the violations to the Proper Lady and True Gentleman ideals and the ways in which these are represented and framed narratively in both corpora, this section starts by analyzing anti-Proper Lady behavior in the reference corpus (i), before delving into the instances of improper conduct in the didactic corpus (ii). The chapter ends on a discussion of the boundaries of the True Gentleman as delineated in the two corpora (iii).

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<sup>256</sup> Novels from the didactic corpus, such as Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) and Robert Bage's *Hernsprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796), notably feature genteel female characters who refuse to defy the authority of their own or their suitor's parents, however unreasonable.

### *i. Transgressing the Proper Lady Ideal in the Reference Corpus*

Many female protagonists in the reference corpus breach the moral principles of the Proper Lady. For instance, Charles Lamb's short pathetic novel *Rosamund Gray* (1798) portrays a young genteel woman dying prematurely as a direct consequence of disobedience leading to the loss of virtue. One night, Rosamund's grandmother and guardian "blessed her, and charged her to go to bed directly" as was "her customary injunction, and Rosamund had never dreamed of disobeying" (32). And yet the young woman gives into the temptation of taking a walk at night ("she thought, and thought again, till her sensations became vivid, even to painfulness—her bosom was aching to give them vent"), to relive the pleasures she had in walking outside with her friend Elinor that day (33). Rosamund is raped by "villain" Matravis, who wanted revenge for having been scorned by her and her friend Elinor, and "polluted and disgraced, [she] wandered, an abandoned thing, about the fields and meadows till day-break" (36).<sup>257</sup> She is taken in by Elinor, unable to speak. Seeing that she is not in her bed in the morning, her grandmother immediately dies while praying for her. Learning of her grandmother's death, Rosamund shortly follows her to the grave, "uncomplaining" (36).

Rosamund's rape and her subsequent death are only implicitly framed as the direct consequence of her disobedience by the sequence of events, while the narrator takes pains to paint Matravis as an unadulterated villain:

Matravis was a very ugly man. Sallow-complexioned! and, if hearts can wear that colour, his heart was sallow-complexioned also. [...] The sublime and beautiful in nature, the excellent and becoming in morals, were things placed beyond the capacity of his sensations. He loved not poetry—nor ever took a lonely walk to meditate—never beheld virtue, which he did not try to disbelieve, or female beauty and innocence, which he did not lust to contaminate. (34)

Rosamund, following Matravis's assault, is still called a "sweet maid" and "expire[s]" in the arms of Elinor—quiet, gentle, as she lived—thankful, that she died not among strangers—and expressing by signs, rather than words, a gratitude for the most trifling services, the

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<sup>257</sup> Although the question of consent, which is at the heart of our contemporary conception of rape (*OED*), does not necessarily appear in tales of "seduction" in this period, the word fits the suggestion that Matravis's actions are criminal: Rosamund is portrayed as Matravis' victim, who "had, till now, been content to be a *villain* within the limits of the law" (35, my emphasis). The assault fits the eighteenth-century definition of rape, as the heterosexual penetration of "a chaste woman usually of equal or higher social status to her assailant," amounting to the "theft" of Rosamund's chastity (Greenfield 6). This topic is further explored in chapter 7, II, i.



common offices of humanity" (36). Strikingly, Allan, Elinor's brother and Rosamund's admirer, is said to be still willing to marry her, "humbled though she was, and put to shame" (36). Rosamund is portrayed as the victim of Matravis's evil designs, and remains a beacon of female modesty ("quiet," "gentle") to the end instead of being turned into a cautionary tale for other young ladies not to disobey their guardian's orders.

And yet, Rosamund's direct transgression of the Proper Lady's imperative of filial obedience may be taken to be the reason why the novel was simply found to be moral, but not morally elevating<sup>258</sup>—especially since her disobedience leads to an actual rape, which the *Critical* reviewer of Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1813) cites as a reason why that novel falls short of the required delicacy in novels aimed at young ladies' entertainment and improvement: "As parents, we would not wish our girls even to suppose that such monstrous characters existed; much less should we wish them to take up a *religious* novel and read of *rapes*" (DBF 1811A026, author's emphasis).

Other female protagonists are more explicitly shown to violate the principles of the Proper Lady. Their narrative trajectories typify reformation plots, which Jane Spencer cites as a "didactic tradition" encouraging conformity to the patriarchal order particularly when applied to female heroines while also allowing "the development of a new and more complex treatment of female character" through a focus on her mind and her capacity for moral growth (143). Nevertheless, this type of plot occurs more often in the reference than in the didactic corpus, suggesting that the explicit representation of vice may have been a hindrance to the early reception of moral didacticism, though the aim was the same.

For example, Adeline Mowbray in the eponymous novel by Amelia Opie (1804) repeatedly endorses philosophical ideas of free love outside the bounds of marriage, and acts on them in her union with her lover Glenmurray. The latter is a thinker who also questions the institution of marriage, but understands that society is not ready for theory to be put into practice, and he urges Adeline to marry him. She refuses, in order to live in consistence with their beliefs. Although originally Adeline means to obey her mother and vows never to become a kept mistress, she eventually runs away with Glenmurray when she finds that her

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<sup>258</sup> The *Monthly* states that "in the perusal of this pathetic and interesting story, the reader, who has a mind capable of enjoying rational and moral sentiment, will find much gratification" (Raven 749).

step-father's roof is not safe for her, as her mother's new husband tries to seduce her. Adeline is repeatedly punished for her choices in the narration—she gives birth to a still-born child, Glenmurray dies just when she finally agrees to marry him, and she marries his cousin Berrendale only to be neglected and abandoned by him a young mother.

Adeline bears her trials with repentant resignation, explicitly renouncing her previous criticism of marriage, and is contentedly driven to an early grave so that she may be for her daughter "an awful warning, a melancholy proof of the dangers which attend a deviation from the path of virtue" (238). Nonetheless, I contend that her becoming a cautionary tale by the end of the novel is not enough to counterbalance the time spent in the narration on her transgressions. While the novel is not deemed immoral by the early reviewers, it may fall short of being called morally didactic because of how much time and space is devoted to Adeline's long process of falling.

Ellen Percy, the protagonist of Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814), transgresses the tenets of the Proper Lady in slightly less obvious but still very real ways. Ellen, who professes in the first chapter of this autodiegetic novel to write her story "that the perusal of it may be profitable to others," immediately presents herself as a cautionary tale, as "one who has escaped from eminent peril, to warn others of the danger in their way" (63). Although Ellen does not fall, she is portrayed as someone so used to getting her own way when a child that her unreasonable desire to see a play leads to her mother's premature death by illness (70). As an adolescent, she disobeys her mother's pious friend, who has been called by Ellen's father to help raise her, and attends a masquerade ball. She narrowly escapes being kidnapped by Lord Frederick de Burgh thanks to virtuous Mr. Maitland's attendant, and does not end up eloping with Lord Frederick only because he does not come to the rendez-vous point. Ellen starts paying attention to her mother's friend's moral lessons after this event, and eventually improves sufficiently to be worthy of becoming Mr. Maitland's wife in Scotland. Much like in *Adeline Mowbray*, a significant part of *Discipline* takes place before the moral reformation of the heroine, and portrays her failings in detail, which may explain why the novel was not received as morally didactic in spite of its explicit design to be so.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> This also applies to Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806), an epistolary novel set in aristocratic life which portrays immoral Lady Olivia's successful seduction of virtuous Lady Leonora's husband. The novel ends on the reconciliation of the married pair and the exaltation of Leonora's virtue and fortitude, but much of the

Furthermore, Ellen Percy, of genteel birth, finds herself utterly alone when her father and her guardian Mrs. Mortimer die. She finds herself traveling beyond the borders of Britain, stranded at Rotterdam for two weeks on her way to Edinburgh to become a music tutor to a young girl, but must leave when she finds that only an older brother is there to receive her, and makes her advances. She is then employed as a governess with a tyrannical mistress, eventually leaves, and is taken in by an elderly gardener's widow. There, she makes toys to sell, with no friends from her social rank and working for her bread, before finding again Mr. Maitland—actually called Henry Graham—through his sister, marrying him and living in a castle in an idyllic Highland glen. In addition to being less than obedient and in danger of losing her virtue for close to half of the novel, Ellen also briefly falls below her social station, away from the close social ties which mark genteel life—all of which contravenes to the ideal of the Proper Lady.

Finally, in Eaton Stannard Barrett's satirical novel *The Heroine* (1813), the middle-class protagonist eventually repents her folly and is rewarded with marriage to virtuous Robert Stuart, who has actually been to "college" and worked in the army, suggesting a gentleman's education and profession (84). Cherry's class prejudice against her father, an "honest farmer" who only ever entertains at dinner "a farmer or the Parson," nonetheless refuses him the moral and social status of gentleman, contrary to Agnes' merchant father in Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* from the didactic corpus (10, 13). This is why Cherry is classified as middle class rather than gentry in Table 25, and her rejection of her birth throughout most of the novel may explain why, in spite of the conclusion of her story as a cautionary tale against irrational novel reading, the work was not received as morally didactic by early reviewers. Indeed, her desire to rise above her given station may be seen as an attempt to upstage the social hierarchy. She also clearly disobeys her father by running away, and further transgresses the virtue of filial obedience and respect by renouncing him and leaving him to be imprisoned in Bedlam.

These examples suggest that in spite of these novels' tendency to uphold the moral ideal of the Proper Lady, the explicit portrayal of protagonists breaching the boundaries of

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novel is devoted to the portrayal of Lady Olivia's vicious tendencies and schemes in her own voice, which may also have been deemed too inappropriate to warrant the novel being called positively morally didactic.

acceptable behavior, for instance through reformation narratives, may be the reason why early reviewers did not view them as didactic. In the case of *Discipline* and *The Heroine*, homodiegetic narration and epistolary form give direct access to the inner-lives of the flawed characters, amplifying the force of the depiction by creating a sense of subjective authenticity (Altman 6).<sup>260</sup>

## ii. *The Limits of the Proper Lady in the Didactic Corpus*

Transgressions to the Proper Lady tenets of chastity and filial obedience also appear in several novels of the didactic corpus, but these are framed quite differently from the occurrences found in the novels of the reference corpus. As Mary Poovey and Katherine Rogers have stressed, women in the period were valued primarily in terms of chastity (Poovey 6; Rogers 9). The necessity of sexual purity affected women much more than men, a fact which Mary Wollstonecraft deplores in her *Vindication for the Rights of Woman*, calling for a renewed vision of modesty anchored in not only chastity but also reason, and equally extended to both sexes (155). Chastity refers primarily to "purity from unlawful sexual intercourse," including a chaste unmarried women with no sexual experience as well as married women and mothers whose sexual activity is sanctioned by marriage.<sup>261</sup> Gender is crucial to the concept, female infidelity being seen as a threat to the social order, while male infidelity was morally condemned but not nearly to the same extent (Poovey 6, Rogers 9).<sup>262</sup>

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260 Lisa Wood associates an emphasis on individual experience and subjectivity to radical novels of the period, for instance through epistolary form (74). This is certainly true in Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman* (1798) where a number of first-person narratives, oral or epistolary, co-exist to dramatize the novel's point on structural gender inequality. *Discipline* and *The Heroine* are both conservative novels, yet arguably the use of personal voice participated in their not having been received as didactic by early reviewers, and the didactic corpus features significantly fewer epistolary and homodiegetic narratives than the reference corpus (Lanser 18). Nonetheless, epistolary form and homodiegetic narration are not inimical to early didactic reception, as the presence of Burney's *Evelina* (1778) and More's *Cælebs* (1808) in the didactic corpus illustrates. Narrative content therefore seems to have taken precedence over form for reviewers in perceiving moral didacticism, though heterodiegetic narration appears as its more common vehicle, as discussed in chapter 5.

261 "Chastity, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/30924](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/30924). Accessed 17 May 2022.

262 This double standard is visible for instance in Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810, didactic corpus) and Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806, reference corpus), where married men who have dalliances are permitted to return to their wives and enjoy domestic harmony following their reformation, while the mistresses—who were not themselves married, and only participated in the men's infidelity—are at best banished overseas (Lady Olivia in *Leonora*) and at worst suffer an early death (Lady Isabella in *Romance Readers and Romance Writers*).

Margaret, from the satirical novel *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), transgresses this value and falls, taking a lover as a result of reading too many lascivious French romances. Aside from falling, she also doubly contravenes social norms in fancying herself in love with Phelim O'Gurfy, who would be above her pretensions if her belief that he is secretly a prince were founded, and is below them in his actual status as a worker on her uncle's farm. However, Margaret is not the sole protagonist of *Romance Readers and Romance Writers*. Her virtuous and sensible sister Mary provides a positive role model for readers in conjunction with Margaret's negatively instructive role as a cautionary tale, which I contend is the reason this novel was originally received as morally didactic, in spite of its explicit portrayal of a fallen woman.

Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801) features a fallen woman as sole protagonist, Agnes.<sup>263</sup> Yet, in contrast to the eponymous character in *Adeline Mowbray*, written by the same author but not perceived as explicitly didactic by early reviewers, Agnes has already fallen by the beginning of the novel, and the tale of what she believes to be an elopement where marriage never actually materializes is relatively short, amounting to less than one sixth of the narrative. Moreover, Agnes is presented as a victim of rake Clifford, who gradually convinces her to leave her town with him under the pretense of marrying in Scotland, meticulously twisting her father's words and leading her to disobey him, as she has been instructed to "never see Mr. Clifford more, if [she] can avoid it" (12). Agnes's eyes are opened to Clifford's treachery when she overhears two men discussing his known libertine ways and upcoming marriage with an heiress, while he has been pretending to delay marrying Agnes so as not to affront his own father, whose life he pretends is in danger upon hearing about a private marriage between Clifford and Agnes. The men whom Agnes overhears express pity for her as his "favourite mistress," but "a girl who was worthy of a

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<sup>263</sup> The fallen woman in literature refers to female characters that willingly or unwillingly engage in sexual activity with a man outside of the bounds of marriage. This character type is often associated with Victorian literature, as Gretchen Braun discusses in her article "Untarnished purity": Ethics, Agency, and the Victorian Fallen Woman: "[f]or a female Victorian literary character, maidenly demise is preferable to sexual fall, and should physical chastity be compromised before marriage, an outcast state—from respectable society and perhaps even from God's grace—is inevitable. A lonely and early death often follows" (342). Fallen women appear in many earlier English novels, however, with authors such as Eliza Haywood and Delarivier Manley including such protagonists in the early eighteenth century (Spencer 122). By the turn of the nineteenth century, the fallen woman was established as a literary type in British novels, as Eleanor Ty and Andrew McInnes' discussions of Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* and Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* suggest (Ty 1998: 134, McInnes 88).

better fate" (37). Agnes is not only framed as a victim of manipulation—as opposed to Adeline who willfully follows an erroneous path advised against by everyone around her, including her lover—but also spends the rest of the novel looking for her father and caring for him when she finds him mad with grief over his loss of her. She nurses him for years until he finally recognizes his daughter on his deathbed, and she almost immediately follows him to the grave.

Agnes's reformation is enacted from the beginning of the novel rather than the end, when the character exclaims "Would to God I had never left [my father's habitation]!" and introduces the cautionary tale of her seduction with only a promise of marriage, never fulfilled (1). Although Agnes does not have a positive double to counterbalance the cautionary tale like Margaret in *Romance Readers*, the narrative focuses on the heroine's pathetic and arduous path to redemption, rather than the process of falling and realizing her mistake.

In addition, the virtue of chastity may extend beyond the question of actual sexual experience to include the suppression of desire and its positive expression—women could only respond to a man's interest in them, not express their own unprompted (Rogers 11). It is this expanded definition of chastity that the heroines of Helen Maria William's *Julia, A Novel* (1790) and Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) transgress. Both heroines feel desire for men who have not yet declared themselves, and in the case of *Julia*, the man is engaged to the protagonist's cousin and close friend. Julia does not express this desire to Frederick Seymour; he eventually reveals his to her, and is punished for it, dying soon after the death of his child by his wife Charlotte: "Such was the fate of this unfortunate young man, who fell the victim of that fatal passion, which he at first unhappily indulged, and which he was at length unable to subdue" (156). Julia fares better, as her life is embittered but not shortened by the recollection of her illicit passion for Frederick, since she manages to subdue it and find "consolation in the duties of religion, the exercise of benevolence, and the society of persons of understanding and merit" (158). Though she has partly failed the precepts of the Proper Lady, Julia ultimately embodies modesty and self-denial, central qualities of this feminine ideal.

The fact that Julia does not marry has been interpreted as a victory over the Burkean paradigm and patriarchal order, given Frederick's own fate, the lack of happy marriages in the novel, and the survival of Julia and Charlotte's friendship in spite of it all (Ty 1993: 80-1).<sup>264</sup> Nonetheless, it may also be seen as a result of the illicit passion which still looms over her life, denying her a happy domestic ending, implying that chastity of heart as well as of body may be required to become a wife. The author explicitly frames her novel as a cautionary tale, which supports this interpretation, and may explain why the early reviewers took no issue with the portrayal of Julia's transgression—especially as it remains a transgression of the mind only:

THE purpose of these pages is to trace the danger arising from the uncontrolled indulgence of strong affections; not in those instances where they lead to the guilty excesses of passion in a corrupted mind—but, when disapproved by reason, and uncircumscribed by prudence, they involve even the virtuous in calamity; since, under the dominion of passion, if the horror of remorse may be avoided, misery at least is inevitable; and, though we do not become the slaves of vice, we must yield ourselves the victims of sorrow. (2)

Emma Courtney's expression of desire is more explicitly subversive, in that she actually expresses her desire to Augustus Harley, which he does not clearly reciprocate (although he later confesses the love he has repressed), because he is in fact already secretly married. Emma dies an early death, presented in the preface as a direct consequence of her illicit passion for Harley, since the novel professes to trace "the consequences of one strong, indulged, passion" (3). Emma's husband and child also die prematurely, leaving only Harley's orphaned son, the recipient of the memoirs and Emma's ward while she lived, to hopefully redeem his father and guardian's moral failings. The preface and the narrative framing of the memoir doubly affirm the cautionary nature of Emma's tale, as she enjoins Harvey to "learn, then, from the incidents of [her] life, entangled with those of his to whom [he] owe[s] [his] existence, a more striking and affecting lesson than abstract philosophy can ever afford" (9), which arguably counterbalance the breach of gendered decorum of which Emma Courtney is guilty in the tale.

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<sup>264</sup> This notion is developed further in chapter 7.

In these last three novels, the erring heroines are shown as victims of passion or deceit, and yet punished for their transgressions in spite of being shown to be repentant, with great pains being taken to frame their stories as cautionary tales. In light of the narrative treatment of erring ladies from the novels of the reference corpus, it may be claimed that the portrayals of these heroines focused on their status as repentant victims in cautionary tales is part of the reason why the novels were originally received as morally didactic. Moreover, though *Julia* and *Emma Courtney* feature protagonists who subvert the expectations of female chastity, reflecting the radical political leanings of their authors, their transgressions are not physically enacted through illicit sexual intercourse. Though transgressions of all kinds are punished narratively in the novels of both corpora deemed morally sound by early reviewers, they must not exceed certain bounds to be included in novels received as didactic.

In Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* (1805), Angelica and Lord Vallency suffer trials before settling on their comparatively humble domestic life given their rank and fortune, as Vallency persuades Angelica to marry him in secret, while her noble birth has yet to be legally ascertained, because his father has forbidden him in his will to marry any other noblewoman than one who dies over the course of the novel, and whom Vallency does not love. The couple therefore openly disobey Vallency's father, in violation of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman. Much like Agnes, Angelica's consent to secrecy is portrayed as hard-won by her suitor, who however in this case has perfectly virtuous and honorable intentions. Their actions are pardoned by Angelica's aunt and uncle first, proper figures of authority for the orphan Angelica. They "condem[n] highly the absurd prejudice of [Vallency's] father, in making so unnatural a will," and are "so much struck with his generosity of conduct, as to look with anxiety for the return of this noble, disinterested young man" (Vol. III, Chapter 15). This may denote a double standard in the treatment of disobedience in men and in women, mirroring that existing in breaches of chastity, and explain why the novel was nevertheless received as morally instructive.

Moreover, although Angelica and Vallency's secret marriage comes to be accepted by their respective families and is professed to be happy, domestic, and virtuous, they both almost die of a fever before enjoying domestic happiness, and Vallency loses his mother to



an illness which she contracts while he is sent to war. Disobedience, although it ultimately pays, comes at a price, and leads to the married couple living a virtuous but not unmitigatedly happy life in the country. They lose a son, and Vallery is often called away in the army, with the possibility of his death looming with each absence. Arguably, Angelica and Vallery's moral fault in disobeying Vallery's father brought them closer to the greater austerity of a moral middle-class life, which the quote from Hannah More before the closing sentences of the novel illustrates:

The rank Vallery held in the army was too elevated to make him seek a retreat.  
The claims of his country he held sacred, consequently there were moments  
when Angelica deeply felt

"That life's bright sun is dimm'd by clouded view,  
"And who have most to love, have most to lose."

H. MORE. (Vol. III, Chapter 21)

More is viewed as an active participant in "the emergence of the culture of purposeful energy and earnest moralism known by the convenient shorthand of 'Victorianism,'" and a quote by her at the novel's conclusion firmly anchors it in that ethos (Stott xi).

Two novels of the didactic corpus feature heroines who openly defy a tenet of the Proper Lady, and they are also the two novels that received one positive and one negative review on moral grounds upon first publication, emphasizing the link between the adherence to this feminine ideal and early reception. In Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811), Laura Montreville refuses to marry Hargrave after he suggests early in the novel that she become his kept mistress, and stands fast in spite of his subsequent repeated proposals of marriage and her father's vocal approval, who repeats his desire to see his daughter married on his deathbed. Although Laura does not clearly disobey her father in the sense that he never orders her to marry Hargrave, she is still seen going her own way in spite of her parent's express wishes, which the reviewer from the *Critical* criticizes at length (*DBF* 1811A026).

Laura also starts working to earn her bread when she and her father are in dire financial straits in London, which comes after she has refused Hargrave's proposals put to her father. Her lack of filial obedience and her refusal to accept a suitor of respectable birth and fortune therefore lead to the heroine willfully lowering herself socially by associating with

the commercial and working-class, although the skill she uses to do so, painting, is decidedly genteel.<sup>265</sup> Laura thus transgresses several elements dear to the ideal of the Proper Lady, including obedience, self-denial, and a clear genteel lifestyle, which may explain why only one review was overall positive.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), far from being the only novel of the corpus written by a political radical, is the most obviously revolutionary, as it openly endorses divorce, and not only in extreme cases of abuse:

The marriage state is certainly that in which women, generally speaking, can be most useful; but I am far from thinking that a woman, once married, ought to consider the engagement as indissoluble (especially if there be no children to reward her for sacrificing her feelings) in case her husband merits neither her love, nor esteem. (139)

These words are spoken by Maria's uncle and guardian before his death, the character's gender, age, and wealth conferring a great degree of authority to the statement. Maria justifies her relationship with fellow detainee Darnford at the insane asylum where she has been imprisoned by her husband precisely because she cannot esteem him ("I despised the man," 171). She pleads guilty to the charge of adultery in court, owning her *de facto* condition of fallen woman. Although the ending is open-ended given that Wollstonecraft left various fragments of possible conclusions for her unfinished work, the author clearly supports the views on divorce expressed by the protagonist and her uncle, writing in the preface "I cannot suppose any situation more distressing, than for a woman of sensibility, with an improving mind, to be bound to such a man as I have described for life" (67).

Maria's conduct therefore openly defies several tenets of the Proper Lady, such as chastity, modesty, self-denial, and obedience (to her husband, at least), which is striking in the context of the didactic corpus. The *Monthly* reviewer's comment that, had Wollstonecraft lived to finish her novel, "its moral effect or utility would not, we apprehend, have been at all increased" is completely in line with the centrality of the ideal of the Proper Lady which is evident in the novels of the corpus (Raven 765). Interestingly, the positive review from the

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<sup>265</sup> Sarah Green cites painting as a valuable occupation for a genteel lady in her conduct book (*Mental Improvement* 37). Drawing or painting are regularly cited as accomplishments in young ladies of the didactic corpus, such as Emma Courtney, Belinda, Angelica in *Nobility*, and Caroline in *Patronage*. In *Pride and Prejudice*, drawing is included in Miss Bingley's extensive list of attributes said to define "an accomplished woman," which Elizabeth considers too exacting a standard (32).

*Critical* which claims that "Mrs. Godwin's particular *forte* was novel-writing," which they define as producing tales "of interest and intellect, leading to important lessons in life," hinges on Wollstonecraft's "richness of imagery in portraying the passions, and especially the distress of certain situations," focusing on artistry and leaving out the substance of the lessons to be learned (Raven 764, author's emphasis).<sup>266</sup> In spite of the *Critical's* more conservative reputation, reviewers who were sympathetic to revolutionary causes may have existed, or ones not very attentive to the political content of novels, which may explain this unexpectedly laudatory review in terms of "lessons in life" to be learned.

### *iii. Beyond the True Gentleman*

Representations of masculine conduct reinforce the difference between the two corpora in the ways in which the True Gentleman and his negative double are portrayed. Much like female characters must epitomize the Proper Lady or contravene its principles only peripherally and suffer the consequences for a novel to be received as didactic, male characters in the novels of the reference corpus transgress the ideal of the True Gentleman in important ways. As demonstrated in section I, ii of this chapter, the notion of "gentleman" is explored largely in its moral dimension in the novels of the didactic corpus, with characters embodying gentlemanly values despite having more ambivalent ties to the gentry as a social class than their female counterparts. In these novels, the male protagonists exemplify positive versions of the True Gentleman, always affiliated to the upper social classes—albeit in more variegated ways than the Proper Lady. On the other hand, the novels of the reference corpus feature male protagonists who contravene the moral values of the True Gentleman, underscoring the validity of the portrayal of proper gentility as a discriminating factor between the two corpora.

Three novels portray a genteel male protagonist who materially transgresses at least one moral virtue of the True Gentleman, such as self-control, humility, and "sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others," epitomized by Samuel Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison (Doody 242, 246). The novels in question are Gregory Lewis Way's epistolary novel *Learning at a Loss, or The Amours of Mr. Pedant and Miss Hartley* (1778), George Walker's satirical anti-Jacobin novel *The Vagabond* (1799), and William Godwin's *Fleetwood, or The New Man of*

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<sup>266</sup> The importance of composition in the early reviews is discussed in chapter 1, I, ii.

*Feeling* (1805), intended to realistically portray the life of a university-educated gentleman (xv).

The only novel of the reference corpus to have received an unmistakably negative review, which has already been quoted several times, is Way's *Learning at a Loss*. It is also the one novel which egregiously transgresses the virtues of magnanimity and humility, with the two young lovers Mr. Easy and Miss Hartley marrying paying absolutely no mind to Miss Hartley's father's lack of consent to the match. The names of the male characters, Easy and Pedant, reflect their one-dimensional characterization, and are reminiscent of the archetypes found in the Christian allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). Mr. Pedant is described by Easy as a dull man only interested in the classics, belonging to

the Set of the most erudite, insolent, awkward, uncivilized Animals that ever honoured an University, or disgraced all other Parts of a Kingdom. In Regard to the History of the Day, or how the World goes, as we say; their Ignorance of present Occurrences is equalled by nothing but their thorough Acquaintance with the statesmen, Warriours, and Demireps of Antiquity. (Letter from Mr. Easy to Mr. Melmoth, Vol. I, 96-7)

The novel does not provide a refutation of this brazenly satirical portrayal, and Miss Hartley's father's continued interest in Pedant marrying his daughter, in spite of Pedant's own clear lack of interest in the match turns Mr. Hartley into an object of ridicule as well (Mr. Hartley had to "tal[k] him over, and persuad[e] him," Vol. II, 115). Moreover, Miss Hartley and Mr. Easy elope, leading to Mr. Pedant simply leaving without a word. The novel ends on Mr. Easy describing Mr. Hartley's reaction before stating that "All's well that ends well" (Vol. II, 163):

This piques the old Gentleman, who begins at last to open his Eyes a little and perceive what a Fool he has been. And so, considering as he says, that What is done cannot be undone, he resolves to put the best Face upon Things, and make up his Mind as well as he can about it, before he sees us (Vol. II, 162)

Easy's irreverence towards his father-in-law illustrates a complete disregard for social norms, and particularly for a daughter's obedience to her father, in stark contrast to the remorse coupled with the almost deadly consequences which attend a similar offense in *The Nobility of the Heart* from the didactic corpus, as discussed in the previous section.

In Walker's *The Vagabond*, we first meet the young protagonist of gentle birth Frederick Fentel as a robber. He explains that his parents

have great landed possessions, that is, are great tyrants, in the county of Kent. They educated me in all the superstitions of the Protestant church, and my whole study was to conform to their desires, and restrain my wishes to the line of what they called rectitude and religion. (7-8)

The upbringing he describes is a genteel one, on a country estate, and stresses the importance of self-control, religious belief, and filial obligation.<sup>267</sup> He was also taught that learning was "the greatest object of human attainment," before realizing that "profound ignorance is the real and only state in which men can enjoy felicity" (8). *The Vagabond* was written with the explicit aim of discrediting what was called the New Philosophy. Walker situates the latter primarily in "the doctrines of Godwin, Hume, Rousseau, &c.," which he calls "inimical" (vi). The *Critical* reviewer supports the anti-Jacobin sentiments which abound in this satire ("we approve of Mr. Walker's views"), but takes issue with the "extravagance" and "absurdity" of the tale and the author's interpretation of the philosophers cited in the preface ("such perversions as are not deducible from the principles of Rousseau or Hume" Raven 805). I contend that Frederick's transgression of the ideal of the proper gentleman is paramount to the critic's judgment.

Frederick acts contrary to the True Gentleman in several ways, starting with his complete break with his genteel family legacy, going far beyond disobedience and doing away with any possibility of filial friendship, utterly lacking humility or self-control. He also seduces the young daughter of a farmer, Amelia, completely disregarding her feelings, which he hardly mentions. He frames the seduction as a competition with Amelia's other suitor, as well as proof that the free love doctrine preached by his mentor is valid on philosophical grounds. He states that "I had not only supplanted him, but even gained those favours he durst not in idea think of: a glorious superiority of truth, and the new morality" (24). Frederick shows no regard for the social repercussions that the relationship may have for Amelia, in addition to the absence of self-control or humility in courting someone who has

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<sup>267</sup> Though not part of Doody's definition of the True Gentleman, filial obedience is considered paramount to the upbringing of a proper gentleman by Locke. Locke does not suggest that gentlemen should always blindly obey their fathers, since "every man must some time or other be trusted to himself and his own conduct" (28). Nevertheless, he advocates for filial obedience in childhood so that the son may be the "affectionate friend" to the father in adulthood, which Frederick in *The Vagabond* evidently resists (27).

already attracted a suitor. He justifies his action thus: "Had I attended to the old-fashioned doctrine of honour, I might have refrained from desiring the girl myself; but our enjoyments are very transient in this world, and none but fools will think of the next" (23). Frederick consequently violates just about every tenet of the True Gentleman, not least the moral ideal's anchor in Christian values, which he openly scorns (Doody 246).

Moreover, Frederick proves to have a perverted sense of reason, as illustrated for example in the following scene, where a farm is on fire, with the young woman whom he has seduced and her family inside:

My father, without any reflection, darted up the flaming stairs, and descended with the two little boys in his arms; in doing which, he was considerably scorched. Meanwhile, I snatched a ladder from one of the men, with intention to rescue Amelia, who had been sleeping in her room, and now appeared terrified at the window. I was going to apply the ladder, when part of the roof fell into the room where her father was employed, and drove him to the window in danger of suffocation.

In this dilemma it was impossible to save both: —'Were Stupeo [Frederick's mentor in new philosophy] here,' cried I, 'he would tell which is the most deserving of life; but I shall commit some injustice, if I save the life of the one with the lesser merit, ('Let go the ladder,' cried several; 'why do you keep it useless?'). (31-32)

Both Amelia and her father die in consequence of Frederick's indecision, and his ability to reason and act upon his reasoning, a key virtue of the Lockean gentleman, appears clearly compromised in the disconnect between his decision to take the time to reflect "calmly" in a situation which demands a swift decision, and prevents others from making such a crucial decision—"I was calmly proceeding, in spite of the struggles of the men to wrest the ladder from me" (32).

Godwin's Fleetwood also fails in his ability to reason, and is manipulated into feeling unjust extreme jealousy for his wife, leading him to legally file for "a divorce and the illegitimizing [his] unborn child" (331). *Fleetwood's* autodiegetic narrator mentions his own "sick imagination" which fuels his jealousy, the metaphor of disease suggesting that his mental faculties have been overpowered (295). Taking legal actions against his wife moreover has very concrete repercussions for her reputation, willfully turning her into a fallen woman in the eyes of the world. Given the importance of the virtue of chastity for women,

Fleetwood compromising his wife's reputation in such a way emphasizes the injustice of the proceedings, and a lack of generosity and consideration for her feelings and needs. In these three novels, the genteel male protagonists repeatedly prove themselves ungentlemanly in their conduct, and the fact that Frederick Fenton and Fleetwood eventually see the error of their ways and repent does not counterbalance the extent of their transgressions, especially in the amount of narrative space devoted to them.<sup>268</sup>

In fact, both novels are homodiegetic narrations, portraying in great detail with no counterbalancing perspective their moral failings. Other novels of the reference corpus, though centering on a perfectly virtuous woman of genteel or noble birth, similarly devote much time to the portrayal of vicious men of their social class, using different narrative devices. For instance, epistolary novels allow for detailed first-person accounts of one's vices, as mentioned in the previous section, though they may be offset by the perspectives of other correspondents. Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792) and Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806), both of which center the eponymous female protagonists, give the readers access to the thought process of rake Coke Clifton, who relentlessly pursues Anna and even holds her hostage before eventually repenting, and Mr. L., Lady Leonora's husband, who misunderstands his wife's feelings for him and momentarily takes a mistress. In both cases, domestic felicity is secured for the female protagonist, who has shown in her plight great fortitude and self-control, proving herself a worthy illustration of the Proper Lady. However, the violations of the masculine ideal are portrayed at length through the epistolary form, granting them tremendous narrative weight.<sup>269</sup> In Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788), the continual pursuit of the eponymous heroine by her high-born cousin drives much of the narrative, and though the heterodiegetic narration does not give us access to the assailant's thoughts, his transgressions of the True Gentleman are central in the text, rather than peripheral.<sup>270</sup>

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268 In both cases, repentance occurs very late in the narration, after their moral transgressions have taken center stage for the vast majority of the story.

269 Violation of the feminine ideal is also openly explored in the character of Lady Olivia in *Leonora*, as mentioned in section II, i of this chapter.

270 The extensive portrayal of Hargrave's merciless pursuit of Laura in *Self-Control* from the didactic corpus, including kidnapping and imprisonment like in *Anna St. Ives*, may likewise explain the negative review it garnered, explicitly on the grounds of Hargrave's characterization as a rapist, as has already been quoted. Maria's husband in *Wrongs of Woman* is also reminiscent of the Gothic villain, attempting first to sell his wife's sexual favors to another man before eventually confining her to an asylum. Transgressions to the True Gentleman ideal remain much more implicit in the novels of the didactic corpus which received only positive early reviews, or less explicitly vicious. For instance, Wickham's rakish behavior with Georgiana

The narrative trajectories of the erring and repenting genteel ladies of the novels discussed in the previous section is mirrored in these examples, further supporting the claim that explicit and extensive anti-Proper-Lady-and-True-Gentleman behavior disqualifies novels from being considered morally didactic, even if they uphold similar values as the novels received as such. Moreover, unlike in the novels of the didactic corpus, the male protagonists of the novels of the reference corpus who are not clearly members of the gentry upset rather than reinforce the cultural and moral ideal of the proper gentleman. The cases of lower-class characters such as Caleb Williams in Godwin's first novel and Henry from Inchbald's *Nature and Art* have already been shown to fully disconnect moral virtue from fashionable society, in stark opposition to the notion of the proper gentleman, which combines both moral and social respectability (see chapter 6, I, ii).

In Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791), it is unclear who the main protagonist is due to the story being divided in two. The first half focuses on Catholic priest Mr. Dorriforth and his relationship with his frivolous ward Miss Milner; the second half takes place seventeen years later after Mr. Dorriforth has become Lord Elmwood and was relieved of his priestly duties, allowing him to marry Miss Milner. Miss Milner, now Lady Elmwood, is unfaithful to her husband while he is in the West Indies for three years, and dies while her legitimate daughter is still a child. The rest of the novel centers on the strained relationship between Lord Elmwood and his daughter, who is much more properly submissive than her mother was, and the only main character of the novel to fit a moral ideal, namely that of the Proper Lady. Aristocrat Lord Elmwood is portrayed through most of the novel as austere and unreasonably intractable, and while this does not make him vicious, neither does it align him with the concept of the Proper Gentleman.

Finally, while Henry in Richard Cumberland's novel of the same name fits the moral ideal of the True Gentleman, for instance in his generosity and his ability to withstand temptation through reason, he is an illegitimate child, which legally positions him at the

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Darcy and Lydia Bennet in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, though central to the resolution of the marriage plot, is left at the margins of the text, recounted briefly but not explicitly dramatized. In Edgeworth's *Belinda*, Mr. Vincent has one single serious vice in gambling, which disqualifies him as a future husband for the heroine. This moral flaw is explicitly portrayed in dramatic scenes (389-392), but he is otherwise portrayed as in every way the True Gentleman, having "magnanimous" pride and particularly prizing "honour and generosity" (199).



border of the social fabrics, unable to officially inherit any wealth (Zunshine 2). His mother Lady Crowbery, the only daughter of baronet Sir Andrew, was forbidden by her father to see the man she loved, on account of him being a second son in a noble family, and therefore liable to be in need of financial support. The two young people decided to travel to Gretna Green to elope, but were overtaken on their way by Sir Andrew, "too soon for the completion of the ceremony, too late for the rescue of her innocence" (part 1: 230). It may therefore be surmised that making the hero an illegitimate son who is lifted to the station he would have held had he been legitimate, and marries to enjoy domestic happiness, is at least in part responsible for the *Critical* reviewer pronouncing the novel well-intentioned, but morally "very blameable" (Raven 637), as it implies that a woman of high birth need not be chaste for her children to come into their inheritance, imperiling the social order of the paternal line (Poovey 5).<sup>271</sup>

## Conclusion

The early reception of moral didacticism, investigated through the prism of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman, thus reveals that the moral values and social rank associated with these ideals of femininity and masculinity must coincide in order for novels to be considered as morally instructive. The difference between the two corpora enacted in the narrative trajectory of protagonists moreover supports Lisa Wood's claim that didactic novels relied on plot "to inculcate particular morals" (68). Although the novels of both corpora overwhelmingly espouse similar moral values, these are largely dramatized in the form of genteel exemplars in the didactic corpus, whereas the novels of the reference corpus foreground characters which are shown to deviate much more explicitly and significantly from the ideals of the Proper Lady and True Gentleman, often through the use of

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<sup>271</sup> Lisa Zunshine insists on the gendered nature of the stigma of illegitimacy in its fictional representations, claiming that "lost male children, such as Tom Jones and Humphrey Clinker, were allowed to stay illegitimate," while female foundlings in the period were almost without fail ultimately discovered to have been legitimate all along, with Burney's Evelina and Smith's Emmeline cited as examples (8). She moreover notes that illegitimacy in the aristocracy was historically not a barrier to subsequent wealth, marriage, and status for either female or male bastards, but that "the overwhelming majority of eighteenth-century fictional bastards either came from this sprawling social stratum [of the middle class], or, importantly, *expressed its views*" (3, author's emphasis). Henry's inheritance and marriage in spite of his illegitimacy may therefore be seen as historically accurate given his mother's social status, but inimical to the moral standards that the novels of the didactic corpus appear to espouse, which often prove closer to middle-class rather than aristocratic values embodied by genteel protagonists, as discussed in section I of this chapter.

homodiegetic narration or epistolary form. This chapter highlights a deep-seated concern with a particular ideal of the nation tied to the importance of reinforcing social decorum, with characters remaining within the proper bounds of their own station, and may indicate a counter-revolutionary fear of social order being upended, even if in actual fact the boundaries between social classes were murky, as the novels of the reference corpus portray much more realistically than those of the didactic corpus. The link between the early reception of moral didacticism and the national ideal is further explored in the following chapter.

## Chapter 7. The Geography of Moral Didacticism

### Introduction

The early reception of moral didacticism, with its emphasis on proper genteel morality and behavior, appears closely tied to a certain conception of the nation, supportive of the traditional social hierarchy while also upholding moral values which have come to be associated with the coming Victorian period. This parallels prevalent anti-revolutionary sentiments in Britain following the revolutionary period in France, which may seem paradoxical given that a number of novels from the didactic corpus were penned by radicals such as Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams or Mary Wollstonecraft. Nevertheless, the portrayal of English gentility unifies the otherwise variegated novels of the corpus and illustrates what William Warner has identified as a process of nationalization of narrative fiction in Britain in the nineteenth century, departing from the more pan-European nature of the circulation of novels in the previous century (20). The corpora under study in this dissertation span the turn of the nineteenth century and may illustrate the foundations of the novel genre's development as "a distinct expression of the nation" and "of middle-class (democratic, Protestant) culture" in nineteenth-century Britain (20-1).

Aside from portraying a moral ideal of female and male gentility compatible with that of the growing middle class, the novels of the didactic corpus are also strikingly Anglo-centric in their plots, circumscribing this model within specific geographical borders. Primary narrative setting within the British Isles was one of the criteria for inclusion in both corpora, making the difference among the two sets of novels in the treatment of geographical locations all the more striking. As Fiona Stafford claims, the writings of the Romantic period participate in constructing and shaping the notion of Britishness, accentuated by historical events such as the Napoleonic wars (96). She also argues that "the local was foundational to any larger sense of Englishness or Britishness," which is precisely what we find in the novels of the didactic corpus. "Britishness" and "Englishness" are often used interchangeably or conflated in some way, and the difference between them is not always easy to pinpoint (Kumar viii; MacPhee and Poddar 5; Parrinder 18). This is reflected in

my use of Edmund Burke's thought on the traditional national order in this chapter, in spite of my favoring the term Englishness over Britishness, for reasons which I give below.<sup>272</sup>

Importantly, "the terms 'British' and 'English' are at some deep level opposed to a European identity that is conceived of as distinct and alien" today, an opposition which very much applies to the novels of the didactic corpus, as this chapter will show (MacPhee and Poddar 2). Still, Britishness may be understood as more inclusive than Englishness, making room for the Celtic nations of the union, though never unproblematically (2). As Linda Colley argues, the concept of "Britishness" was invented in the eighteenth century, in the context of continual war with various continental nations and growing colonial expansion (5). Rather than subsuming the older regional and national cultures making up the political entity of Great Britain, Britishness "was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other" (6). Though Colley resists the notion of "an English 'core' imposing its cultural and political hegemony on a helpless and defrauded Celtic periphery," the distinction remains useful in the context of my study, with didactic novels centering Englishness over Scottishness, Welshness, and indeed Britishness in important ways (6). I consequently use the concept of Englishness in a postcolonial perspective which understands that "Englishness, far from emerging from a body of stable values and shared experiences, ha[s] been produced by a continuous conflict between the center and its Celtic and colonial peripheries" (Gikandi xvii). As we will see, this geographical positioning of Englishness as the national center in Gikandi's postcolonial theory is strikingly evident in the novels of the didactic corpus.<sup>273</sup>

According to Robert Tally Jr., "the last few decades have witnessed a profound reassertion of space in humanities, as matters of space, place, and mapping have come to the forefront of critical discussions of literature and culture," after having long been eclipsed by the centrality of "the discourse of time, history, and teleological development" (1). Jean-Paul

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<sup>272</sup> Mary Brunton and Maria Edgeworth are examples of "national" writers of Scottish and Irish tales whose works sometimes lean toward a greater sense of Englishness, reflected in those included in the didactic corpus. This gives credence to Patrick Parrinder's notion of the English novel's affiliation to the "cultural nation," as opposed to the "political nation officially known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" (18). The centrality of England within the cultural nation is at times portrayed in fiction by authors "of Welsh, Scottish, Irish, or more distant origin" (18).

<sup>273</sup> Robert Tally Jr. stresses the importance of postcolonial approaches to the inception and development of the "spatial turn," centering concerns of space and spatiality (2).

Forster argues that representation of space is an integral part of the development of the novel as a genre of English fiction as opposed to the largely place-less romance (103), but he seems to take the relationship between fictional characters and geographical mobility as unproblematic, as an illustration of the increasing mobility of people of all classes at the time (225). The representation of geographical mobility in the novels of the didactic corpus tells quite a different story however, which evidently stems from the question of gender. Forster almost exclusively discusses male authors and characters, and tellingly refers to the generic writer and protagonist as "he" (25, 184).

Following the study of my two corpora, I agree that "the eighteenth-century representations of geographical space, but not only the literary ones, highlight two of the most basic concerns of the century: people's movements and their occupation of the soil" (225). However, far from mirroring an increasing and unencumbered ability to travel in the society of the time, I contend that the kind of mobility found in the novels of the didactic corpus value stasis within concrete and specific location over wanderings through abstract, "undifferentiated space" (Tuan 3, 6), and that defined places symbolically represent and reinforce a sense of Englishness rooted in genteel land ownership, prefiguring the idealization of "the tranquil and picturesque English village that was perpetuated in prose fiction from the 1820s onwards" (Parrinder 147). Much like geographical borders in Walter Scott's historical novels have been viewed as a critical means to "separate the outdated Highlands and their medieval-like rituals from the more commercial and intellectual Lowlands, the seat of learned universities," the novels of the didactic corpus clearly position the English country estate as a structuring element of the narrative, symbolizing the stability of proper genteel Englishness (Sabiron 207 in *Literature and Geography*). Strikingly, these novels largely obviate other types of space, in contrast to those of the reference corpus, which have a much greater propensity to stage a contrast between place and space.

This observation mirrors Franco Moretti's in relation to Austen's novels, noting the absence of the "Celtic periphery" or the industrial north as narrative settings (1998: 13). He notes that "instead, we have here a much older England celebrated by the 'estate poems' of topographical poetry: hills, parks, country houses" (19). Although Moretti suggests that Austen is the first author to convincingly offer "a symbolic form capable of making sense of

the nation-state," this study highlights that her narrative use of space is part of a greater tradition of the novel of her time, one that appears central to the early reception of moral didacticism (20).<sup>274</sup>

This is largely illustrated through the trajectories of the female protagonists of these novels, whose spatial mobility often represents their social precariousness, while their immobility, most often signified through marriage on a genteel country estate in England, symbolizes social security and stability, and is a fixture of the novels' happy endings. In their travels, these protagonists overwhelmingly stay in England as well as within the confines of the Burkean order, based on the fundamentally patriarchal "myth of the benevolent country squire as an adequate miniature head or 'monarch' of the residents of his estates" (Ty 1993: 60). According to Eleanor Ty, the Burkean patriarchal order is defined by a firm belief in the "wisdom and judgment of authority figures," and Lisa Wood stresses the importance of Burke's popularization of the "family-politic trope, [...] an analogical link with the family and the nation" (Ty 20, Wood 56). In *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790), Burke figures the state as a father, whose existence guarantees the security and stability of the nation comprised of his children. He writes that "man [...] should approach to [the state's] faults as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude," drawing a clear vertical line between children as subjects, the state as father, and God (93). This vision is opposed to that of the "new philosophy," epitomized by Rousseau in his novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), accused of attacking the very fabric of society through a lack of reverence for tradition, destabilizing the family structure with atheist moral corruption (Burke 265).

The novels' adherence to the Burkean order highlights the centrality not only of proper gentility, but of proper genteel Englishness to the early reception of moral didacticism in British fiction, which also extends for the most part to the trajectories of the male protagonists. Although, as Elizabeth Sauer and Julia Wright note, notions of the nation in the period were not as clearly tied to geography as they are today, location and space are

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<sup>274</sup> Anthony Mandal has stressed the "dislocation of Austen from the nuanced dialectic between her novels and those of her contemporaries" as a result of her canonization, asserting in contrast that "her fictions are not the works of an author isolated from her context, but the results of a unique negotiation with that very context" (2007: 210, 216).

central to the delineation of a moral ideal of Englishness in the didactic corpus (3).<sup>275</sup> As will be made clear, the narrative trajectories of female and male protagonists of the novels from the reference corpus routinely venture beyond the borders of England, and in their mobility within England, wander into places evocative of lawlessness which constitute a clear breach of the Burkean order, even though they largely reaffirm the latter in their endings.<sup>276</sup>

The notion of domesticity, a concept often associated with women in conduct literature at the turn of the nineteenth century and in scholarly works on the literature of the period, is inextricably tied to the home, and therefore to a sense of geographical circumscription.<sup>277</sup> Importantly, the persistent association of women to the so-called private sphere has been established to be primarily ideological. As Mary Waldron states in reference to eighteenth-century writing which argued that men and women were fundamentally different, and so naturally had different roles to play in society, "the polemic is prescriptive, not descriptive" (1999: 24).

This ideology of female domesticity, which as we have seen is visible in the focus on gendered ideals of gentility in the didactic corpus, is also underscored by characters' spatial mobility in those novels, which is similarly informed by gendered and social norms, but also by national hierarchies. The female protagonists of the didactic corpus do not travel as much as their counterparts from the reference novels; when they in fact travel, they tend to do so in ways which ultimately reinforce the Burkean ideal of the stable, patriarchal, but specifically English household, linking the reception of moral didacticism to a certain ideal of English nationhood.<sup>278</sup>

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275 They for instance quote Edmund Burke's statement that "Nation is a moral essence, not a geographic arrangement" (3).

276 See chapter 4, I, ii for a discussion of the moral implications of the endings of the novels of the reference corpus.

277 Amanda Vickery contends that the "new domestic woman," a product of print culture, has evolved gradually in conjunction with "the distinctively gradual growth of commerce and manufacturing in Britain since at least the fifteenth century" (4). She states that "the eighteenth century saw not so much a dramatic break with past assumptions about the good woman, as a compelling dramatization of her traditional predicament" (6). This includes the prerequisites of chastity and obedience, an association with the home and children, alongside the "commonplace [notion] that the strict performance of duty generated a degree of secret pleasure" (6-8).

278 The ongoing digital project directed by Robert Clark and Emmanuelle Peraldo of mapping the geographical travel undertaken by characters within a novel's story has participated in making me pursue this angle of analysis. See [www.mappingwriting.com](http://www.mappingwriting.com) for a description of the project.

## I. Spatial Mobility in the Didactic Corpus

In the novels of the didactic corpus, protagonists on average spend time in almost half as many distinct locations as in the novels of the reference corpus (see Tables 26 and 27): each novel of the didactic corpus features on average 3.6 different locations, as opposed to 6.5 in the novels of the reference corpus.<sup>279</sup> Moreover, protagonists venture beyond English borders in six of the didactic novels (33%), whereas this is the case in fourteen of the reference novels (77%).<sup>280</sup> Spatial mobility is thus clearly a dividing criterion between the two corpora. In addition, when we look closer at the kinds of places that the protagonists of the novels of each corpus visit, and the ways in which they travel to these, it becomes evident that the novels of the didactic corpus as a group reinforce hegemonic and colonial Englishness symbolically through the engagement with spatial mobility and geographic markers in the diegesis.

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<sup>279</sup> Locations include regions, towns, or estates where the protagonists go over the course of the narrative, but also types of places such as wanderings on the road, and time spent in prison or in an asylum.

<sup>280</sup> International locations, including Wales, Scotland, and Ireland are in bold in Tables 26 and 27.



NOVEL	PROTAGONIST	LOCATIONS
<i>Evelina</i> (1778)	Evelina Anville	English countryside upbringing, London, Bath, Bristol, Lord Orville's country estate
<i>Munster Village</i> (1778)	Lady Frances	Travels to <b>Rome</b> and <b>Paris</b> , English countryside
<i>Cecilia</i> (1782)	Cecilia Beverley	Suffolk country upbringing, London, Delvile Castle in the country
<i>Mary</i> (1788)	Mary	English countryside, <b>Lisbon</b> , London, Bath, Bristol, Southampton
<i>Julia</i> (1790)	Julia	Country seat in northern England, London
<i>Hermesprong</i> (1796)	Hermesprong	English countryside, upbringing in America <sup>281</sup>
<i>Memoirs of Emma Courtney</i> (1796)	Emma Courtney	London, English countryside
<i>Edgar</i> (1798)	Edgar	English country estate, hermit's dwelling by a mountain lake
<i>Wrongs of Woman</i> (1798)	Maria	Asylum, English countryside upbringing, London, unsuccessful attempt at leaving for Italy
<i>Belinda</i> (1801)	Belinda Portman	English countryside upbringing, London, Percivals' country seat
<i>The Father and Daughter</i> (1801)	Agnes	English countryside upbringing, London
<i>The Nobility of the Heart</i> (1805)	Angelica	English countryside upbringing, London, Bath, Bristol, <b>Wales, Holland, Dublin</b>
<i>Cælebs in Search of a Wife</i> (1808)	Charles	English countryside upbringing, London, Stanley Grove country estate
<i>Romance Readers and Romance Writers</i> (1810)	Mary and Margaret	English countryside, London, <b>Wales</b>
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1811)	Elinor and Marianne	English countryside
<i>Self-Control</i> (1811)	Laura Montreville	<b>Scottish countryside</b> upbringing, London, <b>Quebec</b> , De Courcy's English country estate
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1813)	Elizabeth Bennet	English countryside, London, Kent countryside, Pemberley estate <sup>282</sup>
<i>Patronage</i> (1814)	Percy family	English countryside, London, brief journey to <b>continent</b> (Caroline), <b>West Indies</b> (Godfrey)

Table 26. Protagonists' Locations in the Didactic Corpus

<sup>281</sup> I do not include Hermesprong's childhood in America as international travel, since it does not occur during the narrative.

<sup>282</sup> The different locations and characters' geographical travels within *Pride and Prejudice* have been mapped in detail by Robert Clark and Emmanuelle Peraldo, see <https://mappingwriting.com/works/2575/chronologies>, accessed 20 May 2022.

NOVEL	PROTAGONIST	LOCATIONS
<i>Learning at a Loss</i> (1778)	W. Easy	Bath, London, Oxford, English countryside, <b>Scotland</b> Receives letters from others in <b>The Hague</b>
<i>Emmeline</i> (1788)	Emmeline	Born in <b>France</b> , raised <b>Welsh</b> country estate, Swansea, London, Hertford, English countryside, Bath, Isle of Wright, <b>Toulon, Alps</b>
<i>A Simple Story</i> (1791)	Lord Elmwood	Bath, London, English countryside, <b>West Indies</b>
<i>Anna St. Ives</i> (1792)	Anna St. Ives	English countryside, London, <b>Paris, French countryside</b>
<i>Caleb Williams</i> (1794)	Caleb Williams	English countryside, <b>Italy</b> , prison, on the road, London, attempted escape to <b>Ireland, Welsh countryside</b>
<i>Henry</i> (1795)	Henry	East coastal town, <b>Lisbon</b> , <b>at sea</b> , Falmouth, different areas of English countryside, London
<i>Nature and Art</i> (1796)	William and Henry	London, <b>Africa</b> , English country seat, English sea-side hut
<i>Rosamund Gray</i> (1798)	Rosamund	English countryside, London
<i>The Vagabond</i> (1799)	Frederick Fenton	English countryside, on the road, London, <b>Philadelphia, Kentucky</b>
<i>Adeline Mowbray</i> (1805)	Adeline	English countryside, Bath, <b>Portugal, France</b> , Brighton, London <sup>283</sup>
<i>Fleetwood</i> (1805)	Fleetwood	<b>Welsh countryside</b> , Oxford, <b>Switzerland, France</b> , London, Bath
<i>Leonora</i> (1806)	Lady Leonora	English country castle, Yarmouth (+ Lady Olivia: London, <b>Continent</b> )
<i>The Wild Irish Girl</i> (1806)	H. M.	English country castle, <b>Dublin</b> , <b>Irish country estate</b> , <b>Inismore</b> , <b>country lodge</b> , <b>Ulster</b>
<i>The Son of a Genius</i> (1812)	Ludovico	English countryside, Manchester, York, Leeds, London
<i>The Heroine</i> (1813)	Cherry Wilkinson	English countryside, London, prison, poor cottage, castle ruins
<i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814)	Fanny Price	Portsmouth, English countryside <sup>284</sup>
<i>Discipline</i> (1814)	Ellen Percy	London, Richmond villa, English countryside cottage, <b>Rotterdam, Edinburgh, Scottish asylum, Highland castle</b>
<i>The Wanderer</i> (1814)	Juliet Granville	<b>Sea voyage from France</b> , London, Brightelmstone, different lodgings and cottages, forest, English country mansion, farmhouse, Stonehenge

Table 27. Protagonists' Locations in the Reference Corpus

<sup>283</sup> A map of the different locations present in *Adeline Mowbray* may be found in Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel*, 23.

<sup>284</sup> The different locations found in *Mansfield Park* have been mapped in detail by Robert Clark and Emmanuelle Peraldo, see <https://mappingwriting.com/works/3731/chronologies>, accessed 20 May 2022.

The main characters of the novels of didactic corpus are overwhelmingly young women—fourteen novels feature a heroine or a pair of heroines who are sisters, while one presents a balance of male and female young protagonists, and three clearly focus on a male hero. There is no gendered difference in this corpus in terms of the amount of places that the characters visit, but as we will see, male and female mobility differ in their ways of upholding the Burkean social and national order. Moreover, a clear class difference also emerges—the rare aristocratic protagonists tend to travel more beyond the borders of England, but arguably still in ways which reinforce English nationhood.

### *i. Spatial Mobility of the Female Gentry*

As seen in the previous chapter, the majority of female protagonists in the novels of the didactic corpus belong by birth to the social class of the gentry. Ownership of land is at the heart of the definition of the gentry in this period, creating an obvious tie between this social class and a sense of English nationhood.<sup>285</sup> This is clear in the novels of the didactic corpus, which often finish and end in the English countryside, with the female protagonists starting the story on their father's or guardian's estate and finishing it on their husband's. This is the case in France Burney's *Evelina* (1778), Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* (1811, 1813), and Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814). Even when the stories with heroines of the gentry do not explicitly start and end in the country, such as Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), which takes place almost exclusively in London, or Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782), the heroines are explicitly said to have been raised in the country, and their impending marriage to a man of property ensures them a stable place in society, symbolized by the prospect of a country seat.<sup>286</sup>

More generally, it is possible to divide the fourteen novels which center on a genteel female protagonist in three groups: those with euphoric marriage plots, cautionary tales, and those with complex ties to England. The early reception of all of these stresses how central stable Englishness conveyed through geography is to novels received as morally didactic.

285 G. E. Mingay defines "the main body" of the gentry as "the middling country landowners" (3).

286 It is important to note that the choice of partner in *Belinda* is decidedly tied to Englishness in the sense of geography and race, as Belinda rejects creole Mr. Vincent in favor of English gentleman Mr. Hervey. This is made even clearer in the 1815 edition, where revisions stop Mr. Vincent's courtship much earlier than in the first edition, where he and Belinda actually become engaged.

In all but two novels centering on one or two female heroines, spatial mobility symbolizes the precariousness of the characters' situation in society, which is resolved differently according to whether the novels feature euphoric marriage plots or cautionary tales within English borders, or plots which illustrate a more complex relationship to Englishness. Elizabeth Bennet, in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), travels to Kent to visit her friend Charlotte, who has recently married, along with Charlotte's father and sister, and later accompanies her aunt and uncle Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner on a trip to Derbyshire, which turns out to be instrumental in bringing about her marriage to Mr. Darcy. In both cases, Elizabeth travels to another part of the country by choice and chiefly for pleasure, and no sense of social precariousness is attached to these moments.<sup>287</sup> This is also the case of Caroline Percy, who in Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814) goes to London to accompany Lady Jane Granville, solely because the latter wishes it. Caroline is at no point in danger of either falling or being unable to return home.

Elizabeth and Caroline's cases constitute a rarity in the didactic corpus; whenever the genteel female protagonists of the other novels travel, they are presented as vulnerable, underscoring the uncertainty of their position as women, who are much less likely than men to own or inherit land. Among the genteel protagonists of novels with euphoric marriage plots, Evelina's displacement from the country house where she was raised by her guardian Mr. Villars is seen as a danger by the latter from the beginning of the novel. Villars writes to his friend Lady Howard, who has expressed a desire to send Evelina with her granddaughter to London for the spring, under the tutelage of her older, married daughter: "In detaining my young charge thus long in the country, I consulted not solely my own inclination. Destined, in all probability, to possess a very moderate fortune, I wished to contract her views to something within it" (15). He adds that "this artless young creature, with too much beauty to escape notice, has too much sensibility to be indifferent to it; but she has too little wealth to be sought with propriety by men of the fashionable world" (20). The country appears as a place of secluded safety for Evelina, while London represents moral and social danger.

<sup>287</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the geographical wanderings of the secondary Wickham couple at the end of the novel mirrors their financial instability: "Their manner of living, even when the restoration of peace dismissed them to a home, was unsettled in the extreme. They were always moving from place to place in quest of a cheap situation, and always spending more than they ought" (333). In fact, locations such as the north are used throughout the novel to emphasize the moral disconnect between Lydia and Elizabeth, as Anne Bandy-Scubbi has shown (2014, [www.18thc-cities.paris-sorbonne.fr/spip.php](http://www.18thc-cities.paris-sorbonne.fr/spip.php), accessed 20 May 2022.)

Moreover, Mr. Villars states in the same letter that, because of the refusal of Evelina's father to own his marriage to her now deceased mother, "this deserted child, though legally heiress to two large fortunes, must own all her rational expectations to adoption and friendship" (20). Evelina is made to pass as discreetly genteel Miss Anville in the world, given the impossibility of her owning her higher birth, and each of her trips shows her to be in a precarious social position. The contrast between her first stay in London, with genteel Mrs. Mirvan, and her second, with her vulgar but rich grandmother Madame Duval, formerly "a waiting-girl at a tavern" (15), highlights Evelina's uncertain position in society, showing her to indeed be wholly dependent upon her relations. Travel also signifies the social precariousness of the protagonist in Burney's *Cecilia* (1782), whose titular character tellingly hops from the house of one guardian to the next until her majority, all three in different areas of London. Cecilia's stay with each guardian is unsatisfactory, on moral grounds with Mr. Harrel, for the sake of social propriety and material comfort with Mr. Briggs, and because of class prejudice with Mr. Delville.

Dependence on male relations for one's livelihood is the central premise of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which sees Mrs. Dashwood and her three daughters leaving the late Mr. Dashwood's estate because the rules of primogeniture make Mrs. Dashwood's son-in-law heir to the property. The Dashwood women move to a cottage on a virtually unknown cousin's land, showing just how dependent on encountering chance generosity these women (and by extension women in general) are.

Belinda Portman's geographical mobility in Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) also shows her to be dependent upon the goodwill of her relations: her aunt, Mrs. Stanhope, originally contrives to have her stay with fashionable Lady Delacour in Bath, who then invites her to spend the high season at her house in London. When Belinda leaves Lady Delacour's as the latter becomes violently—and wrongly—jealous of her and Lord Delacour, she takes refuge with morally upright Lady Percival. Belinda's aunt Mrs. Stanhope strongly disapproves of her niece's choices, which include her refusal of a marriage proposal by rich and titled but immoral and rude Sir Philip Baddely. Mrs. Stanhope rejects her niece in no uncertain terms: "Henceforward, Belinda, you may manage your own affairs as you think proper; I shall never more interfere with my advice. Refuse whom you please—*go where you please*—get what

friends, and what admirers, and what establishment you can—I have nothing more to do with it" (196, my emphasis). Belinda's parents are never mentioned in the novel, which gives the impression that Belinda is now completely alone in the world, lacking secure social and therefore geographical anchoring. This is reinforced by the fact that her acquaintance with Lady Percival is new, and therefore necessarily tenuous and liable to be broken if her reputation came to be damaged—which at this point in the novel is a tangible danger for Belinda, given that Sir Philip Baddely is spreading false rumors concerning her and Lord Delacour.

The tie between female social precariousness and geographical mobility is all the more evident in the novels which are largely cautionary tales. Julia Clifford and Emma Courtney, the protagonists of Helen Maria William's *Julia* (1790) and Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) respectively, are both orphaned over the course of the novels, leading to several geographical changes for the heroines. Emma's mother dies in childbirth, and she is immediately given by her father to the care of her maternal aunt, where she grows up happy and taken care of. As an adolescent, she is summoned by her father for regular visits, a journey which she views as "weekly punishment" (20). Her aunt dies when she is seventeen, closely followed by her father, who leaves her too little money to live on. Emma consequently becomes a dependent, and must move again, this time to the house of her paternal uncle, with whom she is unhappy, finding the company "uncongenial to [her] reflecting, reasoning, mind" (38). She finds a more favorable home with a neighbor Mrs. Harley, the mother of Augustus, to whom Emma declares her love, and then with a friend of Mrs. Harley's in London, Mrs. Denbeigh.

Both of these establishments are temporary and precarious, as Mrs. Denbeigh moves to India to join her husband who is employed there, and Mrs. Harley dies shortly after Emma goes back to her. Following this, Emma boards a coach to London, with no plan and nowhere to go. She happens to meet Mr. Montague on the way, an admirer of hers whose proposal of marriage she previously refused and when asked where she is to stay in London, answers " 'I have no home'; said I, in a voice choaked with sobs—I am an alien in the world—and alone in the universe" (161). This moment of complete uncertainty as to Emma's future takes place on the open road, giving geographical shape to her statement. Montague helps Emma settle

in town, once more showing just how dependent upon male relations she is. After the bank where what little money she has is gone due the institution's undergoing bankruptcy, Montague proposes again. Emma eventually accepts, though largely because of her distressing material situation rather than inclination: "Suffice it to say, that, after a long contest, my desolate situation, added to the persevering affection of this enthusiastic young man, prevailed over my objections" (168). This makes the following statement, that "[Montague's] happiness, he told me, entirely depended on my decision," ring ironically, given the difference in material security between the two characters (168). Emma is immediately taken by her husband "to the town of —, in the country of —, the residence of his late father," providing her with the security of a male inherited genteel estate (168). The lack of specific place, though not uncommon in these novels, symbolically reinforces the status of the country estate, suggesting that any and all such dwellings hold the same protective power, regardless of precise name, location, or size.

Consistent with the aim of the cautionary tale professed in the novel's preface, Emma hints at the end of her memoir that she will die prematurely, and enjoins Harley's son, the only character of the story who remains alive at this point, to be more virtuous in life than she has been. As a widow, she remains on her husband's estate however, showing the permanence of place through marriage, which symbolically reinforces the traditional Burkean order and sense of Englishness anchored in the paternal and genteel country estate.

In *Julia*, the titular character also depends on male relations for her geographical mobility. She is prevented from joining her cousin and her uncle in France due to the sudden death of her father following a hunting accident, and moves into her uncle's estate. She is safe from poverty thanks to her uncle's generosity, who upon coming back rich from the East Indies, settled an annuity on her father and gave her a generous inheritance, her father and grandfather being largely bankrupt. The family estate is in the north of England, which up until her uncle buys it back with the money he made in the East Indies, Julia had never seen:

She had, till now, only seen the rich cultivated landscapes of the south of England; but her ardent imagination had often wandered amidst the wild scenery of the north, and formed a high idea of pleasure in contemplating its solemn aspect; and she found that the sublime and awful graces of nature exceed even the dream of fancy. The setting sun painted the

glowing horizon with the most refulgent colours: immediately above its broad orb, which was dazzling in brightness, hung a black cloud that formed a striking contrast to the luxuriant tints below: some of the hills were thrown into deep shadow, others reflected the setting beams. When the sun sunk below the horizon, every object gradually changed its hue. The form of the surrounding hills, and the shape of the darkening rocks that hung over the lake, became every moment more doubtful; till at length twilight spread over the whole landscape that pensive gloom so soothing to an enthusiastic fancy. Every other sound was lost in the fall of the torrent, a sound which Julia had never heard before, and which seemed to strike upon her soul, and call forth emotions congenial to its solemn cadence. (31-32)

The landscape of the north "exceed[s] even the dream of fancy" for Julia, and in this description of a sunset, the landscape of the family estate completes the character's sense of identity and grounds it to this specific place. Julia seems awed by the landscape she sees, with some elements of language evoking the sublime, such as the "black cloud that formed a striking contrast to the luxuriant tints below," and the setting sun making it increasingly difficult to distinguish the shape of "the darkening rocks."<sup>288</sup> Julia's intense response to this vision is posited as the perfect match to her "ardent imagination," and though for Edmund Burke, the sublime takes its source in terror, claiming that "the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure," here the protagonist's awe is tied to deeply positive feelings (1909: 40). Indeed, the religious imagery coupled with the sibilant alliteration in "a sound [...] which seemed to strike upon her soul" emphasizes the return to the family estate within this striking scenery, which had been lost for almost two generations, as rightful, almost divinely so. This strongly enforces an ideal of English nationhood anchored in English land and landscape, in addition to legitimizing colonial expansion which makes this idyllic return to old family land possible.

Just like the other heroines, Julia is dependent upon the fortune and generosity of her male relations for subsistence, made obvious by her geographical mobility being contingent upon their state of health or their goodwill. This female social precariousness symbolized through the heroine's relationship to geography is not overtly presented as problematic however, as Julia is characterized as perfectly content to be back at the family

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<sup>288</sup> Edmund Burke notes the importance of obscurity in the production of the sublime in *A Philosophical Inquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful* (20).



estate, regardless of the means of getting there. Moreover, her attachment to place mirrors her moral ability to overcome her misplaced love and desire for her cousin's husband, but also in a sense punishes her for it, as she continues to live with her cousin and the latter's son after Frederick Seymour's death in her uncle's house, never marrying herself.<sup>289</sup>

Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) presents a similarly unproblematic vision of the male estate as rightful safe haven for female protagonists. The main female characters, sisters Mary and Margaret, function as doubles, with the former illustrating rational virtue and the latter irrationality leading to her fall. Strikingly, Mary never leaves the countryside where she was raised—even when she and Frederic Harrington marry halfway through the novel, Frederic's uncle Sir Edward establishes them near the Marsham farmhouse. Mary remains in the country when Frederic leaves her with Lady Isabella before repenting and returning to his wife. In contrast, Margaret leaves the country, and it is in London that she falls, strongly encouraged by Lady Isabella. The city, as is also the case for Mr. Villars in Burney's *Evelina*, here represents moral danger, which likewise underscores young women's fragile position in society, hinging on the publicly recognized preservation of their virtue.<sup>290</sup>

London is also where Agnes falls in Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801). In both cases, the young fallen women do not realize their danger in associating with their "seducers," and they finish their respective narrative arcs back in the country with their family—although not without due payment for their errors. Agnes finds her father in her hometown, gone insane after she left, and nurses him for several years before he finally recognizes her shortly before they both die. Green's Margaret, again thanks to Sir Edward, is

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289 As mentioned in chapter 6, II, ii, Julia not marrying at the end of the novel has also been interpreted as revolutionary in the way it denies the marriage plot and establishes a feminine paradigm of a community "motivated by caring, connectedness, and sensibility," as opposed to the male paradigm "characterized by competition, ambition, separation, and the desire for domination" (Ty 1993: 81). I believe that both interpretations may coexist, Ty's relying on William's revolutionary thought and mine contextualized by the early reception of the novel as morally didactic.

290 Rumors (wrongly) incriminating a female protagonist's virtue are responsible for Belinda's sudden departure from Lady Delacour's in Edgeworth's *Belinda*, and for Emma's first stay with Mrs. Harley and subsequent move to London at Mrs. Denbeigh's in Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. These motifs echo Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), where the dangers of imperiled reputation regardless of actual transgression are stressed. For instance, Lady Trusty warns the heroine that "the world is censorious, and seldom ready to put the best construction on things; so that reputation may suffer, though virtue triumphs" (37). Jane Spencer includes *Betsy Thoughtless* as an early example of eighteenth-century literary "didactic tradition" (140).

permitted to live in the vicinity of her family with her child and a matron. The entire family moves to the Welsh countryside however, beyond the strict borders of England, suggesting that Englishness must not be tainted with such vice, further linking female virtue to a sense of English nationhood.<sup>291</sup>

Some of the novels discussed may be perceived as somewhat critical of the social precariousness of women in relation to land and geographical attachment—as seen in the meticulous description of the means by which Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters are stripped of her husband's estate upon his death in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and the adverse consequences that this has on them, and in Mrs. Bennet's criticism of the injustice for herself and her five daughters of the family estate's entail to her husband's cousin Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*. Ultimately, however, all the novels that were favorably reviewed in the *Monthly* and the *Critical* reinforce the value of the stability of the English patriarchal estate through the marriage of virtuous heroines to equally moral gentlemen. These matches attach the protagonists to new secure estates through their husbands, emphasizing the dependence on generous male relations for morally compromised female protagonists, or through the suggestion that Englishness cannot bear to accommodate the fallen woman, especially when she is genteel and a main character, who must therefore either die or exist beyond the nation's strict borders.

Of the remaining three novels of the didactic corpus featuring genteel female protagonists, two are those that received one positive and one negative review on moral grounds in the *Monthly* and the *Critical*. They present a much more ambiguous relationship between moral virtue and English nationhood, giving credence to the argument that early reception of moral didacticism in these novels is tied to a certain vision of Englishness. The heroines of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) and Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) travel on their own of their own volition at one point in the novels, either finding themselves or trying to find themselves beyond the national and patriarchal space. This is also the case in Wollstonecraft's first novel *Mary* (1788), though as we will see the patriarchal order is significantly less imperiled than in *Wrongs* or *Self-Control*, which is

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<sup>291</sup> The same has been argued in relation to Lydia and Wickham's "banishment" to the north in *Pride and Prejudice* (Bandry-Scubbi 2014, <http://www.18thc-cities.paris-sorbonne.fr/Space-and-Emotions.html?lang=en#3.1.6>, accessed 20 May 2022).

consistent with it having been deemed morally sound by both reviewers. As Yi-Fu Tuan states, the notions of place and space differ fundamentally in a complementary way: "place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (3). In this corpus, I posit that we overwhelmingly see a distinct attachment to places, representing an ideal of landed stability. In the three novels just mentioned, however, the heroines make forays into uncharted space where they enjoy—or attempt to enjoy—freedom of movement, beyond the security of the English estate.

In Mary Wollstonecraft's first novel, the titular character Mary travels to Europe twice, both times without her husband whom she neither loves nor esteems. Each time she obtains his consent before going, as "the man she had promised to obey" (20). It is important to note that she does not actually ask for his blessing, however. Before her first voyage, she writes him a letter (he is abroad at this time), representing to him the necessity of her accompanying her ailing friend to Lisbon for her health. She assertively writes: "I must—I will go." The narrator adds that "She would have added, 'you would very much oblige me by consenting;' but her heart revolted—and irresolutely she wrote something about wishing him happy" (21). For her second journey to Europe, she negotiates with her husband: "she was prevailed on to promise to live with him, if he would permit her to pass one year, travelling from place to place; he was not to accompany her" (61).

Mary is back in the countryside on her husband's property by the end of the novel, and is implied to be approaching premature death ("Her delicate state of health did not promise long life," 62), which may be understood to ultimately invalidate her life choices and champion the stability of proper genteel domesticity on a country estate. This is consistent with the fact that the novel garnered one review critical of its narrative composition—but not its moral tendency—which may suggest the reception of a disconnect between elements of plot and the work's morality.

In Wollstonecraft's *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), the heroine also openly resists the bonds of her marriage, and goes so far as to argue for the legitimacy of her adulterous relationship in court—a notion which the judge promptly discards. Maria's story is one of physical confinement and attempted geographical freedom, representing her attitude to her marriage. When she endeavors to formally leave her husband for his "tyranny

and infidelities," repudiating his name and taking off her ring, her husband locks her up in a room (143). She eventually manages to go and take lodgings for herself, and hopes to flee to Italy. She is overtaken on her way to Dover, separated from her child, and taken to an asylum. It is not clear from the extant fragments what happens to Maria after she escapes the asylum with her lover Darnford and their warden Jemima, but the story as it is completely contravenes the Burkean ideal materialized by a stable English estate, showing the heroine perpetually fighting to recover her freedom of movement, denied to her by her husband.

Laura Montreville in Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) is similarly shown to be restricted in her movements by a man, and actively resists. In addition, her story starts beyond the English border in Scotland, and her adventures subsequently take her incredibly far from the English mainland, which mitigates the force of the ending that conventionally affirms genteel Englishness in the form of Laura's marriage with Montague De Courcy and subsequent domestic life on his country estate in the north of England. Indeed, Laura and her admirer Hargrave, whom she consistently refuses throughout the novel on the grounds of his moral failings, both restrict—or attempt to restrict—each other's geographical movements, and in either case this pushes Laura beyond the realm of the proper English patriarchal order.

Laura promises to marry Hargrave if his conduct proves beyond moral reproach after a period of two years, symbolically making herself judge of his conduct, in a striking reversal of gender roles. Moreover, she resists seeing him in that period, and accepts a visit from him "to bid him farewell, till the stipulated two years are finished. If he really loves me, his affection will survive absence" (77). Although this fails and Laura is eventually abducted by Hargrave, her continual attempts to set the rules of the relationship, including the circumstances of their meeting in the same place is striking, and shows her attempting to exert a degree of geographical freedom beyond the reach of her male relations seldom seen in these novels.

Laura's abduction and spectacular escape on a canoe down a river in Canada has been made famous by Jane Austen's incisive comment on the incident in a letter to her sister Cassandra, and positions Laura as far as could be from the role of domestic wife on an

English estate which she nonetheless takes at the end of the novel.<sup>292</sup> The place where Laura finds herself upon being kidnapped is explicitly opposed to Europe, which here includes Britain: "At length a city appeared in view, rising like an amphitheatre, and flashing bright with a material unknown to European architecture" (336). She is then taken further into the wild, passed the city which she assumes to be Montreal, and "towards woods impervious to the light" to a remote cabin with "three Indians" on whose way there was "no trace [...] of human footstep" (336-337). This strongly evokes the notion of the frontier, and stages Laura in the position of the traditionally masculine figure of the colonizer and explorer, although she assumes a position of submissiveness in her imprisonment in a remote cabin, unresisting and passing the time "in acts of devotion" and "unconsciously swallow[ing] what was placed before her" (343). Laura manages to escape on a canoe, is rescued by benevolent settlers and eventually makes it back to Scotland, explains her ordeal to De Courcy, and marries.

Whether or not Laura's adventures are realistic is a moot point; they are above all striking in their departure from traditional femininity, showing the heroine to be extraordinarily resilient away from any recognizable markers of patriarchal Englishness. She achieves this strength through religious devotion and unflinching chastity, in line with proper femininity, but this episode also arguably diminishes the force of the traditional ending supporting the Burkean ideal. *Mary*, *A Fiction*, *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman*, and *Self-Control* all fall significantly short of upholding this ideal, which may explain in part why these novels received mixed reviews upon their first publication, and why *Self-Control* and *Maria* particularly were received by one critic each as morally flawed.

## *ii. Spatial Mobility of Female Nobility*

Three novels feature female protagonists who are born or marry into the aristocracy over the course of the narrative—Burney's *Evelina* is not included here, since her marriage to a peer comes at the very end of the story. Aristocratic status confers greater ease of geographical movement to these characters, as they readily go overseas for purposes of pleasure, education, or international politics. Although such mobility diminishes the

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<sup>292</sup> Austen writes of Brunton's debut novel: "I am looking over 'Self-Control' again, and my opinion is confirmed of its being an excellently meant, elegantly written work, without anything of nature or probability in it. I declare I do not know whether Laura's passage down the American river is not the most natural, possible, every-day thing she ever does" (1995: 234).

centrality of the English country estate, the novels all reinforce traditional social order, and by featuring other nations, assert the superiority of Englishness.

In Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* (1805), Angelica's noble birth is first unknown, and while that is the case, her changes in location mirror those of the genteel protagonists' discussed previously in materializing her precarious position within society. When her birth is suddenly questioned after her uncle dies before legally ascertaining her claim to nobility, she travels on her own to Wales to live with her former governess (Vol. I, Chapter 26). She finds herself utterly destitute when the latter dies, and she once again travels alone, to London, in order to become a lady's companion. Angelica even travels alone and in secrecy with her maid to Holland in the hopes of meeting her now husband there, whom she married in secret and against the will of his parents, as has been discussed in chapter 6, II, ii. There is a clear parallel between the secrecy of her journey and that of her marriage, exemplifying the danger of such behavior: the trip to Holland does not achieve its end since Lord Vallency has already left that country by the time Angelica arrives, and it endangers her health as she contracts a fever (Vol. III, Chapter 17). These various moves illustrate Angelica's precarious social status as she undertakes them, echoing the situation of genteel female protagonists.

On the other hand, legally recognized nobility provides Angelica with complete social and material security, which translates into the ways in which she travels. When she first journeys to London with her uncle in order to prove their kinship, she is well received by high society and the trip is meant to further her aristocratic standing by mixing with people of her own rank, and therefore reinforce her status within the English social elite (Vol. I, Chapter 8). Once her title and lineage are legally proven and her marriage disclosed and accepted by her own and her husband's families, the couple take a trip to Dublin with Angelica's aunt and uncle, a Marquis and Marchioness. This journey comforts Angelica's secure status in the high nobility, as it is seemingly taken for pleasure rather than necessity ("they spent some months with [the Marquis and Marchioness] in Dublin, which fine city Angelica was much delighted with," Vol. III, Chapter 19). It is significant that the trip is taken beyond the borders of England into Ireland, where the English enjoyed a superior status to the Irish in a relationship mirroring that of colonizer and colonized, in spite of the country

being at the time of the novel's publication part of the Union.<sup>293</sup> Thus, national superiority is asserted through international travel.

In Lady Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village* (1778), geographical mobility for protagonist Lady Frances also serves the purpose of furthering her education as a noblewoman, which ultimately reinforces her superior social status in England. She is educated for three years in Rome, "where she had the best masters, and where Santerello improved her taste in music" (10). She then spends time in Paris, before removing to her country estate, where she founds a university and a utopian society. Lady Frances's nephew, young Lord Munster, is also sent to Europe for three years, which the narrator claims is necessary to the creation of "not a *nominal*, but a *real* patriot," by the contrasts made between England and continental Europe (42-3, author's emphasis).<sup>294</sup> This is explicitly linked to imperialism, which itself is tied to virtue by the narrator: before describing the effect of Lord Munster's continental tour, the narrator claims that "we have a natural force to *defend* and *maintain* the empire of the seas. We enjoy wealth and possessions in both the Indies, if we do not lose them by our own misconduct" (42, author's emphasis). Although Lady Frances's relationship to English land and institutional education is distinctly not patriarchal, it is strongly colonial, which does comfort the Burkean national order even as it challenges gender norms.

Caroline's trip to continental Europe with her aristocratic husband toward the end of Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814) also serves to reinforce Englishness over other nations. Her husband is a German Count, with English heritage on his mother's side, and it is significant that he renounces his political role as Count on the continent in order to

live in a free country, already his own, half by birth and wholly by inclination, where he had property sufficient to secure him independence, sufficient for his own wishes, and for those of his beloved Caroline—a country where he could enjoy better than on any other spot in the whole compass of the civilized world, the blessings of real liberty and of domestic tranquillity and happiness. (603)

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293 Patrick Parrinder points to the difference between "Anglo-Irish colonists" and "typical specimens of 'native' Irish people" in his discussion of Irish fiction of the period, underlining the unequal relationship (26).

294 The importance of the Grand Tour in forging elite English masculinity is discussed in section II of this chapter.

He retires to England in order to become a country gentleman, and after a brief role as a continental Countess, Caroline happily reverts to being a domestic gentlewoman. Her travels abroad never bear the sense of social danger given the rank that she has acquired through marriage, and they reinforce a sense of moral English nationalism by being cut short in favor of a life on an English country estate.

### *iii. Male Spatial Mobility*

The patrilineal nature of English society necessarily renders female characters' ties to land complex and liable to change, although the novels suggest that aristocratic status counterbalances this unfavorable power dynamic for women. It is quite different for male characters whose geographical mobility is largely presented as unproblematic, whether they are of genteel or noble birth. Male travel is often a necessary step toward achieving full social stability in these novels, reinforcing along the way a sense of Englishness anchored in inherited landed property. Jeremy Black notes that "British domestic travel and tourism boomed in the eighteenth century" among the upper class and the middling ranks, owing a great deal to improvement in infrastructure (1991: 4). None of the male protagonists of the didactic corpus travel for pleasure, however, nor do they go on the Grand Tour, in spite of the perceived social and cultural importance of traveling to Paris, Italy, and beyond in order to provide the finishing touches to their education in the intellectual, political, and sentimental spheres (Black 7, Vивиè 40). The importance of lengthy continental travel, particularly for the country gentry, is thus conspicuously downplayed in these novels, emphasizing instead attachment to England by marking travel largely as an enforced step on the way to returning to one's rightful country seat, rather than a culturally encouraged way of perfecting their status as gentlemen.<sup>295</sup>

In the three novels of the didactic corpus which feature a single male protagonist, the heroes are all first—or more accurately, only—sons, and the story-lines all start and end in the country. The characters have different narrative trajectories, but each can be seen to weave a straightforward link between moral virtue, male gentility or nobility, and the stability of the English country seat.

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<sup>295</sup> As Jeremy Black notes, "the principal arguments advanced in favour of foreign travel were that it equipped the traveller socially and provided him with useful knowledge and attainments" (1991: 289).



Charles, in Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of Wife* (1808), notably travels from the country estate which he has inherited from his father for the sole purpose of finding a suitable wife to live with him in domestic happiness on that estate. He is deeply attached to the place he owns and that he has always known: "I was passionately fond of the scenery that surrounded me, which had never lost that power of pleasing, which it is commonly imagined that novelty can alone confer" (18). His incentive to travel in order to find a wife is directed by his father's wishes, seamlessly linking family land, filial obedience, and domestic happiness. His father instructs him not to "irrevocably dispose of your affections till you have made the long-promised visit to my earliest, wisest, and best friend Mr. Stanley," leading to the protagonist's decision to "leave the priory, the seat of my ancestors, to make a tour not only of London, but to Stanley Grove in Hampshire, the residence of my father's friend" (21). In stark contrast to most of the novels of the corpus with female protagonists, Charles' journey is not shown as a break from social and material stability, but as a step—devoid of any particular social, moral, or material danger—to further solidifying the stability of "the seat of [his] ancestors," by securing a wife and by extension a lineage. This is exactly what happens, as Charles settles on Mr. Stanley's daughter Lucilla, in accordance with the secret wishes of their fathers from the time they were children, further reinforcing the patriarchal order.

In the case of Robert Bage's *HermSprong; or, Man as He Is Not* (1796) and Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar; or, The Phantom of the Castle* (1798), the titular characters face challenges to reclaim their noble birthright, symbolized by an estate in the country. Both travel in what might be called free space as opposed to precise place, but each with the aim of recovering their established property, taken away from them in family feuds. HermSprong speaks of "the Aborigines of America" with whom he has associated using the colonial language of the "noble savage" meant as a compliment, opposed to the morally corrupt "civilized world" of the colonizer.<sup>296</sup> HermSprong for instance states that "in variety of knowledge, the aborigines of America are much your inferiors. What they do know, perhaps they know better" (125). HermSprong is notably of geographically obscure lineage, "American [...] by birth; but of European parents" (187), and is characterized as a wanderer, as this dialogue illustrates:

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<sup>296</sup> Rousseau famously uses this rhetoric in his exploration of "natural law" (70-71). Bage's *HermSprong* has been described as "anti-establishment satire," and the echo to Rousseau's thought underlines his "Jacobin" political affiliation (Butler 1987: xix, 56).

Mr. Sumelin. "Have you left America long?"

Mr. Hermsprong. "About five years."

S. "Since then you have resided in France?"

H. "Properly speaking, I have not resided any where. Smitten with the love of being seen, I have shewed myself to half Europe; returning occasionally to France, as I was wanted." (40)

Hermsprong's description of his years on the continent are the most evocative in the corpus of the Grand Tour, spending significant amounts of time in various places across Europe in order for young men "to improve their taste by studying the finest specimens of art and architecture; and to participate in the leisure pursuits and sociability of polite company in the different countries through which they passed" (Sweet 3). However, the character does not actually travel during the story, making its country setting the logical endpoint to his former geographical wanderings—which, as a man of means, never denote a particular sense of social precariousness in any case. He turns out to be the son of the elder brother of the current Lord Grondale, and is restored to his name and property in the conclusion of the novel, without the necessity of fighting his uncle for it in a court of law, since the latter dies following a stroke in the second to last chapter of the book. His recovering his inheritance is thus portrayed as a matter of course, and reinforces the link between moral virtue, which Hermsprong embodies in the novel, and the stability of English landed property. This is underscored by the casually ironic tone of the closing sentence:

The union [between Hermsprong, whose legal name is Sir Charles, and Miss Campinet], I believe, will prove unfortunate only to the gentlemen of the law; for Sir Charles having no body to go to law with but himself, is under the necessity of not going to law at all; which will be so obliging as to give him a full title to his property, by what the gentlemen of this science call a *rèmitter*.<sup>297</sup> (352)

Sicklemore's Edgar, much like Hermsprong, qualifies himself as a wanderer, as he has left the persecution of his uncle in the castle that is actually his birthright to wait until he could legally claim it: "One year more, and my majority would place me above his power and until the arrival of that period, I will no more enter the walls of Castle Fitz-Elmar: wherefore,

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<sup>297</sup> Legal term referring to "the principle or process by which a person having to titles to real property, and entering on the property by the later and weaker of these, is deemed once in possession to be holding it by the earlier and stronger one." "Rèmmitter, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/162235](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/162235). Accessed 19 May 2022.

you see me now a poor forlorn wanderer, without friends, and without a home" (15). Edgar does not go far in his wanderings, contrary to Hermsprong's extradiegetic cross-continental voyages, but he spends a considerable amount of time in hiding in the forest, and finds refuge with a hermit, taken there by a "route over the most unfrequented paths" (45). This again evokes uncharted place, in opposition to the named and established Castle Fitz-Elmar. Edgar manages to reclaim his castle, also thanks to the death of his usurping uncle. The conclusion of the novel clearly establishes a link between moral virtue and the stability of well established English property: "Edgar was blest with a numerous progeny, and, in the danger he had escaped, proved that the efforts of an honest mind, though poor and unprotected, will eventually rise superior to the deep-laid machinations of vice, though armed with wealth and power" (102-3). The "numerous progeny," symbol of the continuation of the line established at the castle, functions both as the assurance that virtue triumphs over vice and as its reward.

Finally, the male protagonists in Edgeworth's *Patronage* travel either to the city, or in the case of the eldest son Godfrey, at sea. They always do so for the sake of their profession, which enables them to make a name for themselves, leading to material security and social respectability, especially for second sons Alfred and Erasmus. Though according to the rule of male primogeniture Godfrey is the heir to his father's estate and as such does not need to enter a profession to attain material security, inheritors often had a government position in the army or the law (Stone 226). Moreover, Godfrey's willingness to be employed while his father remains the resident gentleman on the estate further illustrates the novel's middle-class ethos of self-sufficiency and industry, relying on the equation between masculine identity and the "emerging concept of 'occupation'" (Davidoff and Hall 30).<sup>298</sup>

Importantly, Godfrey, who travels the farthest, is in the army, and is sent fairly early on in the novel with his regiment to the West Indies. Godfrey successively becomes captain and major, showing imperialism to be an important means of social advancement, in ways which infuse the notion of Englishness with empire, looking forward to what Krishan Kumar has called "global Englishness" in reference to "the height of empire" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (18). Several male side characters of the gentry from the novels of the didactic corpus, such as Mr.

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298 The permeability of gentility and middle-class values in *Patronage* was explored in chapter 6, I, ii.

Clifford in William's *Julia* (1790) and Charles Marsham in Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), also achieve higher social status through extended stays in the colonies, allowing Mr. Clifford for instance to buy back the family estate, as has already been mentioned. This reinforces the political notion of Englishness as a colonial and moral power, as all of these characters are portrayed favorably.

An analysis of protagonists' locations and geographical mobility in the didactic corpus highlights a deep narrative anchoring in England landed property, with euphoric plots invariably featuring female and male protagonists settled on a country estate—or at least implied to be so in the near future as in Edgeworth's *Belinda*. For female protagonists, geographical mobility often signifies vulnerability, symbolically equating social stability with a position within the patrilineal system of land ownership as the wives of country gentlemen. This narrative trajectory of the marriage plot, illustrative of the domestic novel according to Anthony Mandal and Lisa Wood's definitions, explains the presence of "gentleman" as a keyword in the largely female-led didactic novels (see chapter 5, I).<sup>299</sup> The country estate is moreover figured as specifically English, as the few references to Wales or Scotland position these nations as places of transit for the characters rather than stable destinations. The focus on English land in the didactic corpus is all the more obvious when contrasted with the reference corpus, as the following section shows.

## II. Spatial Mobility in the Reference Corpus

When taking note of the various locations where the stories take the protagonists in both corpora, one of the most evident differences is the amount of international travel that the main characters in the novels of the reference corpus undertake, regardless of their social rank. Although most novels reinforce traditional Englishness by the end of the story, the protagonists, female and male, tend to venture beyond the borders of proper civility before getting there, and that process is reflected in the geographical borders that are crossed.<sup>300</sup> These borders can be strictly national, but also more generally spatial, in the form of geographical spaces such as woods, roads, or even prisons, which can be understood to symbolize social liminality, far removed from the stability of the national Burkean order

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<sup>299</sup> See Mandal (2007: 23) and Wood (69-70).

<sup>300</sup> See chapter 6, II, i and iii.

symbolized by the prevalence of the English country estate in the novels of the didactic corpus.

### *i. Female Travel*

Gentlewomen protagonists tend to travel much more than their counterparts from the novels of the didactic corpus. They do so in ways which contravene the Burkean ideal of the patriarchal country home, even though they often end with proper social stability alongside the prospect of marriage and the geographical stability that comes with it, or include the death or geographical removal of the female protagonist in the case of cautionary tales. Anne Rouhette notes that "exploration and conquest of space were associated with men and antithetical to the idea of the private sphere to which women were increasingly relegated as the eighteenth century wore on and as conduct-book writers like James Fordyce stressed the domestic circle as woman's natural environment" (3). Consequently, novels featuring a female protagonist traveling alone on the open road depict a breach of proper feminine behavior, which may explain why they were not perceived by early reviewers as morally instructive, in spite of their overall sound tendency.

In addition, as the following examples illustrate, unsanctioned female travel in these novels is at times very explicitly linked to the threat of rape, a subject deemed uncouth for young ladies to read about by at least one early reviewer, as has already been quoted. Anne Greenfield notes that "as a theft of chastity, rape was understood as a violation against men, as a theft of everything a man owned and achieved and as a fissure in the most basic structure of social order," potentially destabilizing the line of inheritance if a woman gave birth to a child who was not her husband's (2). Narrative renditions of rapes or attempted rapes may consequently be seen as a breach of the Burkean order.

As has already been mentioned in chapter 6, II, i, in Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1814) and Frances Burney's aptly named *The Wanderer* (1814), protagonists Ellen and Juliet find themselves alone on the open road, both in England and abroad, completely out of reach of the protection which the patriarchal ideal of Englishness is meant to offer them, before eventually being settled in the prospect of marriage to morally upright gentlemen.<sup>301</sup> Gaston

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<sup>301</sup> Juliet is often referred to simply as a "Wanderer" throughout the novel, emphasizing the connection between the stability of the home and individual social recognition symbolized by one's name. The

Bachelard defines the house as a place of fundamental shelter (*abri*), turning mere walls into a home (23-24). Ellen and Juliet find themselves homeless, and their wanderings through open space and precarious dwellings—including cottages and lodgings but also a hut in a forest in Juliet's case—materialize that loss of protection, especially for these unchaperoned young ladies. In these moments, space, rather than place, is foregrounded. Andrew Thacker notes that this opposition is "often employed to understand how writers engage with urban landscapes, broadly distinguishing between an alienating sense of the city as an abstract space and a more attached belonging to particular places within cities, such as rooms, cafes, or restaurants" (30). The same dichotomy is visible in these novels, but applied to rural spaces: the country estate is figured as the characters' place of anchor, to which the narrative eventually takes them in the euphoric ending, and the road, the sea, or the forest as inhospitable, almost unnatural spaces for them to transiently inhabit.

The inherent inhospitality of these spaces is connected to the physical dangers the heroines face, positioning by contrast the home they no longer have as sanctuaries for their chastity. Indeed, Ellen leaves her place of employment as a governess in Edinburgh upon finding herself alone with the family's son Henry when she arrives, determining not to be "made a spectacle to idle boys,—nor remain in a situation of which even they can see the impropriety" (316).<sup>302</sup> In *The Wanderer*, fear for her physical integrity is implied to undergird Juliet's difficulty in finding a lodging, as she "met with no cottage from which some lounging labourer did not frighten her" (703). She loses her way and arrives at the New Forest, where she has previously unwittingly stayed in a highwayman's hut, leaving it quickly as soon as she could, and reacts thus:

Few sights could have been less welcome; what already she had suffered, and, far more, what she had apprehended, filled her with terrour; and her imagination was fearfully at work, now to bring her to the hut which she had so suspiciously fled; now to the encounter of disorderly young assailants, with no Dash for her protection;<sup>303</sup> now to the attack of lurking thieves, and strolling vagabonds; and now to the danger of being bewildered and lost in the mazes of the Forest. (704)

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protagonist's name remains a mystery for most of the story as she uses a pseudonym, waiting for her genteel birth to be ascertained. The narrator comments twice over that upon having to leave a lodging, Juliet "became (again) a Wanderer," equating loss of home to that of social status and identity (655, 703).

<sup>302</sup> A friend of Henry's calls and Ellen overhears them talking about her.

<sup>303</sup> Dash is a dog Juliet befriends on a farm on the outskirts of the forest.

Internal focalization dramatizes with great intensity Juliet's fear and vulnerability in this passage, emphasizing her precariousness as she navigates the periphery of society symbolized by the forest at night. The heroines' struggles make up significant portions of the narratives in *The Wanderer* and *Discipline*, honing in on their forays beyond the limits of the polite society to which they belong by birth, thereby decentering the stability of the gentry estate.

It is also worth noting that Ellen eventually settles in a Scottish glen, within the border of Britain but not of England, thus displacing the ideal domestic and rural estate to the Celtic periphery (Gikandi xvii).<sup>304</sup> In Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), the titular character travels abroad to Portugal and France effectively as a kept mistress, to places where respectable members of the upper classes often meet. This is illustrated by the interactions that Adeline and her lover Glenmurray have with latter's acquaintances Mr. Maynard and Major Douglas, reinforcing Adeline's transgression by contrast. In Maria Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806), the protagonist's double Lady Olivia, who seduces Lady Leonora's husband, has just returned from a lengthy stay in France at the beginning of the novel, and goes back to the continent when it ends. During her relationship with Lady Leonora's husband, they both leave the country estate where Leonora remains—except for when she goes to Yarmouth to nurse her sick and repentant husband—in favor of a house near London. This again equates the country estate with proper morality, and associates foreign travel, especially for women through Lady Olivia, with immorality. I posit that the presence of such travel, tied to the various characters' breaches of morality, lead to the stories venturing too far beyond its English countryside center, which may explain why the novels were not received as didactic.

In Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788) and Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792), the female protagonists travel beyond the borders of England but within the rules of propriety: Emmeline is sent to various places in England, Wales, and France by her uncle in order to

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<sup>304</sup> *Discipline* is an example of the Scottish "national tale," made famous by the tremendous success of Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), which Brunton shows an acute awareness of in her preface to the novel (see chapter 3, III, i). Such tales, initially developed by women writers, stage Ireland or Scotland and according to Katie Trumpener "address the major issues of cultural distinctiveness, national policy and political separatism" (689). Significantly, Trumpener lists *Discipline* as an example of a national tale, alongside Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*, discussed in the following section, but not *Self-Control* (690-691).

avoid his son pursuing her romantically and physically, and Anna travels at length to France with her father for pleasure, illustrating British appetite for international tourism in the eighteenth century (Black 1992: 7). Both characters are respectively members of the aristocracy and the titled gentry, making trips to the continent perfectly socially acceptable if undertaken under the proper authority. However, both ladies end up in liminal spaces geographically within England, in plot points which call attention to the lawlessness and immorality that may exist within the national borders, thus tainting the myth of Englishness. Emmeline and Anna are kidnapped by rakes, and brought to locations initially unknown to them, where they are physically and geographically beyond the power of the protective Burkean social structure. In fact, both Emmeline and Anna manage to convince their captors not to rape them, illustrating the agency of these female characters independent of the security that the Burkean ideal is meant, and at this point fails to, provide for them.<sup>305</sup>

A similar plot point occurs in Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791), when young Lady Mathilda is captured by previously rejected Viscount Margrave. The resolution of the kidnapping is more explicitly patriarchal than in *A Simple Story* and *Anna St. Ives*, insofar as Lady Mathilda is rescued by her father and exhibits little agency of her own during the episode—she is even straightforwardly described as being in a "weakly and defenceless state" (328). However, the scene takes place in Lord Margrave's country house, which arguably presents the country seat as a site of potential vice rather than a beacon of English propriety and morality, also upsetting the moral dimension of the construct of Englishness.<sup>306</sup>

Rosamund in Charles Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* (1798) wanders in the woods at night against the explicit orders of her grandmother, as has already been mentioned. This leads to

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<sup>305</sup> These young ladies overturning their would-be rapists' intentions also illustrates the pervasive myth of the "unrapeable" woman, a "widespread popular belief that it was physically impossible for a single man to rape a conscious, 'genuinely' resisting woman, because she always had the power to avoid being penetrated as long as she remained resolute in her defence" (Olsson 142). Lena Olsson argues that this myth "was part of the effacement of the act of rape, which had serious repercussions for the ability of actual victims to obtain legal restitution in a courtroom setting" (148). I study the portrayal of sexual violence in a selection of novels from my corpora in a forthcoming article written in collaboration with Lucy-Anne Katgely.

<sup>306</sup> It is difficult to define who is the main protagonist in *A Simple Story*, given its focus on two distinct generations. I looked at Lady Mathilda for the purposes of this argument, but her mother, the focus of the first part of the novel, might also be discussed as she falls when Mathilda is a small child while her husband is in the colonies, and dies "in a lonely country on the borders of Scotland," illustrating geographically her fallen state (178).



her rape, and the swift death of her grandmother and herself. It is significant that Rosamund wanders out of the geographic parameters of the socially sanctioned protective house, where she usually sleeps "in a kind of closet adjoining [her grandmother's room], where she could be within hearing, if her grandmother should call her in the night" (32). When she decides to take a walk at night, she is explicitly described to be "wander[ing] unprotected to a distance from her guardian doors—through lonely glens, and wood walks, where she had rambled many a day in safety" (34). The house, through the personified metonymy "guardian doors," symbolizes the security that this geographical place is meant to confer, and is contrasted with the danger of the natural world at night ("lonely glens," "wood walks"), illustrating Gaston Bachelard's argument that the house is at its core a protective shelter (23). The problem with outside space at night is that nobody is there to protect Rosamund; she convinces herself that it is acceptable for her to wander out because "it was not so very late. The neighbours were yet about, passing under the window to their homes" (33). When she does go out however, she arrives "at a shady copse, out of the hearing of any human habitation," which is where Matravis finds her (34). Although Rosamund never leaves her village, she willfully strays beyond the proper geographical space carved out for a girl her age, which the outcome of the story implies is the reason for her rape and subsequent death.

Cherry, in Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), similarly willfully leaves the socially sanctioned security of her father's farm, takes her own lodgings in London and successively claims an aristocratic estate and the ruins of an old castle as her birthright, having grown delusional from too much novel reading.<sup>307</sup> These are already blatant transgressions of the rules of proper female geographical travel and property ownership, which even for notable heiresses such as Frances Burney's Cecilia or Charlotte Smith's Emmeline, always remains attached to the protagonist's husband in marriage. During her adventures, Cherry spends a night in prison, showing through the symbolic significance of jail as geographical space how far she has strayed from lawful Englishness. In addition, she allows her father to be committed to an asylum and renounces him, going beyond simply fleeing the patriarchal order to actually subvert it. The heroine remains chaste through all

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<sup>307</sup> The pitfalls of the voracious female novel reader is a recurring motif in the novels of both corpora, which I have explored in a paper entitled "'Counteracting the poison of novels': The Addicted Female Reader and the Prescription of Good Reading Practices in Early-Nineteenth-Century British Fiction."

this, and is eventually brought back to reason. An obvious parallel can be made with Margaret from Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) in the didactic corpus, but Cherry goes much further than Margaret in her subversion of the Burkean order, even if she does not actually fall. She is therefore allowed redemption and a proper domestic ending, yet I contend that her moral transgressions symbolized by her spatial mobility disqualify the novel from the possibility of being received as morally didactic.

Female protagonists of the novels of the reference corpus, although given endings which ultimately reinforce rules of moral virtue and in large part the stability of the national order, transgress that order much more clearly than their counterparts from the didactic corpus, which is materialized through their relation to geographical travel and space. In the novels of the reference corpus which feature male protagonists, ideals of Englishness also suffer significant transgression represented in the characters' travels, while they similarly tend to uphold these ideals by the ends of the novels. This gives further credence to the ideal of Englishness steeped in landed property as a dividing criteria between the two corpora.

## *ii. Male Travel*

As we have seen in the section on male travel in the novels of the didactic corpus, protagonists may venture beyond the national borders in ways which reinforce English nationhood, for example through travels which participate in England's imperial and colonial endeavors. In contrast, the male protagonists of the novels of the reference corpus illustrate a much more ambiguous relationship with the ideal of Englishness, as shown in the characters' spatial mobility.

In the only novel which received an unambiguously negative review, Gregory Lewis Way's *Learning at a Loss* (1778), the explicit transgression of the True Gentleman model discussed in chapter 6, II, iii translates geographically into an elopement in Scotland, which mirrors spatially the couple's deviation from the national moral ideal. The elopement arguably pollutes the integrity of the English estate which the two characters, female and male, will eventually inhabit, even as it legally legitimizes the union. Similarly, novels with male protagonists in the reference corpus which received generally favorable reviews include geographical mobility in ways which sideline this ideal of Englishness to various degrees.

While William Godwin's *Fleetwood* (1805) generally upholds moral values such as integrity, female chastity, and domesticity, the novel sees its main character travel extensively to Switzerland and France and be morally tainted by these journeys. On his first continental tour as a young man, Fleetwood becomes the lover of a married marquess,<sup>308</sup> and his extensive trip to France toward the end of the novel coincides with his desire to see his marriage annulled on the wrongful suspicion that his wife has been unfaithful. Moreover, Fleetwood has a surrogate father-son relationship with Swiss preceptor Ruffigny, whose nationality and ideas on nature and liberty evoke Swiss-born philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Fleetwood's country seat also happens to be in Wales rather than in England proper, making the entire novel geographically circumvent England, and by extension Englishness.

In George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799), the protagonist spends the majority of the novel in America beyond the frontier, in an effort to colonize the land for purely personal reasons as an attempt to live according to the precepts of the satirized "New Philosophy." Although Frederic renounces this way of life by the end and gladly returns to the "happy, happy shores" of England, presented as a sort of earthly Eden with its "few comparative evils," I would argue that the continual disavowal of English laws and values throughout the novel is not sufficiently counterbalanced by the last chapter which attempts to reinforce these values (228). This is evident through the geographical mobility of the main character, who before embarking for America, renounces his genteel heritage and becomes a thief on the open English road. The character therefore constitutes an insidious danger to Englishness working from within national borders before he tests his newfound precepts on American land. He considers the "wilds" of America as more natural and conducive to freedom than England—in a vision of the continent which, unlike Bage's *Hermesprung* in the didactic corpus, completely erases the existing traditions and social cultures of Indigenous peoples (91).

The scene of Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795) is much more static than these two novels, and ends with Henry enjoying genteel domestic felicity alongside his virtuous bride

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308 The novel here illustrates some of the concerns surrounding the Grand Tour, liable to cause young heirs to "waste their estate in folly and dissipation" (Black 1992: 300).

Isabella, alternating between life in the country and in town. As has already been mentioned, Henry is the illegitimate son of Lady Crowbery and Mr. Delaper, and the only time when Henry ventures beyond the national borders is to board his friend's ship Captain Cary, in the hopes that the obscurity and illegitimacy of his birth will be cleared as an obstacle for him to marry Isabella. The ship does not actually go far, as it is involved in a battle against a French "republican frigate" and ends up at Falmouth (Vol. IV, 227). Henry thus becomes embroiled in national affairs, and though "his heart glowed with love and pride for his friend" leading the crew, he is merely an accidental spectator as he is primarily concerned with his own personal matters, which involve illegitimacy (Vol. IV, 226). This short instance of international travel therefore runs counter to the ideals of Englishness supported by the novels of the didactic corpus, as it subverts the interests of the nation in order to seek the legitimization of an illegitimate birth, which itself poses a fundamental problem to national stability through official male lineage.

The remaining novels which feature a male protagonist in the reference corpus eschew the ideal of Englishness even more obviously. In Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796), the characters who are presented as the most moral are not the ones who achieve substantial social status. Rather, the paragons of morality and virtue are Henry and his son, who spend significant parts of their lives in Africa and end up living happily removed from "light promises of pretended friends" in "a small house, or hut, placed on the borders of the sea" in England (551). The location of the hut, on the very border of the country, mirrors the lifestyle of the characters, who choose not to engage with society but live "upon their *own* exertions alone" (551). Moreover, the elder Henry initially leaves for Africa "with a party of Portuguese and some few English adventurers, to people there the uninhabited part of an extensive island" (392). This is of course colonization, but much like *The Vagabond*, it does not occur within an explicitly national imperialist context, as several nationalities are represented on the ship, and the "few" Englishmen are described as "adventurers," suggesting individual rather than national motivations for leaving.

Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) also subverts—but does not do away with—English imperialism, switching the focus from England to Ireland. H. M., a young English nobleman whose father is a landlord in Ireland, is sent there by his father, where he

falls in love and marries Glorvina, the daughter of the Prince of Inismore, "whose great forefathers once owned the half of the barony, from the Red Bog to the sea-coast" (37). The novel ends on a letter from H. M.'s father, who calls for indivisible equality between the English and the Irish: "In this the dearest, most sacred, and most lasting of all human ties [referring to H. M. and Glorvina's marriage], let the names of Inismore and M —— be inseparably blended, and the distinctions of English and Irish, of Protestant and Catholic, for ever buried" (250). He also instructs his son to "consider those estates as yours, which I possess in this country [Ireland]," on the condition of "your spending eight months out of every twelve on that spot from whence the very nutrition of your existence is to be derived," effectively forbidding him from being an absentee landlord. It is significant that H. M. is instructed to spend at least eight, and not merely six months per year in Ireland—the blend of English and Irish ultimately favors Ireland, making Englishness secondary to Irishness, in a subversion of the political relationship between the two countries.<sup>309</sup>

Finally, moral social order is not clearly reinforced at the end of William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) (see chapter 4, III, iii). The moral ambiguity of the ending can be paralleled to that of the novel as a whole with regards to the figure of the landed gentleman, since the iteration of this figure in the novel in the character of Mr. Falkland turns out to be a murderer who persecutes his former employee Caleb Williams throughout the country and to the confines of the Welsh countryside for having found out his secret. Caleb Williams consequently finds himself regularly on the open roads in various disguises and in prison, all liminal spaces which elude proper, stable Englishness. Caleb never actually leaves England, as he is prevented from doing so by Mr. Falkland, which serves to equate the entire English nation as a prison for the main character, thus strikingly subverting the ideal of Englishness as a symbol of protective stability.

Marilyn Butler notes that "the protagonist undergoes traditional imprisonment in most of the best jacobin novels," citing as examples Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, both in the reference corpus, and Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman* from

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<sup>309</sup> Lisa Moore contends that this ending, which blends romance with politics, has led Owenson to be widely "seen as true-hearted Irish patriot, one who valued the beauties of Irish language, music, and folklore and was a worthy, if minor, progenitor to the Irish cultural nationalists of the Celtic Revival," although ultimately her novel supports the Act of Union, arguably "promoting English colonial interests at the expense of an independent Irish nation" (114, 116).

the didactic corpus (1987: 50). In these novels, the motif of imprisonment dramatizes the social oppression which the protagonists face, symbolically questioning and subverting the Burkean order—and at times explicitly so, through a trial "at which the prisoner speaks out against tyranny and in favour of the individual's right to liberty" (50).

### *iii. The Son of a Genius and Mansfield Park*

When it comes to Barbara Hofland's *The Son of a Genius* (1812) and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), their engagement with geographical mobility does not clearly fall in with the novels of either corpus, mirroring the discussion in chapter 6 of the link between moral didacticism and proper gentility in these novels that were not reviewed upon first publication.<sup>310</sup> In these novels, the main characters do not leave England: Ludovico travels with his family from the countryside to Manchester, York, Leeds, and London, and Fanny Price goes from her parents' house to her uncle's estate twice over the course of the *Mansfield Park*.

Moreover, Sir Thomas Bertram spends a significant portion of Austen's novel in the West Indies, reinforcing the power of Englishness anchored in the country estate through the money derived from colonial endeavors. Secondary characters who turn out to be morally flawed or compromised, such as Henry and Mary Crawford, travel much more than the virtuous heroine, linking vice to travels away from the stability of the country estate.<sup>311</sup> This, combined with the fact that the novel ends on the reaffirmation that the estate of Mansfield Park is a place where one can find happiness "as secure as earthly happiness can be," suggests that in this instance the novel falls in with those of the didactic corpus (408). Fanny and her husband Edmund do not end up living in the main house though, but rather in the more modest parsonage attached to the estate, which arguably decenters the focus on the periphery of the estate, while not negating its pull and power.<sup>312</sup>

*The Son of a Genius* is more difficult to classify, as Ludovico's lifestyle is decidedly middle-class rather than genteel, and his industry is rewarded at the end of the novel with

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310 As explained in the General Introduction, these novels were included in the reference corpus so as to balance it in terms of authors and period of publication in order to make it a comparable entity to the didactic corpus, given the relative sparsity of readily available digitized novels from the period.

311 See Clark and Peraldo's mapping of the novel and attending commentary, <https://mappingwriting.com/works/3731/chronologies>, accessed 20 May 2022.

312 *Mansfield Park* remains the abode of Lady and Sir Bertram.

the acquisition of "a small, but neat and pleasant dwelling" in London. The kind of Englishness which is upheld here looks forward to the industrialization of the later nineteenth century and growing importance of urban centers and middle-class commerce in the national social hierarchy, rather than the idealized country estate as the seat of national power and stability (Williams 152; Davidoff and Hall 18; Mingay 14).

## **Conclusion**

Overall, a definite distinction can be made between the two corpora in terms of the way the novels engage with geographical travel and spatial mobility. While the novels of the didactic corpus tend to reinforce a sense of national Englishness as geographically anchored in the stability of the English country estate, those of the reference corpus sideline this ideal of Englishness in favor of a more ambiguous or downright subversive representation of the relationship between geography and power in the English context. The domestic country house or estate thus appears as a symbol of stable nationhood in the novels of the didactic corpus, suggesting that upholding this notion of Englishness is integral to the early reception of moral didacticism. This is congruent with William Warner's argument that the rise of the English novel coincides with the nationalization of culture, which he states is "reinterpreted as a distinct expression of the nation" during the nineteenth century (19-20). Finding one of the main differences between my two corpora to hinge on the representation of the nation therefore suggests that novels received as morally didactic at the turn of the nineteenth century may be understood to be a stepping tone toward the full "nationalization" of the novel genre in the nineteenth century, going hand in hand with its full legitimization as an artistic form. This question will be pursued in the next chapter, comparing the trajectories of the novels of the two corpora in relation to the literary canon from their initial publication to the early twenty-first century.

The last two chapters have also underscored that the dividing lines between the two corpora have much more to do with narrative trajectories than stylistic considerations, which supports the findings from the computer-aided analysis conducted in chapters 4 and 5 and recalls Patrick Parrinder's own investigation of the link between the English novel and the nation (4). The final section of this chapter will assess the extent to which the notion of

nationhood centered on English gentility is central to what we might call a didactic register, or constitutive of a subgenre of narrative fiction.



### Conclusions from Part 3.

The results from chapters 7 and 8 suggest that the novels from the didactic corpus do form a coherent whole, making it possible to delineate the features characteristic of the didactic subgenre from the perspective of early reception. The question of generic definition is a difficult one, and the term genre is often applied in different ways. Biber and Conrad's terminology undergirds the corpus stylistics studies from chapters 4 and 5, and their definition of "genre" and "register" anchored in linguistics mirrors distinctions made by literary scholars. As delineated in the General Introduction, Alastair Fowler posits a division between what he calls "kinds," which are "characterized by *external structure*," and "modes," traditionally adjectival terms derived from genres (such as "comic" and "comedy"), which "have always an incomplete repertoire, a selection only of the corresponding kind's features, and one from which overall external structure is absent," and may be signaled for example by "a characteristic motif," or "a rhetorical proportion or quality" (107). Fowler's distinction between kind and mode mirrors in important ways that found in Biber and Conrad regarding genre and register. For them, genre is defined by "the conventional structures used to construct a complete text within [a text] variety (for example, the conventional way in which a letter begins and ends)" (2). In contrast, register study "combines an analysis of linguistic characteristics that are common in a text variety":

the underlying assumption of the register perspective is that core linguistic features (e.g., pronouns and verbs) serve communicative functions. As a result, some linguistic features are common in a register because they are functionally adapted to the communicative purposes and situational contexts of texts from that register. (2)

In both taxonomies, a distinction is made between a set of formal characteristics and pervasive elements of language which may be found regardless of the former. Importantly, any text may be analyzed from both perspectives.

As we have seen regarding the expected linguistic features of moral didacticism in chapter 4, scholarly discussions of didacticism in fiction tend to center on register rather than genre. Nevertheless, Hilary Havens uses the term "didactic genre" in her introduction to *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing* (8), and the term "didactic novel" suggests by its

construction what Fowler would call a subgenre, "made by distinguishing additional genre-linked motifs or topics" to preexisting genres (112). In contrast with modes, which are not linked to a specific form, subgenres "have the common features of the kind—external forms and all—and, over and above these, add special substantive features" (112).<sup>313</sup> In the case of the two corpora at hand, the external form is the novel, following James Raven's claim that "during the final thirty years of the eighteenth century 'the novel' was secured as an acknowledged category of fiction" and that "the range of publications that contemporaries originally regarded as 'novels' is extremely diverse," allowing for the disparity in size found in the corpora (16, 21).<sup>314</sup> The main additional feature, according to Havens, is the centrality of instruction over "imaginative elements" (5). Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have shown that moral instruction in the form of explicit didactic intent or vocabulary related to the notion generally characterize the novels of both corpora, rendering Havens' definition too wide to account for the difference in early reception.

Topic is central to Fowler's definition of subgenre, differing from Biber and Conrad. They allow for the existence of subgenres, but formal characteristics making up its textual conventions remain central, resulting in a narrower perspective than Fowler's (55). Nonetheless, "topic" is one of seven categories in Biber and Conrad's framework of analysis, "for either the register or genre perspective" (39). These topics may be general, such as "daily activities, business/workplace, science," or more specific, including mentions of "social status" (40). Chapters 4 and 5 for instance explored the difference between the corpora in terms of register through keyword analysis as a means to highlight topic. In addition, Biber and Conrad note that "for literary genres the notion of *textual convention* is somewhat different than what we have discussed in previous chapters for non-literary genres. That is, there are generally no formulaic beginnings or closings in literary genres, but there are expected conventions for constructing a text in a particular genre," including "the existence of protagonists and antagonists, some kind of story conflict, a climax, a resolution of conflict, and discourse that shifts across several major communicative goals" (223, author's emphasis). Chapters 6 and 7 indicate the novels of the didactic corpus to be structured diegetically by

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313 Fowler uses the term "kind" to refer to the notion of "historical genre," which is the starting point of his nomenclature on genre (56).

314 Raven's bibliographical survey was taken as a starting point to build the two corpora, playing a part in my decision to term these works "novels."

the centrality of genteel Englishness framed as a moral ideal. I therefore posit that what has been described as the rhetorical quality of moral didacticism is a distinguishing feature of the register of late-eighteenth-century novels, with formal elements such as concluding moral remarks constituting a generic marker (see chapter 4). The didactic novel as it was received at the time may be said to constitute a subgenre, including the same features of register and generic markers, and adding specific topics and motifs that structure the narrative.

In the didactic corpus, the prevalence of certain motifs, understood to be elements such as "a situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type" that compose topics, gives credence to the pertinence of the didactic novel as a subgenre, which the few variations or deviations found in some of the novels do not undermine (Baldick 1990: 162, 258, Fowler 40). These include the character-type of the genteel female heroine, domestic marriage on a English country estate in euphoric plots and the loss of that prospect in cautionary tales, or geographical travel as a marker of social and/or moral precariousness for female characters in the novels of the didactic corpus. These motifs structure the narratives and take on increased significance when contrasted to the elements which appear to take away from the cohesive nature of the corpus, like the intermingling of several subgenres, visible in both corpora. Beyond a variety of recognizable subgenres, the overall narrative trajectories of the novels of the didactic corpus, through certain motifs and topics, link the didactic novel as a subgenre of the turn of the nineteenth century to the ideal of genteel, domestic English nationhood. Strikingly, the early reception of this ideal includes authors from all over the political spectrum, some of whom appear in both corpora, further underlining the importance of these specific narrative motifs to the cohesion of the critics' reception of moral didacticism in novels.

In terms of generic markers, works from both corpora also fit different subcategories of the novel in addition to the didactic, such as satirical, Gothic, Jacobin or Anti-Jacobin, and domestic. Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810, didactic corpus) and Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813, reference corpus) are both recognizably satirical, ridiculing the figure of the excessive and irrational female novel reader. George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799, reference corpus) is also satirical, but takes 'new philosophy' as its subject

matter, in an example of male anti-Jacobin novels tending to be more political than women's (Wood 56). Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* (1798, didactic corpus), Richard Sicklemore's *Edgar* (1798, didactic corpus), and Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792, reference corpus) have clear elements of the Gothic with passages of suspense and/or horror occurring in settings such as an asylum (*Maria*, *Anna St. Ives*) or the ruins of an old castle (*Edgar*). Several novels can also be seen as overtly political, such as Lady Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village* (1778, didactic corpus), described by Anne Mellor as a "feminist utopian fantasy" (1993: 39), Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary* and *Maria* (1788 and 1798, didactic corpus), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794, reference corpus), Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796, reference corpus), and George Walker's *The Vagabond* (1799, reference corpus). The dividing line between these novels which otherwise share such generic traits hinges on their treatment of the national ideal of proper English gentility, both in male and female characters, making the case for the specific subgenre of the didactic, which can nonetheless intersect with other subgenres.

The final generic category that is often part of discussions of fiction in the period is the domestic novel. The domestic novel has been linked to moral didacticism and is considered to be a predominantly feminine genre, written by women with female protagonists (Bilger 27; Wood 61). The novels of the didactic corpus fit this gendered categorization, and many of them are "based upon a plot of courtship that makes explicit some of the text's central lessons," as previously stated (Wood 69). Wood's definition appears to subsume the didactic subgenre within the domestic one, while Katherine Binhammer (180) and Teri Doerksen (193) differentiate between the two. Wood focuses on anti-Jacobin fiction, and indeed her definition of the domestic novel excludes works from revolutionaries such as Hays, Williams, and Wollstonecraft in the didactic corpus, none of which follow a euphoric plot of courtship. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 5, II, novels from the reference corpus such as Brunton's *Discipline* (1814) and Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) do follow such a plot, and yet are not in the didactic corpus, arguing for a distinction between the domestic and the didactic genre.

Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788) may also be considered a domestic novel, although Smith is considered a radical, and works written by and focusing on men such as

Robert Bage's *Hermesprong* (1796, didactic corpus) and Richard Cumberland's *Henry* (1795, reference corpus) are largely based on a plot of courtship which highlights the texts' moral lessons.<sup>315</sup> This is also the case for Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806, reference corpus), told from the point of view of a young gentleman, and Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792, reference corpus), which focuses on a young woman but is written by a man. This does not necessarily take away from the prevalent view of the genre as particularly feminine, as these are minority occurrences in the two corpora and may illustrate the kind of gender-bending generic engagement which Anne Mellor discusses in relation to her concepts of masculine and feminine Romanticism (4).

In any case, the pervasiveness of the domestic subgenre across the two corpora calls for a reexamination of the didactic novel as a separate subgenre from the domestic novel. All in all, the comparison of the novels of the two corpora in terms of register and topic suggests that the didactic novel of the turn of the nineteenth century in Britain may be defined by a commitment to a certain ideal of proper gentility, female and male, upholding a sense of English nationhood, which the novels of the reference corpus, whether intentionally or not, fail to achieve. This takes the subgenre of the didactic novel beyond its moral nature linked to female domesticity, and makes it decidedly—but not necessarily overtly—political. Often considered to be derived from the non-fiction genre of the conduct book, the didactic novel combines several questions that were central to the period, including the importance of reason and prudence as defined for instance by Locke and often discussed in conduct literature of the period, whether by conservative or radical writers (Spencer 142).<sup>316</sup> A comparative study between conduct books and didactic novels of the period would be useful to investigate the links between the two genres.<sup>317</sup> These elements are central to what Anne Mellor calls feminine Romanticism, and indeed they are visible in a number of the novels

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<sup>315</sup> See Zimmerman, Sarah M. "Smith [née Turner], Charlotte (1749–1806), poet and novelist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, <https://www-oxforddnb-com.janus.bis-sorbonne.fr/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-25790>. Accessed 23 May, 2022.

<sup>316</sup> See for example Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799). A comparative study between conduct books and didactic novels of the period would be useful to investigate the links between the two genres.

<sup>317</sup> This is a project that I would like to pursue, which would necessitate the digitization of a number of works. The scarcity of conduct books readily available in digital format is the reason why such a study has not been undertaken in the context of this dissertation.

from the reference corpus as well (39). The link between didactic novels as they were received in the period and a sense of English nationhood differentiates these novels from others, however; they should therefore be valued as an important step in the development of the English novel tradition, which William Warner specifically ties to the "nationalization of culture" (19).

Warner argues that the novel's realist claims, moral effects, and national ties remain entangled in the nineteenth-century, and "become the minimal criteria for identifying novels and distinguishing them from 'mere' fiction" (40). In light of the importance which didactic novels as they were originally received play in the history of the English novel, it seems pertinent to investigate the fate of these novels in literary history, through their reception in the later nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. This is the subject of the remaining two chapters of this dissertation.

## Part 4. The Fate of the Didactic Novel

The didactic novel has been shown to be a cogent term to describe a subcategory of fiction, starting with its contemporary critical reception. As delineated in the General Introduction, the term "didactic" has been used in recent scholarship in a variety of ways, be it to describe a rhetorical quality suggesting a didactic register or mode, to define a group of novels conceived of as a subgenre, or to judge texts negatively, implying a stylistic flaw, following Biber and Conrad's definition of style as pervasive linguistic features "preferred for aesthetic reasons" (55). Chapter 8 proposes to historicize the evolution of critical attitudes toward moral didacticism from register and style perspectives and the didactic novel subgenre, which the didactic corpus represents, by investigating the relationship of the novels of both corpora to the evolving literary canon, from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first. Finally, chapter 9 presents a case-study in reader-response, analyzing the reactions of French undergraduate students to excerpts from three didactic novels, as a way to explore the variety of possible attitudes to moral didacticism coming from contemporary readers, compared with the scholarly tradition delineated in chapter 8.

# Chapter 8. The Didactic Novel and the English Literary Canon

## Introduction

The literary canon has been the subject of much inquiry in the academic community in past decades. Frank Kermode legitimizes the use of the term "canon" in the context of literature, which originally refers to a set of biblical texts, by retracing how the biblical canon came to be, with an emphasis on the debates and uncertainties surrounding its creation, down to the challenges that it still faces today, rendering it as subject to change as the literary canon, although to a lesser degree (1979: 81). The delimitation of the literary canon is intimately linked to the very concept of literature, which most theorists deem near impossible to define satisfactorily. Scholars generally agree that such a thing as the literary canon exists, but its limits and the forces that have driven its creation and evolution remain heavily debated (Eagleton 1-9, Beardsley 23, Hirsch 48). Pragmatically, the literary canon has been defined as "the list of authors and works included in basic literature courses because they are deemed to comprise our cultural heritage" (Kaplan and Cronan Rose xvii). Indeed, our conception of the Western canon has been closely linked to the university institution ever since the institutionalization of English as an academic field of study, which Carey Kaplan and Ellen Cronan Rose situate at the very beginning of the twentieth century in Great Britain (9), and which Terry Eagleton associates to the rise of New Criticism in the US (43). Furthermore, many theorists agree on the importance of the relationship between the "canon" and university curricula, particularly for undergraduate teaching (Price 2000: 2; Kaplan and Cronan Rose xvii; Kermode 1979: 72; Ohmann 206; Fowler 214; Altieri 6; Bloom 15).

Despite this relative consensus on the nature of the literary canon, the last fifty years have seen an intense debate on what its boundaries should be, which is particularly obvious in the context of feminist challenges to the canon, among others.<sup>318</sup> Even the most staunch

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<sup>318</sup> Harold Bloom writes in *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994), that "the 'expansion of the Canon' has meant the destruction of the Canon, since what is being taught includes by no means the best writers who happen to be women, African, Hispanic, or Asian, but rather the writers who offer little but the resentment they have developed as part of their sense of identity" (7). His fierce reaction against what he calls the "School of Resentment" highlights the strides that were made in the second half of the



defenders of the "traditional canon," such as Harold Bloom who supports the validity of 26 canonical authors for their aesthetic "sublimity and representative nature," recognize that the canon is prone to change, if only to include newer authors who exhibit "strong literary originality" (Altieri 51, Bloom 2, 25). Charles Altieri also defends the "traditional canon" and rejects the move to expand it based on attendance to issues of social and cultural importance like gender and racial equality, a sentiment which Bloom echoes (Altieri 59, Bloom 7). However, Altieri and Bloom disagree on the social function of the traditional canon, with the former arguing for its reliance on "the root of ethics in cultural ethos," able to "challenge our contemporary habits," and the latter asserting the amoral nature of canonical works (Altieri 10, 17, Bloom 29). Altieri also keeps the boundaries of the "traditional canon" vague, "more an ideal productive network of possibilities than a specific curriculum," as opposed to Bloom's fixed 26 authors (50). More pragmatically, J. D. Porter of the Stanford Literary Lab has stated that while canons invariably work on the same binary structure of "you're either in or you're out," there is not just one canon, but multiple canons of literature (1).

Moreover, while Bloom discards the question of the cultural and historical contexts in the construction of the literary canon in favor of a purely aesthetic principle, Altieri recognizes that the elitist canon is linked to the "bourgeois financial position of most academics," although he argues that it cannot be reduced to that dimension and retains value in spite of this reality (73). The question of the importance of the academic institution in the evolution of the canon is something that most theorists discuss, stressing the influence of socio-cultural and institutional values. For Richard Ohmann, the canon embodies a "struggle for dominance" of values (199). This is close to Kermode's notion of "institutionalised competence", which stipulates that only the ones who have been sanctioned by the institution as competent interpreters may incur change in what is to be considered worthy of study and the acceptable ways to study it (1979: 75). Feminist scholarship becoming gradually accepted within academia constitutes an example of a change in the canon from within the institution, leading for example to thematic curricula in women's literature, whose point according to Alastair Fowler "is not to enlarge literature, but

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twentieth century in reevaluating the canon, illustrated for example by the publications of *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English* (1985) and *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997). Denis Donoghue has called the publication of the former a "crucial strategic event" initiating discourse by giving a place for "feminists to go together for a while" (35).

to restructure it and so enlarge its values" (10). Both corpora under study here feature a large proportion of female authors, and part of the aim of this chapter is to determine the importance of feminist scholarship in the relationship between the didactic novels and the canon. While cultural attitudes toward women's published writing are indeed important in the evolution of this relationship, it will become clear in this chapter that evolving perspectives on moral didacticism as a perceived register are also crucial.

For Ohmann, the academic community is one of "the final arbiters of literary merit" in our society (206). Though this community does not equate the ruling class and may resist some of its values, the process of canon formation and reformation is necessarily linked to politics and power, echoing John Guillory's claim that canon formation is closely tied to the "problem of access to the means of literary production and consumption" leading to the "*reproduction of the social order*" (ix, 73, author's emphasis). Scholars such as Sarah Corse or Robert Lecker have stressed the political implications of the national literary canon, respectively stating that "canon-formation is a political process driven by the work of specific cultural agents with identifiable interests and resources within particular historical contexts" and that the process of creating anthologies "involves imagining the country, imagining a community, imagining an identity" (218, 7).<sup>319</sup> These two scholars link the formation of a vernacular and national canon to the notion of nation building, adhering to the idea that "all canon formation [...] is ideological," in stark opposition to Bloom who ultimately rejects the claim that the process is political rather than aesthetic (Kaplan and Cronan Rose 163). Given my conclusions from chapters 6 and 7 on didactic novels articulating a certain definition of Englishness, it is important to study the relationship of these novels to the evolving English canon, to determine whether their definition of Englishness and the ways in which it is framed becomes culturally entrenched.

On the whole, scholars on both ends of the debate regarding canon expansion tend to recognize the importance of both the aesthetic literary value, however difficult that is to define, and political factors in the larger sense. For instance, Alistair Fowler states that "the official canon is institutionalized through education, patronage, and journalism," thereby taking into account the weight of the institution and its political values in the formation and reformation of the canon, yet still calls for including discussions of literary value (214, 10).

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<sup>319</sup> Corse focuses on the British and American canons, while Lecker discusses the English-Canadian context.

Similarly, Altieri argues that "it is a mistake to read cultural history only as a tawdry melodrama of interests pursued and ideologies produced," but also recognizes the politically charged elitism of the canon (17, 21, 73). Fowler's claim that thematic curricula constitute a restructuring and a challenge to the values of the canon rather than an enlargement of it also suggests that works included in such curricula are aesthetically and culturally valuable and deserve their place in the canon, contrasting with Bloom's fear of the "School of Resentment" expanding the canon according to a socio-political agenda rather than based on literary "greatness" (7).

Of course, the very concept of literary or aesthetic value is liable to change according to period and place. Jane Tompkins' work on nineteenth-century American sensational fiction demonstrates this, seeking to explore "why these works, many of which did not seem at all deficient to their original audiences, have come to seem deficient" to modern critics (xii). Perhaps the most problematic aspect in theoretical works on the canon does not lie in failing to historicize the process of canon formation and reformation (as Bloom does), but rather in failing to historicize the aesthetic principle, including in works which do take questions of changing politics and ideology into account. It therefore seems of crucial importance to study the canon empirically in order to shed light on the relationship between aesthetic and cultural values and how both of these may be subject to change, especially insofar as no theorist that I have read claims that all literary works are of similar value, however critical they may be of the "ossified canon" (Kaplan and Cronan Rose xvii). This appears particularly important in the case of moral didacticism, whose critical reception has greatly fluctuated over time, as we will see in this chapter.

Research on canon formation and evolution also stresses the joint—and at times contradictory—importance of aesthetic and commercial concerns. According to Michael Gamer, this is clear from the very first attempts at canon building, such as Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *The British Novelists* (1810). Gamer claims that for Barbauld, "literary production is necessarily collaborative, that legal and economic considerations matter as much as aesthetic ones, and that a utopian world free of legal and commercial constraints would bring with it critical autonomy and a larger and more diverse canon of writing," highlighting the tensions between aesthetic and commercial concerns (462). This supports the findings

from a quantitative investigation into the nature of the English canon from the Stanford Literary Lab, which concludes that while the existence of a canon in English literature is undeniable, "the canon is in a constant state of flux" through continual shifts in popularity and prestige, which are understood to be central markers of canonicity (Porter 17, 20). Porter states that there are "two different ways of entering the canon: being read by many and being prized by an elite few," the latter of which largely referring to the academic community (2).

We will see in this chapter the interaction between popularity and prestige through a study of the publication histories of the novels of both corpora, and the evolution of their treatment by literary historians and critics over the course of the nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first centuries. This canon-formation study illustrates the instability of the canon throughout history, with evolving definitions of and critical attitudes to moral didacticism, shifting from an emphasis on topic as a central aspect of the didactic register and subgenre to a focus on style, emphasizing aesthetics over communicative function (Biber and Conrad 52). It also highlights the interconnected nature of popularity, critical appraisal, and social and cultural shifts in canonicity. The chapter starts by an investigation the publication history of the novels of both corpora (I). It then focuses on the evolution of the novels' prestige using anthologies and books on literary history published in the nineteenth century (II), early twentieth century (III), and late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (IV).

## I. Publication History

One of the indicators that may tell us about the trajectories of works over time and in relation to the literary canon is their publication history, as the number of editions that a novel has been through constitutes a criterion to determine success according to Anthony Mandal (2007: 16).<sup>320</sup> The first volume of James Raven's *The English Novel and the Database of British Fiction*, both of which have been drawn on extensively in this dissertation for my work on reviews, provide the list of further editions of the novels until 1850. This tells us about the popularity of the works in the relatively short term, as it gives an idea regarding the scope of

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<sup>320</sup> This constitutes a different methodology from Porter's, who used reviews from the website Goodreads to assess the popularity of 1 406 authors, and the MLA International Bibliography to count the number of articles centering on each writer as a measure of academic prestige (1-3). Porter's study thus illuminates the state of the canon today, whereas I aim to assess the evolution of reception over time.

their circulation, and by extension of their potential readership. After 1850, the records from *The British Library* and the *Library of Congress* may help draw a picture of the fate of these works over the course of the next 170 years that follow. As stated in the introduction, popularity is but one marker of canonicity, which may be in part measured by publication history. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account the particular editions of the novels, especially in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries when some editions are recognizably scholarly, and may indicate prestige rather than popularity. A study of publication history shows a distinct move within canonicity from popularity to prestige for the two corpora, though to different degrees. While the novels of the reference corpus were more popular in the period following their initial publication, suggesting greater contemporary cultural relevance, those of the didactic corpus have benefited more from renewed scholarly interest in recent decades, implying a steadier legacy within literary history.

Tables 28 and 29 show the publication histories of the two corpora in print (as opposed to digital publication), from first publication to 2020.<sup>321</sup> The period spanned is divided in four, with each column devoted to roughly fifty years, matching the organization of this chapter. A separate column with the number of scholarly editions is also included; editions considered scholarly must feature at least an introduction by a literary scholar. This column includes editions from 1850 to 2020, although the vast majority of scholarly editions were published after 1970, which may be largely explained by the advent of feminist criticism, as will be made clear. The column gives us an indication of the expected readership of the editions, whether general or academic. The ratio between the two types of publications allows us to comment on the place of the novels in relation to canonicity and "hypercanonicity" defined by Porter as including the writers that "are both read and widely written about, the people who most obviously made the club in older, simpler forms of the canon" (Porter 6).<sup>322</sup> Though Porter's study focuses on authors and my work centers on

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321 The tables include print editions of the works in English only. It would be worthwhile to take into account the translations into French and German in further research, to widen the scope of the study to a European perspective, as Algee-Hewitt *et al* have done (3). The rows in blue indicate male authors.

322 Building on Pierre Bourdieu's theory that literary prestige works in opposition to commercial success starting at least in the nineteenth century, with the former being established by an elite few, excluding commercial success which depends on the general public (168, 175), the researchers at the Stanford Literary Lab have developed a model of the literary canon(s) in the context of English-language literature, stressing that the French and British contexts work differently, as do the British and North-American ones (Porter 15, 17). J. D. Porter argues that where popularity and prestige meet, the "hypercanonical" resides. In that area of canonicity, one can find for instance Austen, Dickens, and Shakespeare, with the latter in the top position

specific novels, the concept is applicable to both approaches, as Porter's initial discussion of canonicity highlights.<sup>323</sup>

The tables show a stark contrast in the trajectories of these two corpora's reception over time, which almost mirror each other: in the few decades following first publication, the reference corpus appears almost twice as important as the didactic corpus in terms of number of editions, showing a greater cultural relevance in this period. After 1850 however, this pattern is reversed, which may suggest that the values of didactic novels become canonical to a certain extent, supporting the conclusions of the previous two chapters. These numbers warrant deeper investigation, as this evolution coincides with a growing suspicion of perceived moral didacticism in art over the course of the nineteenth century, which culminates with the art for art's sake doctrine (Price 2000: 153). The possible discrepancy between the evolution of the novels' popularity and that of their critical reception within academia will be studied in the following sections, as well as the evolution of the reception of moral didacticism as an increasingly unwelcome stylistic marker.<sup>324</sup>

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(10).

323 In his article's introduction, Porter first considers the relative canonicity of authors William Shakespeare, Herman Melville, and Nathanael West, before wondering about the status of specific works, such as Stephen King's widely read *The Shining* and Melville's lesser known *Pierre* (2).

324 I use the term "style" here as opposed to "register" to account for the literary historians and scholars' perspective. For Biber and Conrad, "style" considers "typical linguistic features associated with a collection of text samples," associated with idiosyncratic aesthetic preferences rather than functional communicative purpose, as was my approach in previous chapters (18). It is usually used "to describe systematic variations within [a] register/genre of fiction," most often associated with individual authors (18).

TITLE, AUTHOR	1 <sup>st</sup> EDITION	EDITIONS/ REPRINTS BY 1850	EDITIONS 1851-1900	EDITIONS 1901-1969	EDITIONS SINCE 1970	TOTAL FURTHER EDITIONS	NUMBER OF CRITICAL EDITIONS	% of critical editions
<i>Evelina</i> , Frances Burney	1778	15	12	20	12	59	9	15
<i>Munster Village</i> , Lady Mary Hamilton	1778	2	0	0	1	3	1	33
<i>Cecilia</i> , Frances Burney	1782	4	3	3	5	15	2	13
<i>Mary, A Fiction</i> , Mary Wollstonecraft	1788	0	0	0	8	8	8	100
<i>Julia, A Novel</i> , Helen Maria William	1790	3	0	0	3	6	3	50
<i>Hermesprong</i> , Robert Bage	1796	6	0	2	3	11	3	27
<i>Memoirs of Emma Courtney</i> , Mary Hays	1796	2	0	0	8	10	6	60
<i>Edgar</i> , Richard Sicklemore	1798	0	0	0	1	1	1	100
<i>Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman</i> , Mary Wollstonecraft	1798	0	0	0	12	12	10	83
<i>Belinda</i> , Maria Edgeworth	1801	7	3	2	8	20	8	40
<i>The Father and Daughter</i> , Amelia Opie	1801	12	0	0	4	16	2	13
<i>The Nobility of the Heart</i> , Elizabeth Spence	1805	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Cælebs in Search of a Wife</i> , Hannah More	1808	14	6	0	3	23	1	4
<i>Romance Readers and Romance Writers</i> , Sarah Green	1810	0	0	0	1	1	1	100
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> , Jane Austen	1811	6	18	40	72	136	40	29
<i>Self-Control</i> , Mary Brunton	1811	10	1	0	7	18	4	22
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , Jane Austen	1813	8	19	72	105	204	61	30
<i>Patronage</i> , Maria Edgeworth	1814	5	3	2	4	14	3	21
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>29</b>
					<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1277</b>		
<b>- Austen</b>		<b>80</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>29</b>
					<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>496</b>		
Male		6	0	2	4	12	4	33
Female		88	65	139	253	545	159	29

Table 28. Publication History of the Novels of the Didactic Corpus<sup>325</sup>

325 The "total" line in red includes all novels, and the line in blue excludes Austen's novels, as her hypercanonical status heavily skews the data.

TITLE, AUTHOR	1 <sup>st</sup> EDITION	EDITIONS REPRINTS BY 1850	EDITIONS 1851-1900	EDITIONS 1901-1969	EDITIONS SINCE 1970	TOTAL FURTHER EDITIONS	NUMBER OF CRITICAL EDITIONS	% of critical editions
<i>Learning at a Loss</i> , Gregory Lewis Way	1778	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Emmeline</i> , Charlotte Smith	1788	10	0	0	0	3	13	3
<i>A Simple Story</i> , Elizabeth Inchbald	1791	25	3	2	6	36	6	17
<i>Anna St. Ives</i> , Thomas Holcroft	1792	6	0	0	2	8	2	25
<i>Caleb Williams</i> , William Godwin	1794	20	0	3	7	30	9	30
<i>Henry</i> , Richard Cumberland	1795	11	0	0	0	11	0	0
<i>Nature and Art</i> , Elizabeth Inchbald	1796	14	0	0	3	17	2	12
<i>Rosamund Gray</i> , Charles Lamb	1798	2	2	3	1	8	0	0
<i>The Vagabond</i> , George Walker	1799	5	0	0	1	6	1	17
<i>Adeline Mowbray</i> , Amelia Opie	1805	4	0	0	6	10	5	50
<i>Fleetwood</i> , William Godwin	1805	3	0	0	6	9	4	44
<i>Leonora</i> , Maria Edgeworth	1806	2	2	1	2	7	2	29
<i>The Wild Irish Girl</i> , Sydney Owenson	1806	10	0	2	5	17	4	24
<i>The Son of a Genius</i> , Barbara Hofland	1812	17	1	0	0	18	0	0
<i>The Heroine</i> , Eaton Stannard Barrett	1813	3	0	2	1	6	2	33
<i>Mansfield Park</i> , Jane Austen	1814	6	4	15	39	64	25	39
<i>Discipline</i> , Mary Brunton	1814	5	1	0	2	8	2	25
<i>The Wanderer</i> , Frances Burney	1814	2	0	0	1	3	1	33
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>145</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>25</b>
				<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>610</b>		
<b>- Austen</b>		<b>139</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>21</b>
				<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>457</b>		
Male		50	2	8	18	78	18	23
Female		95	11	20	67	193	50	26

Table 29. Publication History of the Novels of the Reference Corpus



Tables 28 and 29 clearly show the hypercanonicity of Austen's novels, with a much greater number of publications than any other novel of either corpus both in general and scholarly editions. The tables show that out of the three Austen novels in the corpora, *Pride and Prejudice* is the most hypercanonical, while *Mansfield Park* enjoys the most subdued canonical status, which Burney's *Evelina* comes close to. Nonetheless, all three Austen novels follow the same trend, with numbers of new editions steadily growing from 1850 on. The presence of an author of such hypercanonical status as Austen in these corpora may therefore skew the data and make the didactic corpus as a whole seem more lastingly canonical than the reference corpus, given the trajectory of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. This is the reason why I have included a count of the editions for both corpora which excludes Austen's three novels. The same trends remain, with the novels of the reference corpus overall starting out with greater popularity than those of the didactic corpus before 1850, and the opposite being true by the later twentieth century (see Figures 7 and 8).<sup>326</sup>

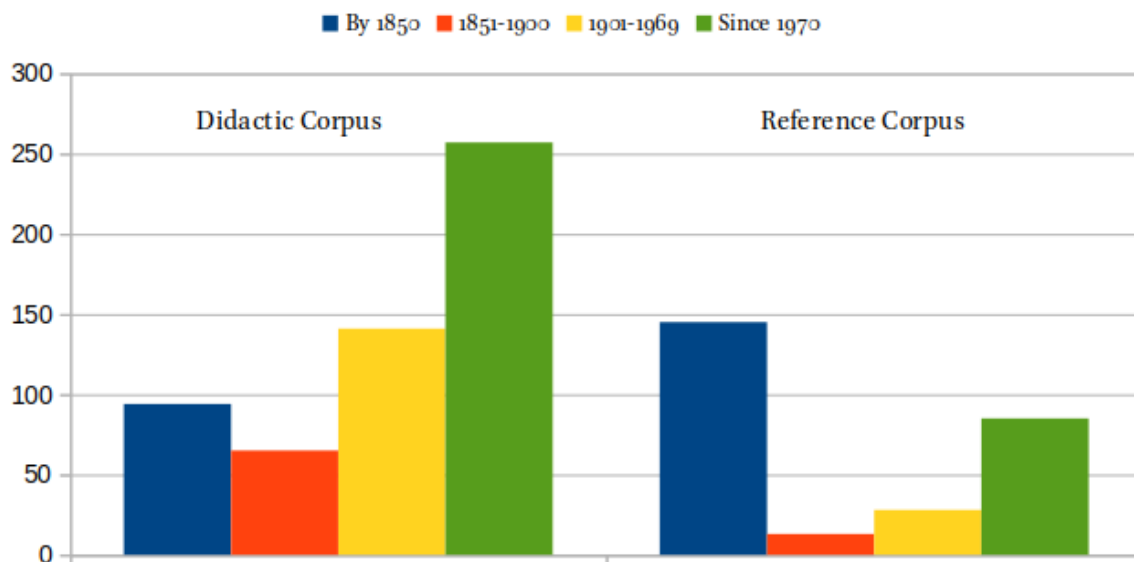


Figure 7. Comparison of Publication Histories (including Austen)

<sup>326</sup> It is important to note that these are overall trends, and both corpora have very unequal distribution of numbers of editions among the individual novels. Both include one novel which according to the records of the British Library and the Library of Congress has never been reprinted: Elizabeth Spence's *The Nobility of the Heart* in the didactic corpus and Gregory Lewis Way's *Learning at a Loss* in the reference corpus. The relative arbitrariness of digitization plays a role here, since digitization can but does not necessarily imply popularity or significant scholarly interest.

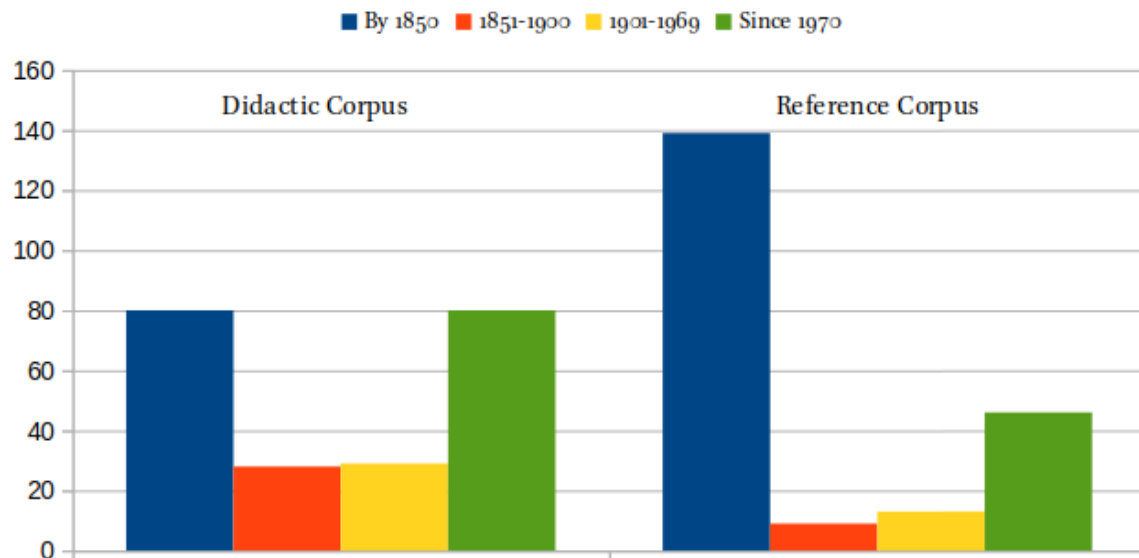


Figure 8. Comparison of Publication Histories (without Austen)

The data puts in perspective the assertion that Hannah More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* was a "bestseller" (Mandal 2014: xxi). While 14 further editions for that novel within the first few years of initial publication is certainly a great number, it pales a little in comparison to the 25 further editions by 1850 of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story*. Seven novels of the reference corpus go through nine editions or more by 1850, as opposed to only four from the didactic corpus, showing that while moral didacticism was valued by critics at the time of publication, overall, novels going beyond the strict portrayals of Englishness found in the didactic corpus were actually more popular. One of these is *Evelina*, whose publication history is strikingly linear, ranging between 12 and 20 new editions in every fifty to seventy-year period, suggesting a relative stability within the canon over time and through several changes in political, moral, and aesthetic sensibilities in Britain.

Another element to consider is the time of publication, whether before or after 1800. The novels that we might call bestsellers in the reference corpus tend to have come out before the turn of the century (five out of seven), while the opposite is true of the bestsellers of the didactic corpus, with three out of four having been published in the early years of the nineteenth century. The five bestselling novels of the reference corpus that came out before 1800 were published between 1788 and 1796, at the height of the popularity of the Jacobin and the Gothic novels, and they all fit one category or the other—or arguably both, in the case of *Caleb Williams*, which is clearly radical in portraying a working-class protagonist

being tormented by his master who turns out to be a murderer, and Gothic in the persecution that he suffers.<sup>327</sup> The popularity of Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* at the beginning of the nineteenth century is consistent with the growth of regional literature at this time, exemplified for instance by Maria Edgeworth's Irish novels (Wood 117).

In contrast, the three bestselling novels of the didactic corpus from the early nineteenth century are emphatically not Jacobin novels. While Amelia Opie was a Liberal dissenter associated with radical circles according to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *The Father and Daughter* does not directly engage with questions of politics and reinforces the patriarchal family order by focusing with great pathos on the downfall of a young woman who disobeys her father, leading to her fall and his insanity, and their reconciliation after much misery a short time before their deaths.<sup>328</sup> More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* and Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* are explicitly Evangelical novels that emphasize the importance of proper piety (Mandal 2014: xxi). This difference in the kinds of novels with immediate popularity among the corpora is consistent with the widespread backlash against revolutionary ideals in Britain in the early nineteenth century, following the Terror in France. None of the bestselling novels of the end of the eighteenth century in the reference corpus were published again in the second half of the nineteenth century, except *A Simple Story*, the least obviously radical of these—and even for that novel, the fall in popularity is striking, from 25 editions until 1850 to three between 1851 and 1900. *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* is published six more times in that period, before disappearing entirely in the first half of the twentieth century, perhaps illustrating the sustained concern with morality in the Victorian novel, which *fin de siècle* authors came to question entirely (Bilger 21).

Neither corpus does particularly well in the early twentieth century, however, if we discard Austen's steady rise to hypercanonicity starting in the mid-nineteenth century and the sustained popularity of Burney's *Evelina*, perhaps again reflecting the turn of the twentieth-century growing distaste for art that specifically aims or seems to aim to make a

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327 Robert Miles links the Gothic novel of late-eighteenth-century Britain with the Revolutionary period (94), and Anna Wilson argues that Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman*, published in 1798, "is probably the last Jacobin novel published, if not the last written" (31).

328 Kelly, Gary. "Opie [née Alderson], Amelia (1769–1853), novelist and poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press.  
<https://www-oxforddnb-com.janus.bis-sorbonne.fr/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-20799>. Accessed 21 May 2022.

moral or political point, as almost all of these novels do.<sup>329</sup> This will be further discussed in the section on anthologies and works on the history of the novel from the early twentieth century.

The real tipping point in the difference between the corpora in terms of publication history occurs in the last three decades of the twentieth century, and coincides with the advent of feminist scholarship. The case of Mary Wollstonecraft's novels particularly illustrates this. Neither of her two novels were published again for over 150 years after their initial publication, which has been attributed both to general anti-revolutionary backlash at the turn of the nineteenth century and the effect of the publication of Wollstonecraft's memoirs by her husband William Godwin detailing her affairs and suicide attempts (Kirkham 48, McInnes 6). Both novels have gone through eight editions since 1970. A similar pattern is visible for the novels of Wollstonecraft's fellow female radicals Helen Maria Williams and Mary Hays. *Julia* and *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* enjoyed limited success when they were first published, and both have been reprinted several times since 1970. Feminist scholarship is clearly the driving force behind this renewed interest in the novels, since all of the recent editions of *Mary*, *Julia*, and *Emma Courtney* are scholarly editions, and so are ten out of the twelve new editions of *Wrongs of Woman*. This is also the case for Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*, and is generally a discernible trend throughout the corpus—except, as always, for Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, which are shown to have both consistently received critical and general attention through the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As such, setting Austen aside, the didactic corpus's publication history suggests that the novels switched from a place of relative popularity to one of equal prestige, with an overall lull from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.

This trend is also visible in the reference corpus; the number of critical editions likewise by and large matches the number of editions that have come out since 1970. Along with feminist scholarship, a general reappraisal of the significance of narrative fiction during the Romantic period began in the last decades of the twentieth century, which the recent critical editions of many novels of the reference corpus illustrate. It is worth noting that the renewed interest in the novels of the didactic corpus appears greater than in those of the

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329 See the discussion concerning moral endings in the novels of both corpora in chapter 4, I.

reference corpus. Indeed, we see recent critical interest in novelists such as William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, George Walker, and Eaton Stannard Barrett, though to different degrees. But for all the authors that feature in both corpora, the novels that are in the didactic corpus have received more recent critical and/or general attention than the novels that are in the reference corpus, except for Amelia Opie for whom this trend is reversed. This might be attributed to the radical nature of *Adeline Mowbray* compared to *The Father and Daughter*: feminist scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s started with a focus on radical women that reflected some of the concerns of the literary critics' own time period, before later on expanding the scope of research to conservative women writers.<sup>330</sup>

This suggests that, didactic novels, while overall less popular in the decades following their first publication (though not necessarily less well-regarded than those of the reference corpus),<sup>331</sup> may have made a more lasting impact on British literary history—at least within academia. This needs to be confirmed through the ways in which critics have framed discussions of these novels throughout history, which is the aim of the following sections.

## II. Nineteenth-Century Reception of the Didactic Novel

Publication history highlights a resurgence of scholarly interest in the novels of both corpora toward the end of the twentieth century, particularly visible in the case of the didactic corpus. This supports the notion of previously "forgotten" novelists having been "rediscovered" in the past decades (Doerksen 180-181, Kelly 2018: 202, Mandal 2014: xiii). Nevertheless, a look at critical reception over time nuances this perception. Nineteenth-century reception assessed through anthologies from the beginning of the century and works on literary history shows a correlation between early popularity and continued presence within the scope of the period's canon. Nonetheless, great disparities emerge, with some authors and novels fading out of focus while others take clear center-stage. Novels from the didactic corpus enjoy the greatest degree of prestige, mirroring the continued approbation of moral didacticism in fiction, though with some caveats.

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<sup>330</sup> In 2003, Lisa Wood puts forth the argument that studying conservative women is "a legitimate avenue of feminist inquiry," implying a relative novelty in her approach (24). This claim is echoed in by Megan Woodworth in her 2017 book chapter on Anti-Jacobin novelist Jane West (38).

<sup>331</sup> See discussion of the early reviews of the novels of both corpora in chapter 2.

In order to assess the level of early canonization of the authors and novels of the corpora over the course of the nineteenth century, anthologies and works of literary history that sometimes served as textbooks can be used. According to Jane Tompkins, anthology editors "are active shapers of the canon, whose differing aims and assumptions determine what will seem central and what peripheral," though that role is not necessarily acknowledged (188). The nineteenth century saw the move from an emphasis on production to one on reception in the publication of anthologies, which started focusing on teaching and transmission (Ross 226). Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *The British Novelists* (1810), which constitutes the starting point of this study, has been described as the first anthology exhibiting "critical concern," as exemplified in her prefaces to the novels (Day 189). Other efforts at anthologizing, such as Bentley Standard Novels series from the early 1830s, illustrate the continuing practice of selecting and compiling texts for readers to "pace themselves through an unmanageable bulk of print," without necessarily including critical commentary (Price 2000: 4). In both cases, the anthology retains a powerful normative function in terms of canon formation, determining "what gets read" (3).

Works of literary history share with some anthologies their critical concern, but as they do not include large extracts or indeed full texts, they can cover more ground. In addition, literary histories tend to be more descriptive than prescriptive, aiming to draw a picture of the literary landscape of a period rather than singling out the few works or authors more deserving of readers' attention. This is evident in Adolphus William Ward's 1907 *Cambridge History of English Literature*, comprising eighteen volumes. Nevertheless, description and prescription often coincide, through commentary or in the framing of the selection discussed.<sup>332</sup> Though often—but not always—different in scope, anthologies and literary histories have overlapping concerns, and both participate in shaping the canon, the former more likely to influence popularity and the latter prestige. Anthologies are also more likely to reflect a scope of canonicity close to that of hypercanonicity, while wide-ranging works of literary history include lower-ranking works and authors down the scale.

This section and the two following investigate the extent to which the novels of both corpora have been included in such works over time. The analysis hinges on the selection of

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<sup>332</sup> For example, Ruben Halleck's *History of English Literature* (1900) includes a "minor" authors list at the end, separate from the main body of the text.

anthologies and literary histories I was able to access in different locations, chiefly in Strasbourg and Basel university libraries, and the British Library. Tables 30 presents the number of pages devoted to each author of the didactic corpus and the number of novels from it included in nineteenth-century works of this type.<sup>333</sup> Table 31 does the same for the reference corpus. The rows in bold indicate authors that feature in both corpora, and those in blue signal male authors. Anthologies and collections of novels are in red.

The striking conclusion that can be drawn from the comparison of these tables is that early critical appraisal of the two corpora roughly matches in numbers the publication history on the same period: there are 159 editions of novels from the didactic and 158 editions of novels from the reference corpus during the period up to 1900,<sup>334</sup> and one can find 28 and 23 references to novels from the didactic and reference corpora respectively in the selection of anthologies and works on the history of the novel from the nineteenth century.<sup>335</sup> The absolute numbers of novels mentioned show a greater disparity however, with ten novels from the didactic corpus featuring in these compared to fourteen from the reference corpus (underlined in Tables 30 and 31). This seems to suggest that early popularity played a role in the early canonization of these novels, regardless of the perspective that literary historians had on moral didacticism as such—which remains fairly positive in this period, as discussed below.

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333 Algee-Hewitt *et al* use somewhat similar criteria in their exploration of the canon, namely numbers of MLA articles with authors as primary subjects, and length of *Dictionary of National Biography* entries to assess prestige (3).

334 These numbers indicate the sum of editions from first publication to 1900: 94 + 65 for the didactic corpus, and 145 + 13 for the reference one (see Tables 28 and 29).

335 27 is the sum of the crosses present in Tables 30 and 31, each signaling the explicit mention of a novel.

	Barbauld 1810	Scott 1825	Bentley's Standard Novels 1832-33	Spalding 1853	Masson 1859	Morley 1873	Raleigh 1894	Halleck 1900	TOTAL
AUSTEN				2	7	3	5	5	22
<i>Sense &amp; Sensibility</i>			x			x		x	
<i>Pride &amp; Prejudice</i>			x			x		x	
BAGE	3	19			2		4		28
<i>Hermesprong</i>	x	x					x		
BRUNTON					2	2	2		6
<i>Self-Control</i>			x			x	x		
BURNEY	11			1	2	2	4	1	21
<i>Evelina</i>	x				x	x	x	x	
<i>Cecilia</i>	x				x	x	x		
EDGEWORTH	1			2	9	1	5	1	19
<i>Belinda</i>	x					x	x		
<i>Patronage</i>							x		
GREEN							2		2
<i>Romance Readers</i>							x		
HAMILTON									
<i>Munster Village</i>									
HAYS									
<i>Memoirs</i>									
MORE				2	2	1			5
<i>Cælebs</i>						x			
OPIE					4	1	1		6
<i>Father &amp; Daughter</i>						x			
SICKLEMORE									
<i>Edgar</i>									
SPENCE									
<i>Nobility of the Heart</i>									
WILLIAMS									
<i>Julia</i>									
WOLLSTONECRAFT						1			
<i>Mary</i>									
<i>Wrongs of Woman</i>									

Table 30. Nineteenth-Century Anthologies and Literary Histories, Didactic Corpus



	Barbauld 1810	Scott 1825	Bentley's Standard Novels 1832-33	Spalding 1853	Masson 1859	Morley 1873	Raleigh 1894	Halleck 1900	TOTAL
AUSTEN				2	7	3	5	5	22
<i>Mansfield Park</i>			x			x	x	x	
BARRETT							2		2
<i>The Heroine</i>							x		
BRUNTON					2	2	2		6
<i>Discipline</i>						x	x		
BURNEY	11			1	2	2	4	1	21
<i>The Wanderer</i>						x	x		
CUMBERLAND		36		2	1	1	1		41
<i>Henry</i>		x					x		
EDGEWORTH	1			2	9	1	5	1	19
<i>Leonora</i>									
GODWIN				1	2	3	10	1	17
<i>Caleb Williams</i>				x			x		
<i>Fleetwood</i>							x		
HOFLAND						1	2	3	
<i>The Son of a Genius</i>						x			
HOLCROFT					1		3		4
<i>Anna St. Ives</i>									
INCHBALD	4			1	1	1	2		10
<i>Simple Story</i>	x					x	x		
<i>Nature and Art</i>	x						x		
LAMB				1		1	3	4	9
<i>Rosamund Gray</i>						x			
OPIE					4	1	1		6
<i>Adeline Mowbray</i>						x	x		
OWENSON					1		1		2
<i>Wild Irish Girl</i>							x		
SMITH	8			1	1	1	1		12
<i>Emmeline</i>	x					x			
WALKER									
<i>The Vagabond</i>									
WAY									
<i>Learning at a Loss</i>									

Table 31. Nineteenth-Century Anthologies and Literary Histories, Reference Corpus

Evidence of the importance of popularity is evident in the first of two such efforts at early canonization from the beginning of the nineteenth century: Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *The British Novelists* (1810) and Walter Scott's *Lives of the Novelists* (1825). In the introductory essay to her collection of novels, Barbauld begins the justification for undertaking the task of compiling British novels into one collection by the popularity of the genre: novels are said to be "condemned to the grave, and despised by the fastidious; but their leaves are seldom found unopened, and they occupy the parlour and the dressing-room while productions of higher name are often gathering dust upon the shelf" (1).

Barbauld's work necessarily excludes Austen, whose novels were all published after 1810. While *The British Novelists* famously includes in the essay 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing' the assertion that "the unpardonable sin of a novel is dullness" (48), Barbauld considered moral didacticism an integral part of good novels, stating that "the power exercised over the reader's heart by filling it with the successive emotions of love, pity, joy, anguish, transport, or indignation, together with the grave impressive moral resulting from the whole, imply talents of the highest order, and ought to be appretiated [*sic*] accordingly" (3). She reproduces and speaks favorably of Burney's *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, Bage's *Hermesprong*, and Edgeworth's *Belinda*, all from the didactic corpus. Yet she also includes in her anthology Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* and *Nature and Art* from the reference corpus, and she mentions *Emmeline* in her preface to Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793) as one of her "two most finished novels" (Vol. 36, vii). Referring to Smith's novels, however, she writes that "they all show a knowledge of life, and facility of execution, without having any very strong features, or particularly aiming to illustrate any moral truth," supporting the separation between the two corpora (Vol. 36, vii). Nevertheless, while she does mention both entertainment and moral value in reference to Burney's novels, she defines Edgeworth's *Belinda* simply as "highly entertaining," illustrating the instability of the very concept of moral didacticism as it is applied to novels over time (Vol. 49, 2).

Barbauld's early efforts at determining a canon of British novels therefore includes authors and books of both corpora in similar proportions. This is also the case with Walter Scott's *Lives of the Novelists*, published fifteen years later, but only one author and novel from each corpus remains: Robert Bage and his novel *Hermesprong*, considered to be his best (42),

and Richard Cumberland, with Scott's claims that "it would be unjust to deny to *Henry* the praise of an excellent novel" (22). Strikingly, Scott does not include Austen, despite his well-known praise of her, widely quoted in critical works several decades later (Halleck 1900: 335 Morley 1873-1898: 883). This particular example illustrates the instability of the canon, a fact which permeates this study in book history and critical reception, especially when we look closely at the evident disparities in the authors and novels featured and the ways in which they are appraised from one work to the next. Scott's selection, overwhelmingly male, also illustrates Anthony Mandal's claim that the Scottish author made novel writing an appropriate activity for men, explaining the shift in male and female output from the 1820s onward (2007: 29).

Nevertheless, general trends begin to emerge in these tables: Austen's canonization starts to become apparent in the works from the second half of the nineteenth century, though it remains for the most part on par with her contemporaries Burney and Edgeworth; all three have similar amounts of pages devoted to them, respectively 22, 21, and 19.<sup>336</sup> This constitutes a departure from the reliance on mere popularity, given that on the whole their novels, particularly Austen's and Edgeworth's but also Burney's *Cecilia*, enjoyed relatively moderate immediate popularity in comparison to *Evelina* in the didactic corpus and several novels from the reference corpus.

In William Spalding's *History of English Literature* (1853), Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen are praised to similar degrees, the first for her "farcical humour" (349), the second for her "acute and humorous common-sense" (383-4), and the last for her "scenes of every-day society" (383). He mentions a string of writers from the reference corpus in one sweeping statement that solidifies the merit of Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth above their contemporaries: "Among the later novelists of the time, there are none that call for much notice. It is enough to name Walpole, Moore, Cumberland, Mrs. Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith" (349). Similarly, David Masson positions Austen on equal footing with Edgeworth and Ann Radcliffe in *British Novelists and their Styles: Being a Critical Sketch of the History of British Prose Fiction* (1859), but Burney is grouped with "respectable writers" such as Robert Bage, understood to be of lesser importance than Austen, Edgeworth, and Radcliffe (175).

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<sup>336</sup> Bage is discussed in 28 pages, but this is due primarily to his inclusion in Scott's *Lives of the Novelists*, whereas for Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen, the distribution is much more even. The same is true for Cumberland in the reference corpus.

Henry Morley's *First Sketch of English Literature* (1873-1898) mentions Austen in the body of the text, and Wollstonecraft, Opie, More, Edgeworth, Burney, and Brunton in the annals section of the book, showing a mark of early division between Austen as a great writer and the others as minor. This is further reinforced in the context of both corpora, since none of the 9 authors from the reference corpus featured in Morley's anthology alongside Austen are in the main section of the book, except for Richard Cumberland, as a dramatist. Austen's emerging status as a major novelist is thus particularly visible here.

Yet this distinction remains equivocal in the last decade of the nineteenth century, as shown in Walter Raleigh's *The English Novel* (1894), which is dedicated to his students. Chapter 9 of his work deals with "The Novel of Domestic Satire: Miss Burney, Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth," in a title that introduces no clear hierarchy among the authors. In the chapter, Brunton's *Self-Control* is cited as an "excellent novel" (254), and Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* is given as an example of a satirical novel, although its literary qualities are called into question (274). Raleigh's treatment of these novelists only implies a division between Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth on the side of the major novelists, and Brunton and Green on the side of the minor, in opposition to Halleck's clear separation of major authors in the body of the text versus minor authors in a separate section at the end of the work in his *History of English Literature* (1900).

Like Spalding almost fifty years earlier, Ruben Halleck only mentions Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth among the writers of the didactic corpus—who also happen to feature in the reference corpus. However, like Morley (1873), he includes Austen in the body of the text, as fully part of the history of English literature which he tells, while Burney and Edgeworth are relegated to the minor novelists section, Edgeworth cited for *Castle Rackrent* and Burney for *Evelina*. In contrast, published in a similar time period to Spalding's work, David Masson's *British Novelists and their Styles* (1859) discusses seven authors from the didactic corpus, and no less than eleven from the reference corpus, though only Austen, Burney, Edgeworth, and Opie are mentioned more than twice, all of whom feature in both corpora. In this series of lectures, only one focuses on a single author, and that author is Walter Scott. Burney, Bage, Edgeworth, and Austen are all said to carry on the Richardsonian tradition, hinting at the

presence of moral didacticism (175, 188, 258).<sup>337</sup> This confirms the higher level of canonization of these authors in the period, although the distinction between this group and the other authors mentioned is not as clear as in other works of this kind. Mason (1859) does not clearly separate the so-called major from the so-called minor novelists, unlike Halleck (1900), and does not have a separate annals section like Morley (1873). Austen and Edgeworth are singled out as "undoubtedly, the first in talent" of the group however (188), and Godwin is described as the only male novelist that "could be put in comparison, in respect of genuine merit" with them and Radcliffe (180), and a generally established preference for Jane Austen is acknowledged.<sup>338</sup>

It is worth noting here that three male writers from the reference corpus are not consistently mentioned as novelists in these works. Morley defines Cumberland in his annals section as a dramatist, while Halleck includes Godwin in his Minor Philosophers section at the end of the book and cites Lamb as an important literary figure of the time in the main body of the work, but not for fiction. Although in strict numerical terms, more authors of the reference corpus are mentioned in these works than writers of the didactic corpus, those that are referenced regularly, thus appearing to be considered as having made a more important mark on literary history as novelists, feature in both corpora, and their novels from the didactic corpus are discussed over twice as much as the ones from the reference corpus.<sup>339</sup>

Finally, the critical stance toward moral didacticism remains generally favorable in these works, although the link between novels of the didactic corpus and didacticism is not always clearly made. While in *History of English Literature* (1853), Spalding praises Wordsworth's didacticism and thus does not appear averse to the presence of edifying material in literature, he in fact only links Edgeworth with instruction out of the writers of my corpora that he discusses (362). Edgeworth is praised particularly for her *Irish Tales* which "showed how novel-readers may be at once interested and instructed," whereas

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337 Richardson explicitly states the instructional purpose of his novels in the prefaces to *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), and he is regularly cited for his "didacticism" and the link between his novels and conduct books (Warner 230, Hornbeak 8).

338 "All in all, as far as my information goes, the best judges unanimously prefer Miss Austen to any of her contemporaries of the same order" (Mason 189).

339 Counting the mentions of novels by these five authors, 23 are in the didactic corpus, and 10 are in the reference corpus.

Burney is commended for her "farcical humour" and Austen for her "scenes of every-day society," as already mentioned (349, 383). Hannah More's work is written off as "writings of no great literary merit, bearing the same honourable stamp" as non-fictional theological works from the period (354). This perhaps suggests a propensity toward moralizing style perceived as dreary rather than an ability to positively instruct, echoing early reviewers (see chapter 1, II). Austen is unanimously praised for her compositional skill, with only Masson obliquely hinting at a morally didactic element in her prose through the blanket comparison with Richardson, departing from her early reception (188).

Moral didacticism is never criticized in and of itself in the works on the history of the novel, but distinctions are made between authors that integrate it well within their composition and authors that do not, suggesting that the implied definition of didacticism for these critics hinges on style rather than topical content, in opposition to what I argue constitutes the crux of the concept for early reviewers—though, as seen in chapter 1, II, early reviewers also valued effective style and overall composition, which influenced the perceived success or failure of didacticism. For instance, as quoted earlier, Walter Raleigh praises Brunton's *Self-Control* as "an excellent novel," and Brunton herself is described as a novelist whose "purpose is to inculcate and illustrate the power of religious principle," showing didacticism to be compatible with narrative excellence (254, 270).<sup>340</sup> In contrast, Raleigh states regarding Edgeworth's novels that "it is their chief fault that the moral suggests the tale far more frequently than the tale suggests the moral" (268-9). Moral didacticism is not problematic as such, though there are more or less effective ways to include it in narrative fiction.

It should be noted that we see in these works a gendered distinction in the treatment of didacticism found in novels. Spalding mentions Godwin's *Caleb Williams* as an illustration that "the strong but narrow mind of Godwin had sought to make the novel a vehicle for communicating peculiar social doctrines," which links his writing to a kind of instruction implied to be political rather than moral. Walter Raleigh also focuses on the political nature

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340 This opinion is not particularly widespread, and is a testament to Brunton's ambivalent place within the early canonization of British novelists. Indeed, *Self-Control* was very successful upon publication and both Brunton's novels were included in the popular and cheap Bentley's Standard Novels collection (1832 edition), where all of Austen's novels also appeared (1833 edition), but is present in just two out of the five critical works from the second half of the nineteenth century studied here, highlighting an early disconnect between popularity and prestige.

of Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* from the reference corpus, as well as Bage's *Hermesprong* from the didactic corpus (246, 242). Raleigh dismisses "the professed moral" of the latter as "as irrelevant as a philosopher in the hunting-field" (246). Given his praise of Burney's didacticism, this comment suggests that overt moral concerns belong to women's writing whereas instruction of a social or political kind is masculine in essence. Some fifty years later, Halleck describes Godwin as a philosopher, but not a novelist, stressing his role as a theorist dissociated from the novel form. The treatment of Godwin, Holcroft, and Bage in these works illustrates a trend which we see cemented in the early twentieth century: female novelists become increasingly more likely to be termed morally didactic, whether as a compliment or a fault, while male novelists tend to be termed doctrinaire in a way which confers a political or philosophical dimension to the instructive nature of the texts, widening the scope of the perceived instruction beyond the realm of the novel genre. This will be discussed further in the next section.

What this non-exhaustive study of nineteenth-century construction of English literary history shows us clearly is the diversity of critical stances on the novels and authors of both corpora, and the consistent exclusion of Revolutionary female writers. Hays and Williams do not appear, and Wollstonecraft, mentioned once in Morley's annals for her *Vindication for the Rights of Woman* (1792), is absent as a novelist. Hamilton, Spence, and Sicklemore from the didactic corpus are also missing, as are Walker and Way from the reference corpus.<sup>341</sup> This imbalance shows some authors of the didactic corpus to be considered of particular importance to literary history in this period while others are non-existent, contrary to the authors of the reference corpus, most of whom are featured in these histories of the novel, but none in a way that suggests a significant mark on literary history—not counting Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth, who feature in both corpora, but whose novels that tend to be praised most highly are to be found in the didactic corpus. Most strikingly, the critical stance on moral didacticism in this period is quite similar to that found in the initial reviews: moral didacticism is a welcome element in novels when deemed successfully

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<sup>341</sup> This largely matches these novels' early reception, with the notable exception of Walker's *The Vagabond* which went through five editions before 1850.

integrated narratively and stylistically, matching the importance of strict morality of the Victorian literary ethos.<sup>342</sup>

### III. The Didactic Novel in the Twentieth Century: 1901-1969

A clear shift in criticism takes place at the turn of the twentieth century, when didacticism comes to be viewed with suspicion from an aesthetic standpoint, and increasingly in terms of topic as well. This does not immediately lead to the erasure of the novels and writers of the didactic corpus, however: what Clifford Siskin has termed "the Great Forgetting" of women in literary history appears to start in the 1930s according to my data (see Tables 32 and 33), and continues until feminist criticism starts to question the literary canon as it had been established over the course of about forty years, which is clearly reflected in the works of literary history from the early twentieth century (195). This "Great Forgetting" of women's writers has been linked to the institutionalization of English as a discipline of study and the latter's focus on formalist criticism and its narrow definition of literature as poetry (Eagleton 43-44). We also see a clear influence of modernism, which according to Leah Price "made novels more difficult and didacticism less respectable" (6).

Misogyny and aestheticism appear to intersect in the early twentieth century, leading to a drastic narrowing of the canon, which in the end seems to have been relatively short-lived, given the advent of feminist criticism in the 1970s. The institutionalization of English as an academic discipline has also been described as an effort in building national consciousness particularly in the UK, in light of which the erasure of such novels as those of the didactic corpus may seem paradoxical (Baldick 1983: 95, Eagleton 24). As we shall see, the question of aesthetics, what Biber and Conrad term "style," appears to have been more important than that of topic, and to an extent gender, in this process of limiting the canon that affects the novels and authors of both corpora (16).

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<sup>342</sup> Although Leah Price notes that Victorian critics "reversed the older hierarchy that subordinated narrative to sententiousness," it does not follow that sententiousness disappeared altogether, as Jesse Rosenthal demonstrates (Price 152, Rosenthal 2).



	Ward 1907	Elton 1920	Baker 1929	Baker 1932	Leavis 1932	Tompkins 1932	MacCarthy 1938 <sup>343</sup>	Sampson 1944	Leavis 1950	Allen 1954	McKillop 1956	Watt 1957	Hoyt 1967	TOTAL
<b>AUSTEN</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>174</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>360</b>
<i>Sense &amp; Sensibility</i>	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x			
<i>Pride &amp; Prejudice</i>	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x		
<b>BAGE</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>27</b>			<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>3</b>				<b>74</b>
<i>Hermesprong</i>	x	x	x	x		x		x		x				
<b>BRUNTON</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>											<b>5</b>
<i>Self-Control</i>	x	x	x											
<b>BURNEY</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>85</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>199</b>
<i>Evelina</i>	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x			x	
<i>Cecilia</i>	x	x	x	x		x	x	x					x	
<b>EDGEWORTH</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>158</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>10</b>			<b>18</b>	<b>250</b>
<i>Belinda</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x	
<i>Patronage</i>		x	x	x			x	x						
<b>GREEN</b>			<b>2</b>											<b>2</b>
<i>Romance Readers</i>			x											
<b>HAMILTON</b>														
<i>Munster Village</i>														
<b>HAYS</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>							<b>19</b>
<i>Memoirs</i>				x		x	x							
<b>MORE</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>				<b>1</b>		<b>41</b>
<i>Cœlebs</i>		x	x	x			x	x						
<b>OPIE</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>				<b>4</b>							<b>21</b>
<i>Father &amp; Daughter</i>	x	x		x			x							
<b>SICKLEMORE</b>														
<i>Edgar</i>														
<b>SPENCE</b>														
<i>Nobility of the Heart</i>														
<b>WILLIAMS</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>						<b>17</b>
<i>Julia</i>			x			x	x							
<b>WOLLSTONECRAFT</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>3</b>			<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>						<b>33</b>
<i>Mary</i>			x			x	x							
<i>Wrongs of Woman</i>						x	x							

Table 32. Early-Twentieth-Century Anthologies and Literary Histories, Didactic Corpus

343 This cell is in bold because MacCarthy's work focuses exclusively on women novelists.

	Ward 1907	Elton 1920	Baker 1929	Baker 1932	Leavis 1932	Tompkins 1932	MacCarthy 1938	Sampson 1944	Leavis 1950	Allen 1954	McKillop 1956	Watt 1957	Hoyt 1967	TOTAL
<b>AUSTEN</b>	29	22	174		12	10	48	7	1	43	2	12		360
<i>Mansfield Park</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x				
<b>BARRETT</b>	2	4	5											11
<i>The Heroine</i>	x	x	x	x										
<b>BRUNTON</b>	2	1	2											5
<i>Discipline</i>	x													
<b>BURNEY</b>	26	15	85			11	41	3		4		5	9	199
<i>The Wanderer</i>	x		x	x			x	x					x	
<b>CUMBERLAND</b>	10	3	9			5		4						31
<i>Henry</i>		x	x			x								
<b>EDGEWORTH</b>	23	15	158		3	4	15	4		10			18	250
<i>Leonora</i>			x	x										
<b>GODWIN</b>	38	36	35		2	13		7		7	1			139
<i>Caleb Williams</i>	x	x	x	x		x		x		x				
<i>Fleetwood</i>	x	x	x	x				x						
<b>HOFLAND</b>	2													2
<i>Son of a Genius</i>	x													
<b>HOLCROFT</b>	15	9	20		1	20								65
<i>Anna St. Ives</i>	x	x	x	x		x								
<b>INCHBALD</b>	17	9	11			11	10	2		1				61
<i>Simple Story</i>	x	x	x	x		x	x	x						
<i>Nature and Art</i>	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x				
<b>LAMB</b>	64	77						7		1	2	1		152
<i>Rosamund</i>	x	x						x						
<b>OPIE</b>	4	11	2				4							21
<i>Adeline</i>	x		x	x			x							
<b>OWENSON</b>	3	8						1						
<i>Wild Irish Girl</i>	x	x						x						
<b>SMITH</b>	2	4	32			20	14			3				75
<i>Emmeline</i>	x		x	x		x	x							
<b>WALKER</b>						10								10
<i>The Vagabond</i>						x								
<b>WAY</b>						2								2
<i>Learning</i>						x								

Table 33. Early-Twentieth-Century Anthologies and Literary Histories, Didactic Corpus

In the first four decades of the twentieth century, novels and authors of both corpora continue to feature in large number in works of English literary history. Adolphus William Ward's 15 volume *Cambridge History of English Literature* (1907), Oliver Elton's *A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830* (1920), and Ernest Baker's *The History of the English Novel* (1929) most faithfully represent the two corpora out of those that I was able to access. They are all multi-volume works, and as such present a rather complete picture of the fictional landscape of the period, without particularly aiming to make a selection based on perceived literary merit. Ward wrote that "*Belinda*, let it be repeated, is not a great novel" (Vol. 11, 297), Elton opines that "had Hannah More been able to think of literature as an end, not a means, we always feel that she might have made something of it; but then she would not have been herself" (Vol. 2, 190), and Baker writes off Cumberland's *Henry* as derivative, a "close imitation of *Tom Jones*, and if that had never been written might be thought a very respectable achievement" despite Cumberland being "sublimely unaware" of Fielding's irony (Vol. 5, 88). The title of Joyce Tompkins's *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800*, first published in 1932, similarly does not suggest a selection based on perceived literary merit, which is reflected in her commentaries. She explicitly refrains from discussing Austen in detail, as a novelist who has gained posterity (v).

The stance toward didacticism becomes more negative in this period, and authors from both corpora are criticized for being didactic in one way or the other. This is consistent with the findings from chapters 1, 3 and 4 in this dissertation, which showed that moral instruction is present throughout both corpora. Elton praises Edgeworth's talent as a novelist in spite of her didacticism, not in part thanks to it; he declares that "humour, in Miss Edgeworth's books, is never far off; lucidity and vivacity are everywhere, only interrupted by the *didactic stain*, and sometimes not marred even by its presence" (188-9, my emphasis). Elton's language is very strong as he suggests that didacticism sullies literary achievement, and it is a testament to Edgeworth's strength as a novelist that she is able to reduce and even at times eliminate this effect. Ward similarly suggests that didacticism—though he does not use the word—comes in the way of *Sense and Sensibility* being a great novel, "as if Jane

Austen's *desire to make her point* had interfered with her complete control of her material" (Vol. 15, 237, my emphasis).<sup>344</sup>

The exact term "didactic" is less often used to describe novels of the reference corpus, but allusions to the presence of a clear ideology are nonetheless made. Charles Lamb is referred to as "a moralist" in the vein of "the Opies and the Edgeworths" (Elton 340), and Elizabeth Inchbald is praised as mixing "schoolroom ethics" with "something much more daring, and with not a little vigour of observant wit" in her two novels (Elton 180), a point which Bridget MacCarthy echoes in relation to *Nature and Art* (210). *Mansfield Park* is said to have been clearly influenced by Richardson (Ward 238), and to include direct moralizing, as opposed to Austen's previous novels (MacCarthy 245).<sup>345</sup> It is worth noting that MacCarthy views Inchbald's professed didactic aim in *A Simple Story* as inconsistent with her observation that "the main narrative seems so free from a didactic intention that, if Mrs. Inchbald had such a purpose at the beginning, one would say that she lost sight of it when she was caught up by the human interest of her story" (206). This directly poses the question of the difference between didactic intent and didactic effect, as much as it points to the profession of the former as a kind of rhetoric, included possibly to abide by critics' expectations of novels at the time, and especially those written by women. Barely a decade prior to MacCarthy, Baker wrote that the critics of the *Monthly* and the *Critical*,

instead of applying canons of imaginative art, [...] required of these books, which they seemed to think were read only by the ignorant and immature, that they should be didactic in every sense of the term, not merely orthodox in teaching a moral lesson, but infallibly accurate and informative on all phases of life delineated. (Vol. 5, 11)

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344 We will see in section IV how the reception of Austen in relation to didacticism continues to shift over time. It should be noted that the term "didactic" appears much more frequently in these works than in eighteenth and nineteenth-century assessments of the novels, linking the qualifier with a negative perception of moral instruction in fiction. As mentioned in chapter 1, the term "didactic" is used once in the early reviews of the corpora, in a way which illustrates that the presence of moral instruction was not viewed as intrinsically positive or negative at the time, but was desirable if well executed. The *Critical* reviewer of Burney's *Wanderer* (1814, reference corpus) is "conscious of the tædium and want of interest in the purely didactic in most hands, but yet [is] inclined to wish, that if Madame d'Arblay favours the world again, it may be in some way that will afford an opportunity for the display of the thoughts and accuracy of her generalizing powers" (DBF 1814A017).

345 MacCarthy writes that "in *Mansfield Park* [Austen] departs from the ironic method to moralise directly" (245). She also sees a "forthright moral" in *Sense and Sensibility*, but considers the novel to include "a fine balance of satire," which the moral however "somewhat disturbs," echoing Elton's view of didacticism in fiction as a blemish (254).

Elton also argued that "story-telling, while seasoned with more or less of wit and observation, becomes a means of preaching the reader into virtue and good sense" once the novel and moral didacticism, deemed acceptable in the works of previous novelists such as Fielding and Hogarth, "falls in the hands, or aprons, of the women" (Vol. 1, 179).

Baker and Elton's comments illustrate the increasingly gendered bias toward the reception of moral didacticism, which appears much more gender-neutral in the early reviews, just as it exemplifies the kind of misogyny that one can find in some of the early-twentieth-century reception of these works.<sup>346</sup> This may also explain why the novels of the reference corpus are represented in significantly greater numbers than those of the didactic corpus, in Ward and Elton's works particularly, given that the former includes a greater amount of male-authored works. MacCarthy's work focuses on women novelists, leading to only female authors from the reference corpus being discussed, and therefore fewer authors from that corpus than from the didactic corpus overall.

The other anthologists studied here are not so staunchly chauvinistic as Elton, but there does appear a gendered division in how they discuss the novels and authors of the corpora. While female authors of both corpora tend to be called moralists or didactic in the context of discussions of the presence of a clear ideological stance in their novels, male authors—including Robert Bage from the didactic corpus—are called "doctrinaire" or "doctrinal,"<sup>347</sup> "propagandist,"<sup>348</sup> "proselitizing,"<sup>349</sup> "novelists with a purpose,"<sup>350</sup> engaging in "theory" or presenting "sociological ideas."<sup>351</sup> The term "doctrinaire" thus appears clearly

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346 This is not to say that earlier reception was necessarily fairer on women, as seen in Frank Donoghue's discussion of gendered differences in the treatment of female and male novelists by the critics of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* in chapter 5 of *The Fame Machine* (1996). He claims that "this programmatic condescension was relatively short-lived," thanks to the rise in prominence of literary women, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who "distinguished themselves as reviewers, and in general the common understanding of the critical principle of impartiality was sharpened in a way that ensured that men and women authors would be treated on more equal terms" (161). This is consistent with the fact that men and women published novels in similar proportions in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth century (Mandal 2007: 4, 13, 21). It should also be noted that reviewers were not always aware of novelists' genders, as exemplified by the assumption that the author of *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* was a man ("The author states that the valley was unadorned, but he had previously given us to understand that it displayed the riches of cultivation," *DBF* 1808A081).

347 Elton on Godwin (269), MacCarthy on Godwin and Bage (186, 190), Allen on Godwin and Bage (97).

348 Ward on Holcroft (Vol. 11, 294), Baker and Packman on Holcroft (244).

349 Ward on Godwin (Vol. 11, 43), George Sampson on Godwin (562).

350 Sampson on Bage (609).

351 Elton writes that Bage and Holcroft both present heroes with an "awkward compound of theory and horse-play" (Vol. 1, 183), and Baker and Packman claim that Godwin fictionalizes "sociological ideas" in *Caleb Williams* (203),

gendered. MacCarthy makes this distinction herself, arguing that "the novel of doctrine offered further scope for teaching, but unhappily the social and political problems involved were regarded either as beyond women's ability, or as a most unsuitable field for feminine speculation" (187). Whether or not this was indeed the case in the late eighteenth century, it is obvious that early-twentieth-century critics associated moral didacticism with the feminine and "doctrine" of a more political or philosophical ilk to the masculine. In 1954, Walter Allen associated the novel of doctrine to radical politics, claiming that "much less openly doctrinaire than Bage and Godwin, Mrs. Smith was all the same a radical" (92). However, he deems Charlotte Smith "much less doctrinaire" than her male counterparts, and the only other female writer called doctrinaire or doctrinal in these works is Wollstonecraft, whose reputation as an "unsex'd female," in reference to Richard Polwhele's 1798 poem, certainly preceded her and may at least partly explain why she would have been more easily described in masculine terms.<sup>352</sup>

The gendered difference in the uses of "didactic" and "doctrinaire" to describe authors suggests an evolution of the concept of moral didacticism since the turn of the nineteenth century. Both imply a will to further an ideology seen in the fictional narrative, but the former is linked primarily to domestic femininity and the latter to a masculine concern with society and politics of a wider scope. The roots of this dichotomy can already be discerned in what the early reception of both corpora tells us about the notion of moral didacticism as a way to entrench the national ideal of proper genteel domesticity, but the gendered component of the dichotomy appears to have grown in rigidity by the early twentieth century.<sup>353</sup>

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352 In this vein, it is worth noting that revolutionaries Wollstonecraft, Williams, and Hays appear in several anthologies in the 1920s through the 1940s, showing that the stigma in which these authors were shrouded throughout the nineteenth century was starting to wane—Wollstonecraft is mentioned twice in the anthologies from the second half of the nineteenth century, whereas all three collectively appear 69 times in the early-twentieth-century anthologies. None of their novels are listed in Baker and Packman's *Guide to the Best Fiction* from 1932, however, a work which I discuss further below.

353 This point has been made before; for instance, Anne Mellor states that "from a late twentieth-century feminist perspective, we might see Victorian literature as a *regression* from the more liberated stance of feminine Romanticism, a backlash in which female intelligence, activity and power was once again *restricted* to the arena of the domestic household" (212, author's emphasis). Stiffening of gender norms may also be viewed in light of Anne Stott's argument that a "seismic" cultural shift took place at the turn of the nineteenth century, "which saw the relatively relaxed culture of the eighteenth century give way to the earnest moralism of the nineteenth" (333). Victorian morality informs the development of the ideal of the gentleman in the nineteenth century according to Philip Mason, with the proper domestic lady as its feminine counterpart (12).

Although predominantly male "doctrinaire" fiction is less openly denigrated than the "didactic" aspects of female-authored fiction in these works, neither term is used as a compliment, illustrating the fact that at this point critics still seemed to find value in authors for their historical significance, though less so for their artistic contributions. Nonetheless, it must be noted that nine novels from the didactic corpus and eleven from the reference corpus appear in Ernest Baker and James Packman's *A Guide to the Best Fiction: English and American Including Translations from Foreign Languages*, published in 1932. Novels derided by Elton or Ward as too didactic or akin to propaganda can be found in this bibliography among the "best fiction." The notion is not understood in absolute terms: "'best' is a relative term, relative, that is to say, not only to the other things with which there is a comparison, but also to the purposes of the books and the needs of the readers. 'Best' really means most suitable for some individual or for promoting some particular purpose," leaving room for didactic, philosophical, and political fiction in the literary canon (v).

A clear reduction of the scope of the literary canon takes place in the 1950s and 1960s, however, effectively erasing a large body of late eighteenth-century writing which was in essence ideological, as we have seen in the first chapters of this dissertation. Godwin and Lamb are the only two authors of either corpus besides Austen to be included in Alan McKillop's *Early Masters of English Fiction*, and Lamb is mentioned once in Ian Watt's seminal work *The Rise of the Novel*. However, they are only mentioned in passing as having commented on the dramatic ending of Daniel Defoe's *Roxana*, their status as novelists left undisclosed (38). This suggests that predominantly male doctrinaire novelists were no more welcome in the English canon of the novel than their predominantly female didactic counterparts. Their names do appear, but so does More's in Watt's work, also in passing.<sup>354</sup> Bage, Burney, and Edgeworth are the only other authors from the didactic corpus still mentioned primarily for their historical importance by Walter Allen in his *Short Critical History of the English novel*, as late as 1954 (89, 97, 98).

Looking at the number of pages devoted to these authors over the period, it appears that mid-century historians of the novel reduced the range of the late-eighteenth-century canon to its most prestigious members: Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen remain the most

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<sup>354</sup> In his discussion of Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) Watt cites Samuel Johnson's comment to More that he "scarcely knew a more corrupt work than *Tom Jones*," while praising Richardson's *Clarissa* for its didactic effect (319). More is included in a passage on moral didacticism in fiction, but not as a novelist.

widely discussed authors from either corpus, followed by Lamb and Godwin (see Figure 9). Of these, Lamb and Austen are mentioned in all three works—though Austen much more prominently than Lamb—Burney and Godwin feature in two out of three, and Edgeworth only in Allen. Fixtures of the canon according to early twentieth-century literary histories become largely relegated to its margins by the middle of the century, affecting more obviously Edgeworth, the second most discussed author after Austen.

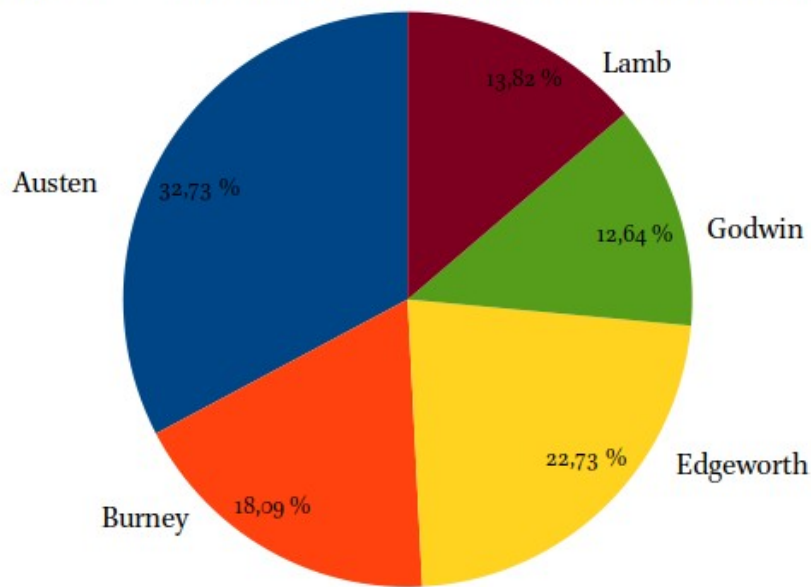


Figure 9. Pages Devoted to Austen, Burney, Edgeworth, Godwin, and Lamb, 1901-1969<sup>355</sup>

McKillop and Watt's texts illustrate most clearly this abrupt change in the scope of works on the history of the English novel in the middle of the twentieth century. According to John Richetti, a shift occurred after World War II, when previously canonical writers such as Burney, considered a "major novelist well in to the twentieth century," were taken out of the English syllabi on the eighteenth century (11). Paul Hunter provides a possible reason for this, citing "Post-Romantic biases" rejecting "entire modes that derive from uncongenial assumptions," such as didacticism (225). The 1950s and 1960s signal the end of critical ambivalence toward any kind of didacticism in these works, and also coincide with the hegemony of "practical criticism" developed by A. I. Richards and of New Criticism (Palmer

<sup>355</sup> Figure 9 shows the importance of these five authors relative to one another, using the number of pages devoted to each (see Table 32).



154, Rabinowitz 212). Both schools of criticism focused on the formal intricacies of literary texts, with little or no attention paid to historical or cultural context.<sup>356</sup>

In light of this, novels with clear political or moral aims as was so often the case in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century no longer had a place in the English canon. McKillop completely erases the end of the eighteenth century from literary history in his claim that "Richardson handed on to Jane Austen the tradition of judgment of society by the intelligent feminine mind, secured by an accepted social and moral system" (95). The "accepted social and moral system" is merely a backdrop here for the expression of "the intelligent feminine mind," and indeed commentators from the mid-twentieth century praised her "technical genius" and her revolutionary importance for the development of the novel primarily in terms of style (McKillop 309, Allen 103). In his 1967 work *Minor British Novelists*, Charles Hoyt does not include Austen, illustrating the rift between her and her previously equally celebrated contemporaries.<sup>357</sup> Austen therefore appears as fully canonized by this time based on her artistry, while Burney and Edgeworth, long considered important in their own right, and posited as two of the best novelists of their day by critics from the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, are relegated to the status of mere precursors to Austen. This is how Watt positions Burney, alongside his infamous claim that the female domination of the novel market before Austen "had long remained a purely quantitative assertion of dominance" (310). The number of pages devoted to each author in these works illustrates this shift in reception, with Austen clearly taking the lead over Edgeworth and Burney (see Figure 10). Tellingly, Hoyt's work on "minor novelists" only includes Burney and Edgeworth out of the authors of both of my corpora: two writers long considered major novelists become minor in this period, while the rest are excluded from the discussion on literary history altogether. This is a sharp turn from Baker and Packman's *The Guide to the Best Fiction* from 1932, which includes even translated works from several other countries up to the early twentieth century, where over half of the novels of the corpora appear.

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<sup>356</sup> See Chris Baldick's definitions of New Criticism and practical criticism (1991: 170, 203).

<sup>357</sup> Austen already had her own section in MacCarthy's *The Later Women Novelists* from 1938, and in Sampson's *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* from 1944. Other authors of the corpora appear under more general headings, with the exception of Charles Lamb, who also has his own section in Sampson's work, with a brief mention of *Rosamund Gray* as "a sombre and tragic narrative" which "can hardly be said to survive, except for Lamb's sake" (660).

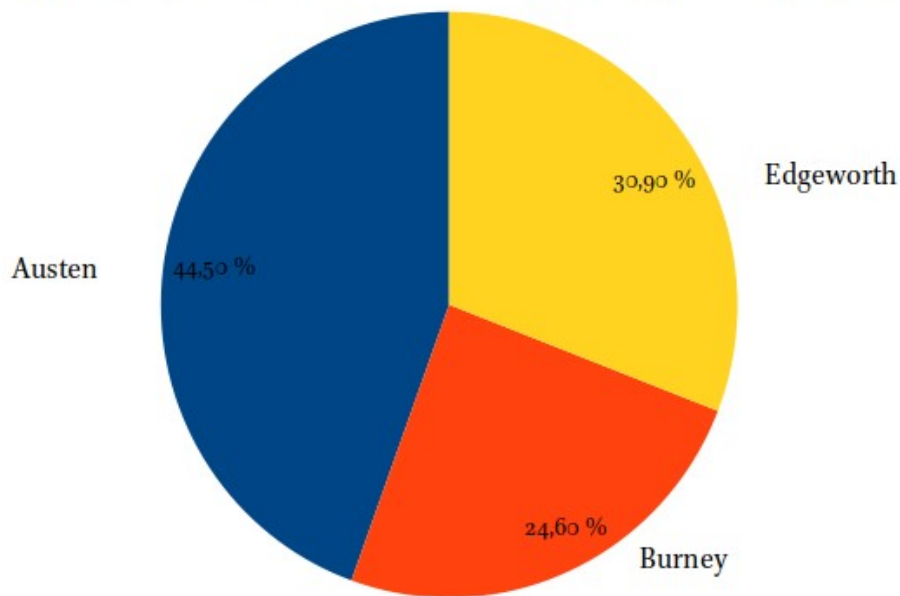


Figure 10. Pages Devoted to Austen, Burney, and Edgeworth, 1901-1969<sup>358</sup>

In addition, Terry Lovell claims that the novel only gained a secure place in academic curricula in the 1930s, and insists on the male-dominated nature of the "great tradition of literary criticism" (12, 4), while Hunter stresses the importance of the university curricula on subsequent scholarship (1990, xiii). If the novel was not a fixture of university literature teaching until the 1930s and the novels newly studied were almost entirely male, it is no wonder that a shift took place in critical works of the 1950s, when the former students exposed to this curriculum would have been publishing their own studies of the novel. We see this reflected in the trajectories of the two corpora, both of which include a large number of female writers. Combined with the decided suspicion toward "didactic" and "doctrinaire" fiction in this period, it is hardly surprising that the novels of both corpora largely disappeared from the canon in the 1950s and 1960s.

The first half of the twentieth century therefore appears as the time when a critical shift against ideological writing of any kind takes place in literary criticism, leading to a drastically selective English canon that excludes almost all of the literary output in narrative fiction from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. There is no material difference in the evolution of the critical appraisal of and interest in the authors of either

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<sup>358</sup> Like Figure 9, Figure 10 shows the importance of the three authors relative to one another, which is why the percentages change from Figure 9, although the absolute number of pages devoted to each is the same, taken from Table 32.

corpus; both corpora have a decided presence in the works of literary history up until the 1940s, a presence which dramatically drops in the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, quantitatively, the reference corpus maintains its lead both in the number of pages where the authors appear and the number of novels cited, possibly attesting to the greater original popularity of the novels of the reference corpus overall, granting them historical importance.<sup>359</sup> However, the novels that remain in the canon as delineated by McKillop, Watt, and Hoyt are all from the didactic corpus, which we might take as a hint that the values of Englishness expressed in these novels, as discussed in chapters 6 and 7, still resonated in the middle of the twentieth century, even as critical focus shifted away from cultural and historical context for a few decades. Finally, this investigation of early-twentieth-century reception suggests that what has been termed the Great Forgetting of women's writing may have had as much, if not more, to do with the critical ethos of aestheticism as with gendered bias, at least when it comes to the period under study.<sup>360</sup>

#### IV. Recent Reception of the Didactic Novel: 1970-2020

The 1970s saw the beginning of a general reassessment of the scope of academic literary studies, with a proliferation of new critical theories, including feminist criticism and cultural studies. Both of these are particularly important for the evolution of the critical engagement with the novels of my corpora. The former aims to bring to light authors previously discarded or forgotten largely because of their gender, and the latter considers that cultural output is worth studying regardless of its place on the high art/low art dichotomy.<sup>361</sup> Tables 34 and 35 show that these developments in literary scholarship have led to the novels of both corpora being reinstated into the critical conversation, in a way which

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359 It must be noted, however, that five authors feature in both corpora, and that their more critically acclaimed novels are part of the didactic corpus. These drive a greater part of the discussion of these authors than their novels that feature in the reference corpus, which may inflate the importance of the latter in this period. The same may be said for all the historical periods studied in this chapter, and is particularly true for Austen and Burney, but also for Edgeworth, Opie, and Brunton.

360 I arrive at the same conclusion in my first article on this subject, while using only partial data in comparison to this chapter (to be published on [carnet1718.hypotheses.org](http://carnet1718.hypotheses.org)). Of course, as illustrated in this section on the gendered distinction between morally didactic and doctrinaire writing, the questions of aestheticism and gendered bias cannot be totally distinguished from one another in the reception of moral didacticism.

361 Paul Hunter claims that following the lack of appreciation for eighteenth-century literature in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, the eighteenth century has become "the locus for many of the feminist, new historicist, and cultural studies" that were gaining ground when Hunter published his study, as "taste has broadened to include popular and paraliterary texts" (xiv).

at first glance may look similar to the kind of appraisal given in the early twentieth century, but with certain key differences which illustrate the current trends in research.<sup>362</sup> As with Tables 30-33, anthologies are highlighted in yellow; works that focus exclusively on women's writing are in red, and Margaret Anne Doody's *The True Story of the Novel* (1996), which features a much greater scope of analysis than the others, is in bold. The rest are histories of the novel focusing on the Romantic period.<sup>363</sup>

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362 The tables include scholarly works published between 1970 and 2020, and does not take into account those that may have been published since 2021. As with sections II and III, the selection is necessarily partial, dependent on the works I was able to access—this is particularly true here, given the amount of publications on this period in recent decades.

363 Probyn's study ends in 1798, however, necessarily cutting by half the number of novels that may be referenced.

	Moers 1977	Gilbert 1985	Rogers 1982	Spencer 1986	Probyn 1987	Kelly 1989	Richetti 1996	Doody 1996	Brown 2000	Batchelor 2005	Greenblatt 2006	Labbé 2010	Garside 2015	TOTAL
AUSTEN	79	22	17	68	15	100	8	25	16	112	23	43	345	873
<i>Sense &amp; Sensibility</i>	x	x		x	x	x			x	x	x		x	
<i>Pride &amp; Prejudice</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x		x	
BAGE			4	1		13			2				46	66
<i>Hernsprong</i>			x	x		x							x	
BRUNTON	5					4						5	37	51
<i>Self-Control</i>	x					x						x	x	
BURNEY	26	13	48	74	14	37	33	15	4	8	18	27	182	499
<i>Evelina</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	
<i>Cecilia</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x		x	
EDGEWORTH	10	14	22	20		48		2	2	11	17	22	111	279
<i>Belinda</i>	x	x	x	x		x						x	x	
<i>Patronage</i>			x			x						x	x	
GREEN													3	3
<i>Romance Readers</i>														
HAMILTON													2	2
<i>Munster Village</i>														
HAYS	2		26	15		9			1	1		6	27	87
<i>Memoirs</i>	x			x		x						x	x	
MORE	9	5 <sup>364</sup>	30	5		23	1		3	40		28	39	183
<i>Cœlebs</i>	x	x		x		x				x		x	x	
OPIE	2		5			16			1	1		3	29	57
<i>Father &amp; Daughter</i>						x							x	
SICKLEMORE														
<i>Edgar</i>														
SPENCE														
<i>Nobility of the Heart</i>														
WILLIAMS	4	4 <sup>365</sup>	4	1		1			2			47	13	77
<i>Julia</i>	x			x		x							x	
WOLLSTONECRAFT	50	21	51	43	1	36	2	4	31	43	45	46	60	433
<i>Mary</i>	x			x		x					x		x	
<i>Wrongs of Woman</i>	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

Table 34. Anthologies and Literary Histories since 1970, Didactic Corpus

<sup>364</sup> In the 2007 edition.

<sup>365</sup> In the 2007 edition.

	Moers 1977	Gilbert 1985	Rogers 1982	Spencer 1986	Probyn 1987	Kelly 1989	Richetti 1996	Doody 1996	Brown 2000	Batchelor 2005	Greenblatt 2006	Labbé 2010	Garside 2015	TOTAL
AUSTEN	79	22	17	68	15	100	8	25	16	112	23	43	345	873
<i>Mansfield Park</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
BARRETT						6							12	18
<i>The Heroine</i>						x							x	
BRUNTON	5					4						5	37	51
<i>Discipline</i>						x							x	
BURNEY	26	13	48	74	14	37	33	15	4	8	18	27	182	499
<i>The Wanderer</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
CUMBERLAND					1	2								3
<i>Henry</i>						x								
EDGEWORTH	10	14	22	20		48		2	2	11	17	22	111	279
<i>Leonora</i>	x		x											
GODWIN	6		17	6		56	10		16	2	1	7	93	197
<i>Caleb Williams</i>				x		x	x		x		x		x	
<i>Fleetwood</i>						x							x	
HOFLAND						6							25	31
<i>Son of a Genius</i>						x							x	
HOLCROFT	5		4			18						1	36	64
<i>Anna St. Ives</i>						x							x	
INCHBALD	2		18	27		12	1		9	7		15	15	106
<i>Simple Story</i>	x		x	x		x			x			x	x	
<i>Nature and Art</i>	x		x	x		x						x	x	
LAMB						13			10		23		4	50
<i>Rosamund</i>						x								
OPIE	2		5			16			1	1		3	29	57
<i>Adeline</i>			x			x							x	
OWENSON	1					10						10	53	64
<i>Wild Irish Girl</i>	x					x							x	
SMITH	1	9	31	44		10	10		4		27	101	61	298
<i>Emmeline</i>	x	x	x	x		x					x	x	x	
WALKER													9	9
<i>The Vagabond</i>													x	
WAY														
<i>Learning</i>														

Table 35. Anthologies and Literary Histories since 1970, Reference Corpus

One of the first striking aspects of these tables in comparison to the previous ones is how many works on the history of the novel one may find in this period, with the variety of scopes that these have illustrating the multiplicity of ways to approach research. For instance, Richetti's *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (1996) focuses on the eighteenth century, while Jane Spencer's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (1986) studies the same time period but looks exclusively at women writers. Margaret Anne Doody's *The True Story of the Novel* (1996) takes a much wider scope, at once in terms of time periods, geographical boundaries, and gender.

Unsurprisingly, the surge of scholarly interest in female writing means that compared to the early-twentieth-century works of literary history, those with a particular focus on women since the 1970s tend to include more women and fewer men. At least as many authors from the didactic corpus than from the reference corpus consequently appear in these books, given the relative proportions of female writers in each corpus.<sup>366</sup> Feminist scholarship gave a notable impulse to renewing research on revolutionary women, such as Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Wollstonecraft. When we compare the amount of pages devoted to these authors in the earlier works that did mention them, numbers soar in the feminist works from the 1970s and the 1980s. Wollstonecraft appears in every single work featured in Table 34, signaling the end of her cultural ostracizing and firmly establishing her in the English canon as a theorist and a novelist. Another striking difference in this period is the tendency toward greater balance between discussions of hypercanonical Jane Austen and less ubiquitous authors of the period, with several works reverting back to late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century trends.<sup>367</sup>

It may be useful to distinguish further between the types of publications featured in Tables 34 and 35. Two of them are Norton Anthologies (Gilbert and Gubar, Greenblatt), which are textbooks often used as course material at the undergraduate level, while the

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<sup>366</sup> See Ellen Moers (1977), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2007, first edition 1985), Katharine Rogers (1982), Jane Spencer (1986), and Jacqueline Labbé (2010). The same may be observed about Bridget MacCarthy's work focusing on women in the 1930s. It is worth noting that some of these works still include male authors such as Godwin, Holcroft, and/or Bage, all of whom were political radicals. As Megan Woodworth notes, many recent scholars have centered their studies on radical writers of the period, and much less on conservatives, "perceived to be on the wrong side of history in the liberal revolutions of the late eighteenth century" (38).

<sup>367</sup> See for example Kelly (1989), Labbé (2010), and Garside (2015).

other works are more likely to be read by post-graduate students and researchers.<sup>368</sup> For Paul Hunter, "introductory textbooks" are "powerful makers of taste aimed at bright and retentive freshmen, who, it turns out, grow up to be graduates and academics," making such works integral to the on-going process of canon-formation and reevaluation (xiii). Terry Lovell similarly notes the importance of university curricula in defining what is to "count as a literary text," and the importance of the Norton company in the university curricula is evidenced by the many editions that its anthologies have gone through over the years (134).<sup>369</sup> The figures concerning *The Norton Anthology for Women* include the 1985 and 2007 editions; in the earlier edition, Helen Maria Williams and Hannah More were not included, More's exclusion illustrating how interest in conservative figures of the period has come after studies of revolutionaries, given More's cultural importance in the period (Woodworth 38). The 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* edited by Stephen Greenblatt features Austen, Burney, Edgeworth from both corpora, Wollstonecraft from the didactic corpus, and Godwin and Smith from the reference corpus—although it should be noted that Godwin does not have a section of his own, and *Caleb Williams* is mentioned in Wollstonecraft's biographical notice. This selection illustrates the stark evolution of the literary canon of the period, with Burney, Edgeworth, Wollstonecraft, and Smith reinstated alongside Austen as important figures in their own right.

The Norton Anthologies do not tend to include novels in the body of the texts, and indeed none of the novels from the corpora are directly quoted.<sup>370</sup> The data shown in the tables are from the biographical notices, where short discussions of authors' works of fiction may be found. For a sense of the novelistic canon according to Norton editors, the preface to the 8th edition refers the readers to Norton Critical Editions of novels, which publish novels as separate volumes (xxxvi).<sup>371</sup> In this latter collection, only Frances Burney's *Evelina*, Jane

368 The Norton Anthologies discussed here are also the only two anthologies strictly speaking presented in this whole chapter, apart from Barbauld's *The British Novelists* (1810) and Scott's *Lives of the Novelists* (1825), providing a selection of writings from a range of authors.

369 In the same vein, Richard Ohmann notes that "the college classroom, and its counterpart, the academic journal, have become in our society the final arbiters of literary merit, and even of survival" (206).

370 To this point, Leah Price notes about the novel that "few genres have been better placed to escape the anthology's sphere of influence" (5). Whereas novel excerpts were found in eighteenth-century anthologies, "over the course of the nineteenth century editors narrowed their generic range until the anthology-piece became tacitly synonymous with the lyric" (5). Although Norton Anthologies do not exclusively feature poetry, also including passages from theoretical works, prose fiction is seldom included.

371 Price describes the volumes comprising the Norton Anthology Editions as "one-volume novels marketed to buyers of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* and designed, as the preface to the latter puts it, to



Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* can be found from the novels of my corpus, out of over 260 books. None of Burney's other works are included, while the full Austen canon is, *Mansfield Park* being the only novel of reference corpus to appear. Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* appear on the Norton Critical Editions Catalog online, showing a level of canonization of some of their work, though not the novels that are in my corpora.

This also suggests that the novels and writers that have gained the greatest recognition actually are from the didactic corpus, which may seem counter-intuitive given the rejection of didactic and more generally ideological writing earlier in the twentieth century, and attests to the shift in critical perspective on Austen and Burney, originally praised for being morally instructive, and nowadays seldom included in studies on didacticism. For example, in *Modes of Discipline: Women, Conservatism, and the Novel after the French Revolution* (2003), Lisa Wood distinguishes Austen and her "narratorial 'indirections'" allowing for "various contradictory readings of her novels" from "[Jane] West and other writers of antirevolutionary didactic fiction [who] strove toward a single meaning and complete closure" (16). Similarly, Hilary Havens explains the exclusion of Burney from *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing, 1790-1820* (2017) on the grounds of its pervasive satire" (8). Austen and Burney's stylistic choices are the disqualifying factor, underlining the shift from the perception of moral didacticism based on the presence of certain topics, to a focus on style. In this case, features which are often praised for their aesthetic qualities are considered inimical to the presence of a didactic register, serving the communicative function of moral instruction.

After works of feminist criticism and textbook anthologies, we may also group together those focusing on prose fiction from the Romantic period, which show a range similar to the rather comprehensive works of the early decades of the twentieth century. Gary Kelly's *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* (1989) is one of the most representative of my corpora, along with Peter Garside and Karen O'Brien's *English and British Fiction 1750-1820* (2015). Both include extensive discussions of male authors Godwin and Holcroft as well as at least several mentions of Lamb, while also giving significant

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'match' the *NAEL*," betraying "the supplementary status of a genre that has become central to our imagination of the canon but whose size prevents it from entering that canon's most concrete material manifestation" (5).

attention to Inchbald, Smith, Owenson, and even Hofland, all from the reference corpus. They thus widen the scope of the canon in a way which clearly builds on feminist criticism, including radicals Hays, Williams, and Wollstonecraft, who had been largely overlooked through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their coverage echoes the wide-ranging histories of the novel from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, taking a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach.

Almost all authors that remain unmentioned are particularly obscure: Sarah Green, Mary Hamilton, Richard Sicklemore, Elizabeth Spence, Eaton Stannard Barrett, George Walker, and Gregory Lewis Way do not appear in Kelly, and neither do Sicklemore, Spence, Barrett, Richard Cumberland, and Way in Garside. Cumberland and Barrett are the only authors from this (non-)selection to have had a previously modestly sustained reputation, featuring in several critical works of the nineteenth century. Green has only been mentioned in three works since the nineteenth century, including Garside and O'Brien's, Walker in two including Garside and O'Brien's, Way only in Tompkins, Hamilton only in Garside and O'Brien's, and Spence and Sicklemore feature in none of the works of literary history under study.<sup>372</sup>

Importantly, as with the works studied in the previous periods, evolution in the narrative fiction canon from the Romantic period since the 1970s is not an even and straightforward process. For instance, Clive Probyn's *English Fiction of the Eighteenth-Century, 1700-1798* (1987), which belongs to the same collection as Kelly's work, mentions only Austen and Burney among the writers of my corpus. Close to half of the novels of both corpora were published by 1798, when Probyn's study ends, illustrating that the move to wider inclusion did not occur evenly across critics—and of course highlighting again Austen's hypercanonical status, given that her novels were all published in the nineteenth century. Marshall Brown's *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism on Romanticism* (2000) illustrates a sort of middle ground in scope of inclusion, featuring all the authors that have been considered important at least at one point in time, because of their perceived

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<sup>372</sup> Garside and O'Brien's monograph is particularly interesting in that it is the latest of the kind in this selection, and is the one that most closely represents both corpora. Its existence illustrates the complete turnaround that we have seen in research on the Romantic period in the last several decades, moving from a conception of Romanticism synonymous with the six canonical male poets to a varied and dynamic view of literary output in the period. This shift in focus is for example at the heart of Anne Mellor's *Romanticism & Gender* (1993).

importance in the development of the novel as a genre (Austen, Burney, Edgeworth), their popularity in their own time (Godwin, Inchbald, More, Opie, Smith), or their importance as radicals and (proto)feminists (Hays, Williams, Wollstonecraft).

In these more recent works, didacticism is discussed more neutrally than previously, in keeping with the principle of cultural studies to "consider every form of signifying practice as a valid object of study if it is to count as a serious discourse of knowledge," rather than focusing on what has previously been considered "high culture" (Easthope 6). As such, didacticism is not discussed in terms of literariness, but factually as an element of the literary tradition of the long eighteenth century. Jane Spencer thus devotes an entire chapter to "The Didactic Tradition," which she particularly ties to the plot trajectory of the reformed heroine (140). She discusses several novels from both corpora, including Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, Burney's *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, Edgeworth's *Belinda*, More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, Inchbald's *A Simple Story*, and Smith's *Emmeline*. The majority of these authors are generally considered to be somewhere on the conservative end of the political spectrum, except for Inchbald and Smith who are described as Radicals in their respective *ODNB* entries.<sup>373</sup>

The didactic tradition is contrasted with the tradition of protest in Spencer's work, which includes Inchbald (straddling both traditions), Hays, and Wollstonecraft.<sup>374</sup> While the previous dichotomy between "didactic" and "doctrinaire" novels seemed to be largely about gender, the didactic-protest spectrum appears to hinge on political affiliation.<sup>375</sup> Didacticism is in Spencer linked to particular narrative features, namely that of the reformed heroine, but the notion is particularly associated with more conservative writers, while that of social criticism is tied to more politically radical authors. Strikingly, novels from both corpora are

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373 There is debate about where exactly Austen and Burney fall on this spectrum, some scholars emphasizing their conservative politics, and others the subversiveness of their writing. On this topic, Spencer compellingly argues that they integrated elements of protest in their novels while defending or at least maintaining the social fabric as it was, indicating a generally conservative attitude (163, 168). She makes a similar claim about More, which Anne Stott echoes in her biography on the latter, writing for instance that her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) contains "a range of seemingly contradictory statements that, pulled out of context, can be used to depict her as a protofeminist or an antifeminist" (217).

374 This discussion occurs in chapter 4, entitled "Seduced Heroines: The Tradition of Protest" (107).

375 Gary Kelly takes up a similar dichotomy, linking political moderate and educator Edgeworth to didactic fiction and radicals Bage, Williams, and Wollstonecraft to political fiction. He describes Bage's *Hermesprong* as representative of "late Enlightenment social criticism," calls Williams' *Julia* a "novel of views," and argues that Wollstonecraft used *Wrongs of Woman* to develop her ideas in novel form (27, 320, 38).

cited by Spencer as belonging to the didactic tradition and the tradition of protest, further highlighting the instability of the notion in the history of literary criticism, regardless of its appraisal in relation to aesthetic taste.

Finally, while critical works on the history of the English novel from the nineteenth and early twentieth century do not seem to have significantly influenced the trajectory of the individual novels on the book market, the renewal of scholarly interest in the fictional output of the period has clearly led to a rise in new publications (see Tables 28 and 29). Many of these recent publications are scholarly editions, indicating a fundamental rift between popularity and scholarly interest, which largely determines prestige.<sup>376</sup> Nonetheless, the renewed availability of many of these works, along with the presence of a number of authors from both corpora in widely used teaching material such as the Norton Anthology series, is an important step toward (re)canonization.<sup>377</sup>

## Conclusion

The pattern of inclusion and exclusion of the novels of the didactic and reference corpora from English literary history is far from clear, supporting the idea of a literary canon forever in flux, always in a process of negotiation and renegotiation. This case study in canon formation suggests that popularity and prestige are indeed interwoven in the making of the English canon, and fully come together in the case of hypercanonical texts and authors, but otherwise remain very separate indicators of canonicity. The study also shows that stability relative to the canon may only be found at the very top or the very bottom of the pile, whereas the middle ground easily shifts in and out of it, showing the precariousness of "canonical" status. While university curricula and anthologies used for teaching certainly

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<sup>376</sup> Pierre Bourdieu makes this exact point in relation to French literary history, which the notion of hypercanonicity within the English tradition complicates (165).

<sup>377</sup> This of course excludes Austen's publication trajectory, which has combined both increasing popularity with steady critical acclaim and scholarly engagement, illustrating the author's hypercanonical status. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we find someone like Elizabeth Spence, whose novel *The Nobility of the Heart* has only been published once, and whose name I have not seen in any of the critical material that I have come across since the early reviews from the *Monthly* and the *Critical*. Its inclusion in my didactic corpus has been possible thanks to the digitization project Novels Online of rare narrative works by women from 1600 to 1830 carried out by the Chawton House Library, and attests to the possibility of widening the scope of the English canon and of literary research in general thanks to greater accessibility to elements of the wider "archive," defined as "that portion of published literature that has been preserved—in libraries and elsewhere—and this is now being increasingly digitized" (Algee-Hewitt *et al.* 2).

seem to impact subsequent directions of scholarly research, and initial popularity of an author is now considered legitimate grounds for academic inquiry, it does not follow that "rediscovered" works and authors will necessarily gain in popularity and commercial success. Moreover, the majority of the authors of both corpora remained part of the narrative of the history of the English novel until the literary canon was dramatically narrowed down in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, stemming in part from the rise of formalist approaches to literary study such as New Criticism during the establishment of English as an academic subject. Though the "Great Forgetting" of women and more largely of late-eighteenth-century novels is evident, it constitutes a relatively short-lived period of these novels' reception (Siskin 195).

Cultural sensibilities to texts with a clear moral aim have also shifted dramatically since the late eighteenth century, culminating in the strong emphasis on stylistic innovation and complexity in Modernism (Price 2000: 6). This shift affects the novels of both corpora, illustrating the gradual—though not linear—change in the reception of moral didacticism over time, from rather topic-oriented in the Romantic period to more style-oriented in the twentieth century. This explains why it was difficult to pinpoint what made the didactic corpus cohesive originally (see chapters 1-3), especially when we consider the fact that what constitutes the core of moral didacticism in the early reception of these novels amounts to a certain expression of Englishness, which has certainly evolved over time, but still remains part of the English narrative of nationhood through fiction and especially the canon.<sup>378</sup> Austen's early novels combine this expression of genteel, domestic Englishness with aesthetics of irony and nuance, which became increasingly praised as dominant cultural tastes moved away from the *utile et dulce* principle to an ethos of aestheticism. The values of moral didacticism as it was initially received have not actually been dispensed with; rather, distaste toward texts where the moral point appears more obviously than their aesthetics has consistently gained ground in critical attitude to literature.

In recent years, relative uncertainty as to what one means when calling a text didactic has remained, even though its use in scholarly works on narrative fiction has been much less imbued with negative judgment.<sup>379</sup> My work on the evolution of the reception of moral didacticism in novels shows the term to be very time-specific, with a greater focus on

378 Sarah Corse notes that "the great literary works of a nation form the national canon," valorized as "key symbols of the nation" (211).

379 See for instance Havens' *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing, 1790-1820* (2017).

the efficacy of its register in the early reception, and a growing centrality of stylistic considerations over time—though both elements, communicative function and aesthetics, always interact in some measure. Didacticism has been received as both a formal element and a reflection of one's gender and/or political opinions. At its core, it seems to involve moral ideology as a framework for narrative fiction, to be expressed in varying degrees of overtness and covertness—overt didacticism being the mode of expression which has garnered most contempt in terms of aesthetic value in the past century. The final chapter of this dissertation explores reactions of undergraduates students today to passages from novels deemed didactic upon first publication, in order to further investigate twenty-first-century reception of moral didacticism in fiction.

## Chapter 9. Reading Moral Didacticism Today: A Case Study

### Introduction

In *The Myth of Popular Culture*, Peter Meisel draws attention to the importance of the reader in the formation and evolution of artistic canons, since "the reader completes, realizes, or indeed, performs the text, which is otherwise without being, and certainly without effective cause" (57). Meisel also argues that "canons are functionally inevitable" (61) and "not elitist" (54). Canonicity is necessary for Meisel as "it is what determines what texts are paradigmatic for practice, and what texts we study, in any field" (54). It participates in the "dialectical" relationship between a work of art and its tradition in the sense that any work of art "has a conversation both with its sources, which it revises and transforms, and with cultural authority as a whole, which it also revises and transforms" (x). Moreover, many scholars emphasize the importance of higher education in (re)establishing the literary canon, within the dual mission of the university institution to produce research and teach, as discussed in chapter 8 (Graff 162, Kowaleski-Wallace 1991: viii, Lecker 10, Lovell 134, Ross 10).

This last chapter consequently presents a reader-response study based on undergraduates' written reactions to four excerpts from three novels of the didactic corpus: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). The respondents were students enrolled in my first-year British Literature course in the fall semester of 2018. Continuing with the previous chapter's look at the evolution of the reception of moral didacticism in critical discourse on the novels of both corpora, this study aims at reflecting on the place of what has been perceived as moral didacticism within that discourse, and whether or not this perception, still very much informed by the post-art-for-art's sake sensibility of mid-twentieth-century criticism, is likely to be reevaluated. The data suggests that these students' responses tend to align with the tradition going back to the early reviews of perceiving Austen as covertly didactic, if she is found to be didactic at all, in contrast to More and Wollstonecraft's more overt styles. Moreover, many reactions evoke those of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* in their absence of opposition between perception of didacticism

and aesthetic response, contrasting with the critical stance prevalent since the mid-twentieth century, as seen in chapter 8.

## I. Introducing the Study

The investigation presented in this chapter takes the form of a case study, a research approach which "favor[s] intensity and depth, as well as exploring the interaction between case and context" within clearly defined boundaries (Marshall and Rossman 69). Geoff Hall counts classroom activities as one among many "bounded" phenomena that may be explored, as is the case here (200). The rationale and contours of the study are detailed in section I, before proceeding with data analysis in section II.

### *i. Literature Review*

The act of reading has received much scholarly attention in the past decades in a variety of research disciplines, all of which tend to agree on the general difficulty of studying reading in all of its complexities. Reading is routinely studied as a cognitive process (Castiglione 2017, Da Costa Fialho 2007, Whiteley 2011) and is a recurring topic in educational research.<sup>380</sup> Sociological studies focusing on groups of readers with the aim of investigating so-called "real readers" also exist (Radway 1991, Swann and Allington 2009). These studies deal with processing and responding to texts in general, and may or may not deal with literary texts in particular. When literary texts are taken as a point of departure, it is not the literary nature of the texts that is at stake, but the cognitive process of reading and its implications for the teaching of reading. For example, Peskin (1998) reports on a contrastive study of "expert" and "novice" readers and concludes that the schemata knowledge that expert readers have is crucial to both their understanding and their appreciation of period poems.

In literary criticism, the relative positions of the reader and the author have been much debated over the course of the twentieth-century, with the advent of reader-response criticism. As Terry Eagleton explains in relation to New Criticism, the prevalent critical

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<sup>380</sup> See Grabe and Stoller (2011) for an overview of the field. Hall (2005) also gives an overview of research into reading as a cognitive process, including research on "expert" and "ordinary" readers, a distinction developed below.



stance of the first half of the twentieth century, texts used to be thought of as enclosing a set of determined meanings independent of the author's intent and the reader's subjectivity (Eagleton 40-42). Nevertheless, various critics then simultaneously worked against this stance and positioned the reader at center stage. As early as 1938, Louise Rosenblatt developed the idea of reading as a transaction between text and reader, with an "emphasis on the to-and-fro, spiraling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning" (1995: xvi). Rosenblatt wrote *Literature as Exploration* with literature teachers and students in mind, giving literature teaching and learning the democratic potential of enabling readers to "think rationally about emotionally charged issues" (xv). She stresses the importance of both cognitive and affective elements in reading, in order for the reading process to be aesthetic or literary—that is enjoyed in itself, as opposed to what she calls efferent reading, which only relies on cognitive abilities to take away something specific, such as information, from the text (23, xvii). Rosenblatt has been cited as one of the precursors of reader-response theory. She wrote numerous articles throughout the twentieth century refining her transactional theory of reading, considered to have had a large influence on American secondary-school teaching of literature (Harkin 3, Park 192).

Reader-response theory has become a vast area of inquiry, with perhaps Wolfgang Iser as its most influential scholar. Although Iser's aim of providing a framework for "mapping out and guiding empirical studies of reader reaction" certainly partly undergirds the present study, it is Rosenblatt's way of linking inquiry into the reading process with the teaching of reading material that best serves as a theoretical framework here (1995: x). Reader-response critics such as Rosenblatt, Iser, or Stanley Fish embody different perspectives on the reader-text relationship that are sometimes at odds, but all rely on the basic assumption that the traditional interpretive practice of "uncover[ing] a hidden meaning," encompassing a form of truth in the text, is no longer what literary criticism should be about (Iser 11). Acknowledging that each reader comes to a text with a particular, and unique set of experiences and values is therefore a first step when one wants to study the act of reading from the perspectives of actual readers (Rosenblatt 1995: xix). Umberto Eco is also part of this tradition, through his concern with interpretive cooperation and the

role of the reader in different types of texts, which he terms "open" or "closed," as discussed in chapter 3 (x).

Despite an array of theoretical work on the figure of the reader, comparatively few studies have been conducted taking actual, flesh-and-blood readers as subjects. Various scholars and critics have called for the need for empirical inquiries involving actual readers. For instance, Patricia Canning writes that "research on readers' responses to literature has largely focused on an 'idealised' reader or an 'experimental' subject-reader often derived from within the academy and conducted using contrived or amended literary fiction" (172). Robert De Beaugrande explicitly calls for empirical research of reading literature in an article entitled "Toward the Empirical Study of Literature", where he claims that "only empirical studies" can free theoretical claims "from their absolute dependence on the personal eloquence or effrontery of the individual theorists and by providing progressively more reliable and intersubjective grounds for preferring any set of claims over any other" (1989: 10).

In some primarily conceptual works, small-scale empirical studies have been conducted in order to confront theoretical claims with empirical data, as does Umberto Eco at the end of *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (1978) in relation to his concept of the model reader, but the empirical study only appears as an appendix. Louise Rosenblatt also reports on studying graduate English students' responses to texts, written immediately after reading (1994: 6). More recently, Faye Halpern has grounded her defense of literary criticism and teaching of nineteenth-century American sentimental fiction in pedagogical concerns about training students to become "critical readers," and how this is tied to recovering the "denigrated role that 'identification' [with characters] has in our students' reading practices" (xviii). In doing so, she works within the reader-response tradition initiated by Rosenblatt of allowing emotional response a place in criticism. However, Halpern does not engage in a systematic study of students' reception of literary texts. These examples showcase scholars basing part of their research or supporting some of their claims on evidence from student coursework, often in a way that gives a different perspective on a question that has been dealt with conceptually, which is what my own study hopes to do.

On the other end of the spectrum, Janice Radway engages in an ethnographic study of a group of women reading popular romances, with the aim to "investigate reading empirically, so as to make 'accurate' statements about the historical and cultural meaning of literary production and consumption" (Radway 4). This kind of in-depth study, involving multiple interviews and data collection over a long period of time, is not replicable in my case, but the idea of conducting empirical research on a group of readers' actual responses to a set of texts is. Again in a university setting, Elizabeth Flynn investigates gendered responses to short stories, identifying a research gap in responses of relatively mature student readers as opposed to younger children (267). She uses data from 26 male students and 26 female students, who wrote their responses in the first class devoted to each story in order to minimize the influence of the instructor or classmates (286). Following this small-scale research, Flynn makes tentative claims regarding women's higher level of reading confidence and competence than men's (285). Finally, Bridget Fowler makes the claim that "the protracted labour of reception theory has still only resulted in the critic's imputation of meaning to texts," leading to a study of readers' motivations for reading romances in Scotland (115). My study hopes to add to the growing body of work interested in the perspective of actual readers, responding to the call made by various scholars for empirical reception and reader response work.

A selection of empirical reader-response research has been compiled into at least one book, *Reader Response to Literature: The Empirical Dimension* (1992). In that volume, a variety of research methods and tools are presented, including the use of undergraduate students' responses to class-assigned texts as evidence of "naive" reading, characterized by Robert De Beaugrande as the absence of "developed interpretive routines" central to the practice of published critics (1992: 200). His research includes students in Asia responding to English literary texts in English, which allowed him to consider the importance of cultural background in literary response. Although French culture is arguably less remote from English culture than Asian cultures, questions of cultural and linguistic background specific to the French context will necessarily have an effect on my project. Geoff Hall cites Hanauer's 2001 study of advanced second language learners' reading of poetry, which suggests that "the second language variable did not seem to change behaviors of poetry

readers, at least if, presumably, past a linguistic 'threshold'" (169). The students in my study had varying degrees of language proficiency, which as we will see is visible in their reactions to the different extracts.

When investigating text-reader relationships, scholars have increasingly used written evidence of reading experiences, such as diaries and letters (Lecouras 2009, Bautz 2007), annotations (Lerer 2002), or reviews (Edwards 2018, Lecouras 2009, Khan 2002, Holly 1985, Hergenhan 1964, Cothran 1994, Bautz 2007).<sup>381</sup> Reviews are a commonly used material in these studies, and according to L. T. Hergenhan, they are important resources because "they serve to enlarge or modify current views of [an author's] reception; second, they illuminate the novels by providing contemporary views of some critical interest which are not represented in the known press notices; third, they add to existing knowledge of contemporary taste and critical standards" (213). Reviews also constitute much more readily available materials than diaries, letters or annotations. This approach allows us to gain insight into the way that works have been received at a specific time (e.g. Cothran 1994), and can give a sense of the evolution of its reception over time in diachronic studies, echoing the approach taken in chapter 8 (e.g. Budelmann 2007).

While reviews, diaries, letters, annotations, and student work emanate from different conditions of production, they are all ways of indirectly accessing experiences of reading and thus investigating the text-reader relationship. On using written responses from students to investigate their reading processes and foster their critical self-reflexivity as commentators of literary texts, Mariolina Salvatori claims that "reading is a form of thinking," and that written accounts of our reading, "however approximate, can provide us with valuable insight into the ways we think" (445). The rationale for the study presented in this chapter follows from this argument.

This brief overview combines research anchored in reader response and in reception, which warrants a clarification in concepts. Patricia Harkin defines reception study as the "inquiry in a text's effect on specific classes of readers," citing Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* as an example, and reader-response theory as the "effort to provide a generalized account of what happens when human beings engage in a process they call 'reading,'" including theoretical texts such as works by Rosenblatt, Iser, or Fish (411). Harkin's definition

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<sup>381</sup> These sources were identified by searching the JSTOR database with the keyword "reception."

coincides with Peter Hohendahl and Marc Silberman's, who call empirical reception research "literary sociology" (40), as well as with James Machor and Philip Goldstein's, who cite Tomkins' *Sensational Designs* and Radway's *Reading the Romance* as reception study.

However, Leah Price distinguishes reception work, where the research material comprises of organic sources such as reviews, letters, or diaries, from reader-response study, which elicits the responses to be analyzed (12). In his 1982 article 'Trends in Literary Theory: The American Reception of Reception Theory,' Robert Holub stresses the importance of the German school of reception in twentieth-century research on literary history, and deplors the Anglo-American practice of dissociating Wolfgang Iser from his German scholarly tradition in discussions on reader response criticism (82). The various national traditions in which readers' experiences of literary texts are explored may explain the confusion which seems to exist in scholarship in the definitions of reception and reader response. For the purposes of this study, Patricia Harkin's definitions will be used. As a result, the inquiry into my students' responses to the didactic mode is a reception study with a theoretical basis in reader response.

My own study has been designed with the aim of providing a complementary angle to the definition and reception of moral didacticism in the novels from my corpus, that of actual readers engaging with kinds of texts that are no longer valued for their didacticism when they are in fact still valued by the literary establishment. This is close to Halpern's concern with nineteenth-century American sentimental literature, whose rhetoric "requires critics to read without critical distance, to read contrary to reading practices that we have mostly adopted as critics" (153). This goes against what university instructors often aim to do with their students, often expecting students not to identify uncritically with texts. However, Halpern argues for the possibility of critics allowing themselves and their students to be more than one kind of reader at once (158). Sentimental texts, much like didactic texts, are generally understood to invite the reader to remain as close as possible to what Peter Rabinowitz calls the authorial audience—"the hypothetical audience that the author composes for," a "good reader " who "does not read against the grain of what she is reading" (Halpern 144). This can be difficult to achieve when the text being read embodies very different values from ours; modern readers may find it difficult to believe in the artlessness of

sentimental effusions, and all the more so if they have been discouraged in educational settings from identifying emotionally with texts in order to avoid uncriticality (Halpern xx).<sup>382</sup>

One of the aims of my study is therefore to investigate the assumption that modern readers are unlikely to respond sympathetically or uncritically to moral didacticism, which are often constructed in ways that call for a particular response, epitomizing Eco's notion of closed texts that aim at "eliciting a sort of 'obedient' cooperation" from the reader (7).<sup>383</sup> Following from this, another goal of the study is to investigate the students' engagement with the notions of didacticism and aesthetic value, and contextualize the findings within my work on the early reception of moral didacticism and its evolution in relation to the literary canon throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first centuries (see chapters 1 and 8). As we will see, studying current students' responses to some of these texts offers avenues for thinking in more nuanced ways about the reception of moral didacticism in fiction today than what scholars often suggest.

I focus on moral didacticism as a register rather than a genre in this chapter, focusing on the responses to elements of language seen as serving the communicative function of instructing readers.<sup>384</sup> The design of the reception study with students, detailed below, is better suited to study the reception of moral didacticism as a possible feature of the texts rather than the generic characteristics of the didactic novel as defined at the end of chapter 7, since the students were given excerpts of three novels from the didactic corpus to react to, and were not made to read the novels in their entirety. The question of style also appears in the examination of the students' aesthetic comments on the texts.

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382 Similarly, Rita Felski calls for a reevaluation of what she terms the "hermeneutics of suspicion," a set of practices that combine "an attitude of vigilance, detachment, and wariness (*suspicion*) with identifiable conventions of commentary (*hermeneutics*), allowing us to see that critique is as much a matter of affect and rhetoric as of philosophy or politics (3, author's emphasis). She argues for the development of "postcritical reading," suggesting that "rather than looking behind the text—for its hidden causes, determining conditions, and noxious motives, we might place ourselves in front of the text, reflecting on what unfurls, calls forth, makes possible" (12). This approach posits an interdependence between text and reader in the process of interpretation, "without opposing thought to emotion or divorcing intellectual rigor from affective attachment" (154).

383 See chapter 4.

384 See Biber and Conrad (31). This is simply a matter of perspective, as "the same texts can be analyzed from register, genre, and style perspectives" (15).

## *ii. Design and Methodology*

The study took place within an introductory course in English literature for first-year students at the university of Strasbourg. The class consisted of 29 students, 25 females and 4 males, self-identified in the form seeking informed consent prior to the beginning of the study.<sup>385</sup> The study is qualitative in nature, with results that do not aim at being generalizable, given the scale of the project. However, it is hoped that these will be valuable to the field of research concerned with the act of reading, which has time and again been studied conceptually, but only seldom empirically, with actual, flesh-and-blood readers.

The population under consideration here is a group of first-year university students in France taking an introductory English literature course which I taught in the fall semester of 2018. The class's aim was to familiarize students with largely British literary texts of various genres over several centuries, and to introduce them to the practices of literary analysis in English. They were humanities majors enrolled in an interdisciplinary program with classes in the French Literature, History, Philosophy, and Modern Languages departments, offering them a solid base knowledge of Western culture, as evidenced in the data discussed in the following section. The syllabus for the class includes poems and narrative texts from the Romantic period to Modernism. The data used was collected over a period of two weeks when the topic of the class was narrative fiction from the Romantic period, and comprises written responses from students on four passages from three novels of the didactic corpus: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). The students are all English language learners with varying levels of proficiency, ranging from B1 to C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This needs to be taken into account when analyzing the written data produced by them.

As undergraduate students, the respondents here may be called "ordinary readers," as opposed to "expert readers" (Hall 162, 165). "Expert readers" are readers whose education and/or profession entails a high proficiency in literary analysis, such as literary scholars, including those who have not quite finished their training, such as PhD candidates (Hall 162). In contrast, "ordinary readers" have presumably had some schooling in literary analysis, but

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<sup>385</sup> See Appendices 9.1 and 9.2 for a sample form and the information notice the students were given in order to explain the study.

cannot be said to be fully proficient in the techniques of literary analysis or in literary history and critical theory. This is the case for these first-year humanities majors. Consequently, the written responses are necessarily very different in nature from the material used so far in this dissertation, be it the early reviews or the works on literary history. Early reviewers and literary scholars also have different positions in the literary world. However, both offer valuable perspectives on the reception of moral didacticism in the novels of the didactic and reference corpora. Reviewers' role of assessing value is tied to the marketing of a commercial product, while literary scholars' appraisals are tied to literary history and theory; literary scholars also tend to be university lecturers, and thus participate in the commercial life of literature from an institutional standpoint (Christie 288, Curran 122-123). Students are another crucial element of the life of literary output, given that they are made to read the texts that have been assigned to them through reading lists. A parallel may be drawn with reviewers here, who review texts largely on assignment, as opposed to those who read for pleasure, and therefore by choice.<sup>386</sup>

In addition, the fact that students often do not possess much knowledge of the cultural context surrounding the works or the critical tradition that attends these productions ensures a fresh perspective on moral didacticism, which it is worth comparing with the early reviewers' and subsequent literary scholars'.<sup>387</sup> Studying students' responses was therefore chosen over, for instance, investigating reviews of the novels found on online platforms such as Goodreads, as the reviewers may include novice and expert readers, as well as readers made to read the books as an assignment in a college course, or who picked them up for their personal pleasure. Studying such reviews would be worthwhile in its own right, for example to further examine the interactions of popularity and prestige in the continual making of the literary canon, and may be an avenue of research to consider beyond this dissertation.<sup>388</sup> Studying students' responses, however, is best suited to answer the research questions here, which are as follows:

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386 This is certainly true for the critics of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* in the late eighteenth century, given the aim of the periodicals to review all current literary output (Christie 282).

387 Robert de Beaugrande notes that "because they have not developed interpretive routines, [naive readers'] responses are often more original and insightful than those I have found among published critics" (1992: 200).

388 For instance, Lisa Nakamura argues for the value of studying such platforms as Goodreads to investigate contemporary modes of what she calls "readerly sociality" (240).



1- Do students identify the texts as didactic, in the sense of carrying moral instruction for the reader? If so, what is their response to it?

2- Do students find aesthetic value to the texts, and if so, how does it relate to their responses to moral didacticism?

In terms of the material circumstances of the present study, I was both researcher and the teacher of the course, which ensured access to the participants as well as minimal disruption of the research environment. However, difficulties may arise from having the simultaneous dual role of teacher and researcher, involving primarily ethical concerns: the students had to be comfortable enough to be able to give their informed consent as willing participants in the study, without fearing a repercussion on their grades or on how they would be treated in class over the course of the semester. In order to avoid these problems, it was made clear from the onset that participation in the writing activities in class was mandatory as part of the course's required work, but that the students had the choice as to the use of their output as data for the study. The data was rendered anonymous as soon as the written responses were included in the study, with each student being assigned a number ranging from 1 to 29. The capital letter(s) preceding the number refers to the author or authors of the passages discussed.<sup>389</sup> Given that gender is an important question in my research, the code names of the responses reflect the gender of the respondents: a lower-case "m" features after the number for male students. The project was submitted to and approved by the ethics committee of the University of Strasbourg prior to its implementation in the classroom (see Appendix Chap. 9.3). The research project was explained to the students in the first class of the semester, and the consent forms were handed out (see Appendices Chap. 9.1 and 9.2).

The data is therefore made up of students' written responses to texts as part of their regular coursework. Data collection took place online, on the Moodle teaching platform, where they were asked, each week, to respond to one or both of the passages that would be studied in the following class. The students could respond in any way or format they wanted, as long as the language was English, and the length between 150 and 400 words. For both weeks when data collection occurred, two narrative passages were given for students to

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<sup>389</sup> For example, MW10 denotes a response on a passage by More and/or Wollstonecraft by the student who was randomly attributed the number 10. The same student wrote response labeled A10, on the passages by Austen.

address, and they could choose whether to respond to just one of the two texts or both. De Beaugrande opines that such "free responses" yield "messier but more spontaneous and natural" data (1989: 23). Although written data is mediated by the cognitive processes of both reading and writing, the fact that it was collected as part of regular classwork makes the collection process relatively unobtrusive for the participants and therefore remains as "natural" as possible. Students who might struggle with what to write had the possibility of responding to one of the guiding questions in the prompt below, which were designed to elicit wide-ranging responses, including emotional and personal ones, not just critical analyses in line with traditional literary analysis done in the classroom setting.<sup>390</sup> The students were also free to formulate their own questions on the text, including questions on vocabulary, context, analysis, imagery, etc. Here is the instruction given each week:

For this response, you are free to give your impressions on any aspect(s) that you find striking in the reading for next class. Remember to explicitly explain why you find these aspects striking. You may relate the texts to other texts, to your personal life, and/or to contemporary world issues. You may either compare the two texts, or only focus on one.

Feel free to raise any questions you may have about the texts. Your response must be in English, and be between 150 and 400 words.

Pedagogically, the idea was for students to engage with the texts prior to coming to class, work on their written English looking forward to the final exam, and for their responses to orientate class content and discussion. This also ensured that their response was as little influenced by me as the teacher or other classmates as possible (Flynn 286). They were asked to send their paragraph at least two days before the class took place, to allow time for me to take their questions and comments into account for the class. I provided weekly feedback and comments in terms of language and content.

The excerpts chosen as the basis for data collection are reproduced at the end of this section. These were used as material to discuss the novel in post-Enlightenment Britain in the third and fourth class of the semester, after a lesson on Romantic poetry where we looked at Wordsworth's 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.' The excerpts from Wollstonecraft and More were the focus of one lesson, and the two passages from *Sense and Sensibility* were studied

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<sup>390</sup> As Louise Rosenblatt argues, a reader's spontaneous response is the "first step toward increasingly mature primary reactions," with the aim to "acquire mental habits that will lead to literary insight, critical judgment, and ethical and social understanding" (1994: 71).

the following week. The Wollstonecraft and More excerpts were chosen for their different treatment of similar subject matters, each including a (supposedly) dying mother giving counsel to her child but expressing widely differing views of family and marriage in a variety of tone and style. The excerpts from *Sense and Sensibility* also portray family relations, with one from chapter 7 describing the Middleton household, and the other from chapter 16 showing a piece of dialogue between Marianne, Elinor, and Edward on the Dashwood ladies' childhood home in the fall season. The texts were also chosen keeping in mind that the students were not asked to read the works in their entirety, and would thus be lacking narrative context. Hence, three out of the four passages feature characters or plot elements that are being newly introduced, such as Maria's upbringing (*Wrongs of Woman*), the relationship between Charles and his parents (*Cælebs*), and the description of Sir John and Lady Middleton (*Sense and Sensibility*). The passage from chapter 16 of *Sense and Sensibility* was chosen for the ironic treatment of Marianne's romantic sensibility to nature, which many of the students did relate to our discussion on nature in Romanticism from the previous class, although a number had trouble discerning irony in either of the Austen passages, as will be discussed in section II, ii of this chapter.

All three novels are from the didactic corpus, and their reception history from the early reviewers to scholars of literary history through the twenty-first century varies tremendously, reflecting the historical ambivalence of the literary critics toward the notion of moral didacticism, as seen in chapter 8. These authors illustrate the variety of trajectories that novels originally received as morally didactic took in relation to the evolution of the literary canon. Passages from their works were chosen to investigate the reactions of contemporary readers who are not particularly aware of the critical tradition surrounding these authors or moral didacticism, whether it is found to be overt or covert. Austen, More, and Wollstonecraft also exemplify the spectrum of political affiliations found in the authors of the didactic corpus, from staunchly conservative (More) to moderate (Austen) and radical (Wollstonecraft). Finally, they highlight the range of moral didacticism's initial reception delineated in chapter 1, II, from successful (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Wrongs* according to the *Critical*), to average (*Cælebs*) and failed (*Wrongs* according to the *Monthly*). The exact passages submitted to the students are reproduced below, in chronological order. Some

elements of language and cultural context were provided for students to limit the occurrence of misreading based on limited language proficiency.

**Mary Wollstonecraft. *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798)**

From chapter 7

“ADDRESSING these memoirs to you, my child, uncertain whether I shall ever have an opportunity of instructing you, many observations will probably flow from my heart, which only a mother—a mother schooled in misery, could make.

“The tenderness of a father who knew the world, might be great; but could it equal that of a mother—of a mother, labouring under a portion of the misery, which the constitution of society seems to have entailed on all her kind? It is, my child, my dearest daughter, only such a mother, who will dare to break through all restraint to provide for your happiness—who will voluntarily brave censure herself, to ward off sorrow from your bosom. From my narrative, my dear girl, you may gather the instruction, the counsel, which is meant rather to exercise than influence your mind.—Death may snatch me from you, before you can weigh my advice, or enter into my reasoning; I would then, with fond anxiety, lead you very early in life to form your grand principle of action, to save you from the vain regret of having, through irresolution, let the spring-tide of existence pass away, unimproved, unenjoyed.—Gain experience—ah! gain it—while experience is worth having, and acquire sufficient fortitude to pursue your own happiness; it includes your utility, by a direct path. What is wisdom too often, but the owl of the goddess, who sits moping in a desolated heart; around me she shrieks, but I would invite all the gay warblers of spring to nestle in your blooming bosom.—Had I not wasted years in deliberating, after I ceased to doubt, how I ought to have acted—I might now be useful and happy.—For my sake, warned by my example, always appear what you are, and you will not pass through existence without enjoying its genuine blessings, love and respect.

“Born in one of the most romantic parts of England, an enthusiastic fondness for the varying charms of nature is the first sentiment I recollect; or rather it was the first consciousness of pleasure that employed and formed my imagination.

“My father had been a captain of a man of war; but, disgusted with the service, on account of the preferment of men whose chief merit was their family connections or borough interest, he retired into the country; and, not knowing what to do with himself—married. In his family, to regain his lost consequence, he determined to keep up the same passive obedience, as in the vessels in which he had commanded. His orders were not to be disputed; and the whole house was expected to fly, at the word of command, as if to man the shrouds, or mount aloft in an elemental strife, big with life or death. He was to be instantaneously obeyed, especially by my mother, whom he very benevolently married for love; but took care to remind her of the obligation, when she dared, in the slightest instance, to question his absolute authority. My eldest brother, it is true, as he grew up, was treated with more respect by my father; and became in due form the deputy-tyrant of the house. The representative of my father, a being privileged by nature—a boy, and the darling of my

mother, he did not fail to act like an heir apparent. Such indeed was my mother's extravagant partiality, that, in comparison with her affection for him, she might be said not to love the rest of her children. Yet none of the children seemed to have so little affection for her. Extreme indulgence had rendered him so selfish, that he only thought of himself; and from tormenting insects and animals, he became the despot of his brothers, and still more of his sisters.

"It is perhaps difficult to give you an idea of the petty cares which obscured the morning of my life; continual restraint in the most trivial matters; unconditional submission to orders, which, as a mere child, I soon discovered to be unreasonable, because inconsistent and contradictory. Thus are we destined to experience a mixture of bitterness, with the recollection of our most innocent enjoyments.

"The circumstances which, during my childhood, occurred to fashion my mind, were various; yet, as it would probably afford me more pleasure to revive the fading remembrance of newborn delight, than you, my child, could feel in the perusal, I will not entice you to stray with me into the verdant meadow, to search for the flowers that youthful hopes scatter in every path; though, as I write, I almost scent the fresh green of spring—of that spring which never returns!

#### **Hannah More, *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1809)**

From chapter 2.

I am a young man, not quite four and twenty, of an ancient and respectable family, and considerable estate in one of the northern counties. Soon after I had completed my studies in the university of Edinburgh, my father fell into a lingering illness. I attended him with an assiduity which was richly rewarded by the lessons of wisdom, and the example of piety, which I daily received from him. After languishing about a year, I lost him, and in him the most affectionate father, the most enlightened companion, and the most Christian friend.

The grief of my mother was so poignant and so lasting, that I could never prevail on myself to leave her, even for the sake of attaining those advantages, and enjoying those pleasures, which may be reaped by a wider range of observation, by a more extended survey of the multifarious tastes, habits, pursuits, and characters of general society. I felt with Mr. Gray<sup>1</sup> that we can never have but one mother, and postponed from time to time the moment of leaving home.

I was her only child, and though it was now her sole remaining wish to see me happily married, yet I was desirous of first putting myself in a situation which might afford me a more extensive field of inquiry before I ventured to take so irretrievable a step, a step which might perhaps affect my happiness in both worlds. But time did not hang heavy on my hands; if I had little society, I had many books. My father had left me a copious library, and I had learnt from him to select whatever was most valuable in that best species of literature which tends to form the principles, the understanding, the taste, and the character. My father had passed the early part of his life in the gay and busy world; and our domestic society in

the country had been occasionally enlivened by visits from some of his London friends, men of sense and learning, and some of them men of piety.

My mother, when she was in tolerable spirits, was now frequently describing the kind of woman whom she wished me to marry. "I am so firmly persuaded, Charles," would she kindly say, "of the justness of your taste, and the rectitude of your principles, that I am not much afraid of your being misled by the captivating exterior of any woman who is greatly deficient either in sense or conduct; but remember, my son, that there are many women against whose characters there lies nothing very objectionable, who are yet little calculated to taste or to communicate rational happiness. Do not indulge romantic ideas, of super-human excellence. Remember that the fairest creature is a fallen creature. Yet let not your standard be low. If it be absurd to expect perfection, it is not unreasonable to expect *consistency*. Do not suffer yourself to be caught by a shining quality, till you know it is not counteracted by the opposite defect. Be not taken in by strictness in one point, till you are assured there is no laxity in others. In character, as in architecture, proportion is beauty. The education of the present race of females is not very favorable to domestic happiness. For my own part I call education, not that which smothers a woman with accomplishments, but that which tends to consolidate a firm and regular system of character; that which tends to form a friend, a companion, and a wife. I call education not that which is made up of the shreds and patches of useless arts, but that which inculcates principles, polishes taste, regulates temper, cultivates reason, subdues the passions, directs the feelings, habituates to reflection, trains to self-denial, and, more especially, that which refers all actions, feelings, sentiments, tastes, and passions, to the love and fear of God."

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Gray (1716-1771), English poet.

### Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)

From chapter 7.

Barton Park was about half a mile from the cottage. The ladies had passed near it in their way along the valley, but it was screened from their view at home by the projection of a hill. The house was large and handsome; and the Middletons lived in a style of equal hospitality and elegance. The former was for Sir John's gratification, the latter for that of his lady. They were scarcely ever without some friends staying with them in the house, and they kept more company of every kind than any other family in the neighbourhood. It was necessary to the happiness of both; for however dissimilar in temper and outward behaviour, they strongly resembled each other in that total want of talent and taste which confined their employments, unconnected with such as society produced, within a very narrow compass. Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she humoured her children; and these were their only resources. Lady Middleton had the advantage of being able to spoil her children all the year round, while Sir John's independent employments were in existence only half the time. Continual engagements at home and abroad, however, supplied all the deficiencies of nature and education; supported the good spirits of Sir John, and gave exercise to the good breeding of his wife.

Lady Middleton piqued herself upon the elegance of her table, and of all her domestic arrangements; and from this kind of vanity was her greatest enjoyment in any of their parties. But Sir John's satisfaction in society was much more real; he delighted in collecting about him more young people than his house would hold, and the noisier they were the better was he pleased. He was a blessing to all the juvenile part of the neighbourhood, for in summer he was for ever forming parties to eat cold ham and chicken out of doors, and in winter his private balls were numerous enough for any young lady who was not suffering under the insatiable appetite of fifteen.

The arrival of a new family in the country was always a matter of joy to him, and in every point of view he was charmed with the inhabitants he had now procured for his cottage at Barton. The Miss Dashwoods were young, pretty, and unaffected. It was enough to secure his good opinion; for to be unaffected was all that a pretty girl could want to make her mind as captivating as her person. The friendliness of his disposition made him happy in accommodating those, whose situation might be considered, in comparison with the past, as unfortunate. In showing kindness to his cousins therefore he had the real satisfaction of a good heart; and in settling a family of females only in his cottage, he had all the satisfaction of a sportsman; for a sportsman, though he esteems only those of his sex who are sportsmen likewise, is not often desirous of encouraging their taste by admitting them to a residence within his own manor.

want of (l.8) = lack of, deficiency in  
good breeding (l.15) = good manners

piqued herself upon (l.16) = prided herself on  
unaffected (l.26) = unpretentious

The Miss Dashwoods (l.26) = Elinor and Marianne, the two heroines of the novel. They have just moved near Sir John and Lady Middleton with their mother, after their father's death.

### Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)

From chapter 16.

"And how does dear, dear Norland' look?" cried Marianne.

"Dear, dear Norland," said Elinor, "probably looks much as it always does at this time of the year. The woods and walks thickly covered with dead leaves."

"Oh," cried Marianne, "with what transporting sensation have I formerly seen them fall! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! What feelings have they, the season, the air altogether inspired! Now there is no one to regard them. They are seen only as a nuisance, swept hastily off, and driven as much as possible from the sight."

"It is not every one," said Elinor, "who has your passion for dead leaves."

"No; my feelings are not often shared, not often understood. But SOMETIMES they are."--As she said this, she sunk into a reverie for a few moments;--but rousing herself again, "Now, Edward," said she, calling his attention to the prospect, "here is Barton valley. Look up to it, and be tranquil if you can. Look at those hills! Did you ever see their equals? To the left is

Barton Park, amongst those woods and plantations. You may see the end of the house. And there, beneath that farthest hill, which rises with such grandeur, is our cottage."

"It is a beautiful country," he replied; "but these bottoms must be dirty in winter."

"How can you think of dirt, with such objects before you?"

"Because," replied he, smiling, "among the rest of the objects before me, I see a very dirty lane."

<sup>1</sup> Norland: where the Dashwoods used to live.

## II. Data Analysis

### *i. Coding the Data*

The data collected was analyzed using coding and close reading, in order to organize it and answer the research questions. In the social sciences, coding is used to generate "names and labels for phenomena identified in the data" (Marshall and Rossman 222). Thematic codes can be chosen based on the literature, and therefore be set prior to data collection and analysis, or they can emerge from the data, in a grounded-theory approach (218, 222). A mixed approach was used in the context of this research, starting with previously theorized categories of reading acts, but also allowing unforeseen codes to emerge. According to Michael Potter and Brad Wuetherick, the close-reading process, when seen as "reading, interpreting, and critiquing text," is similar to the iterative process of allowing codes to emerge from the data of grounded theory (8).

Several theoretical types of reading were used in the coding process, to make sense of the data in terms of reader response. Peter Rabinowitz delineates three kinds of readers: the actual audience, the "flesh-and-blood people who read the book" (20), the authorial audience, involving the "assumptions about the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions" that the author makes when creating the book (21), and the narrative audience, a concept close to "Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief'" (95), which defines the reader that is "swept up in the world of the novel," as Faye Halpern defines it in her own work that takes up Rabinowitz's taxonomy (144).



Students reading texts as part of class requirements are necessarily actual readers, but they are likely to be quite far removed from the authorial audience, given how distant the texts are from them historically, culturally, geographically, and, to a certain degree linguistically. According to Halpern, literary critics must learn to read both "authorially" and "narratively," for "if we want to do any sort of historical criticism, we must be able to read as the authors imagined their audience would read, even if our articles eventually go on to read against the grain" (144). This implies having appropriate historical and cultural background, which the students had limited access to when writing their responses before the classes on the texts actually took place, though, as previously stated, they had some general knowledge of literary eras or movements such as Romanticism, most often in the French and sometimes German contexts.<sup>391</sup> I therefore expected a limited amount of authorial reading in the responses. However, I anticipated evidence of narrative reading to arise, important for determining the students' reactions to moral didacticism. Halpern also introduces in the previous quote the idea of "reading against the grain," that is resisting the direction the text compels us to go, which again appeared as a useful analytical category to assess students' responses to moral didacticism.

The notion of misreading was included as one of the codes for data analysis at the onset. For Rabinowitz, misreading involves a failure on the part of the reader to incorporate the strategies of the authorial audience—which may sometimes be left deliberately unclear in the text, mirroring Umberto Eco's notion of open texts (Rabinowitz 42, Eco 4). Similarly, Wayne Booth sees misreading as either "to pass judgment when the author intends neutrality" or "to be neutral or objective when the author requires commitment" (144). Misreading differs from Halpern's "reading against the grain" or Judith Fetterley's "resisting reader," characterizing for the latter the woman reader who begins "exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted" in women readers (1978, xxii). Halpern's "reading against the grain" expands on Fetterley's resisting reader, applying it not only to feminist literary criticism, but to any literary critical act (144). Both Fetterley and Halpern's views of resisting reading imply the awareness and ability to first read as one is or has been encouraged to do, before moving "beyond that reading to look at the work critically from some perspective

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<sup>391</sup> Of course, there was noticeable heterogeneity in the historical and cultural background of the students that made up the class, but overall none had particular knowledge of eighteenth-century British fiction, beyond the few students who had read or seen an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.

other than the one called for by the author," as Rabinowitz phrases it (32). The ability to "read against the grain" thus appears to be what we are aiming for as teachers trying to engage students in critical reading, on par with Elizabeth Flynn's definition of "competent readers" as readers who have the ability to "break free of the submissive entanglement in a text and evaluate characters and events with critical detachment" (285).

Likewise, in a much earlier publication, I. A. Richards differentiates between "misreading" and "variant readings." The difference at its core involves knowledge, which the "good reader" has and the "misreader" lacks (248). Richards contends that utterances are tied "within a language into a system, giv[ing] us our means of distinguishing between variant readings and misreading" (251). Thus, dictionaries provide a starting point for qualifying misreading and allowing variant readings, although they do not include all relevant information.<sup>392</sup> Permissible variant readings therefore exist within the attested plurality of language. Instances of misreading were likely to occur in the students' responses, especially taking into account the language barrier that may remain for these students as English language learners. All of these categories were taken into account when coding the data, with the possibility left open for them to evolve and other codes to emerge.<sup>393</sup>

Eight different categories of analysis emerged from the confrontation of the data with this theoretical classification. Prior to analyzing the data, I wanted to use various kinds of reading theorized by scholars as coding categories. However, I found it more manageable to first devise descriptive codes that would allow me to segment the responses in their entirety before moving on to finer analytical coding, using some reader-response concepts in addition to other, more descriptive codes. The categories are the following: (1) meaning making; (2) didacticism; (3) aesthetic stance; (4) judgment; (5) misreading; (6) intertextuality; (7) link with today, personal life, or context; (8) questions and uncertainties.

<sup>392</sup> Richards develops the concept of a "dream-Dictionary," close to a Platonic idea, that would include for instance all etymological knowledge of words, with all possible meanings and connotations (248).

<sup>393</sup> The concept of misreading as delineated above differs from Harold Bloom's, who theorizes any reading as misreading, following the presupposition that "there are no right readings, because reading a text is necessarily the reading of a whole system of texts, and meaning is always wandering around between texts" (76). Critical readings of literature are necessarily misreadings to Bloom in the sense that they beget other contradictory readings (86). Bloom's view is close to Rosenblatt's, especially when he writes that "a reader understanding a poem is indeed understanding his own reading of that poem" (76). This is not the definition of misreading that I adopt for the purposes of this work. Although I take Bloom's theoretical point, I use the term reading or interpretation rather than misreading to designate the critical activity that Bloom describes. In my work, misreading retains Rabinowitz's notion of unconscious failure to become part of the authorial audience, with *unconscious* being key to the concept.

Though all the codes are used to articulate the discussion provided in section II, some are more relevant than others to investigate the perception of moral didacticism and aesthetic value, and consequently feature more broadly in the analysis.

Categories (2) and (3) are the most directly linked to my research question concerning whether or not the students perceived a didactic register and whether or not didacticism allowed for the possibility of an aesthetic stance. I base my concept of aesthetic stance on Rosenblatt's "aesthetic reading," a process by which "the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (1994: 25). Rosenblatt also stresses the importance of "pay[ing] attention to the exact words of the text" in order to co-create a work of art with the text through aesthetic reading (88). The elements that were classified as representing an aesthetic stance were therefore the ones that expressed an emotional response to textual elements, as well as comments that pointed to the effect of particular language features, such as literary devices. The didacticism category includes the notions of lesson and of message, given the central importance of perceived authorial intention to the concept of overt didacticism, as discussed in chapter 5, III. This is different from what Martin Price defines as one of the bases of the "fictional contract," which involves the reader's "assumption that a pattern of significance will emerge" when reading a novel (174). Indeed, the students almost always engaged in an attempt at making sense of the passages they had to respond to, illustrating the assumption of a "pattern of significance," hence a separate category (1), which includes all direct references to the texts, whether in the form of quotes or paraphrase, as well as comments that elucidate the plot.

The line between certain categories is sometimes fine; when needed, I included some elements of responses in more than one category. Category (5) includes misreadings based on basic understanding of the text, which can often be attributed to the students' status as language learners. Errors based on erroneous use of contextual elements—and *of* erroneous contextual elements—have also been included in that category, as they incur from lack of a certain kind of knowledge. Categories (6) and (8) were the most straightforward to fill in, including respectively references to other texts or works of art and direct questions or marks

of doubt. Finer codes then emerged within specific categories in order to deepen analysis; they will be introduced in the presentation and discussion of the results.

## *ii. Results and Discussion*

All 29 students making up the class responded to one or both of the set texts for two consecutive classes. Twenty-five students responded to the excerpt from *Wrongs of Woman*, and 22 to the passage from *Cælebs*, with 18 out of the 29 dealing with both texts. The following week, 18 students responded to the excerpt from chapter 7 of *Sense and Sensibility*, 21 to the excerpt from chapter 16, and 10 out of 29 wrote on both passages. The responses are provided in Appendices 9.4 and 9.5.

Predictably, almost all of the students included in their responses efforts at making sense of the plot, paraphrasing and/or quoting the text. Going beyond simply making sense of the plot, about two thirds of the respondents provided personal interpretations of elements of the texts, sometimes based on and supported by textual elements, close to the kind of textual analysis expected of undergraduate students, and sometimes not, resembling value judgments that would not be acceptable as analysis in the context of an essay. I grouped both kinds of responses under the same heading, since at this stage the aim was to differentiate interpretive from non-interpretive comments such as plot summary.<sup>394</sup> The excerpt from chapter 7 of *Sense and Sensibility* gave way to at least twice as many uncertainties as the other passages (manifested by questions and the use of *may* or *maybe*), suggesting that it was the most difficult text for the students to make sense of. In fact, this extract incurred the highest rate of misreading, with 61% of respondents either misinterpreting the text or misusing contextual elements to frame their reading. Although a large portion of responses for all texts include links to historical context, contemporary society, and/or the students' personal lives, reactions to both Austen excerpts garnered a significantly larger amount of references to contextual elements and contemporary life than the other two texts (80% and almost 90% for chapters 16 and 7 of *Sense and Sensibility* respectively, 63% for the passage from *Cælebs* and only 48% for *Wrongs of Woman*). Specific examples are discussed in the sections below.

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<sup>394</sup> The tables with the data divided into the different coding categories may be found [online](#) [like the chapter 5 keyword lists].

The propensity of students to find links between the passages from Austen and historical context, contemporary society or their personal lives may indicate another effort at making sense of texts which the rest of the data shows was more difficult for them to access. Indeed, the responses to the passage from chapter 7 of *Sense and Sensibility* include the largest amount of questions and/or marks of uncertainty, the most instances of misreading, and the largest amount of links with the students' world, societal and personal.

The vast majority of responses to the passages from *Cælebs* and *Wrongs* (91% and 92% respectively) shows an awareness of—or at least a sensibility to—didacticism in these texts on the part of the students, matching the historical reception of the novels as respectively moralizing and doctrinaire, as discussed in chapter 8. Only 42% and 38% of responses to the passages from chapters 7 and 16 from *Sense and Sensibility* note evidence of didacticism on the part of the text or the author to the reader or from a character to another, which also corroborates the critical reception of Austen as covertly didactic, if didactic at all.

However, while critics discussing Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft's novels today tend to state or suggest that their value does not lie in their aesthetic qualities—which is very different from the scholarly reception of Jane Austen—the divide between didactic quality and aesthetic value is not nearly as evident in the students' responses to the excerpts.<sup>395</sup> 32% of students gave evidence of reading the passage from *Cælebs* aesthetically, 40% in the case of the passage from *Wrongs*, and 39% and 52% regarding the passages from chapters 7 and 16 of *Sense and Sensibility* respectively. It is not surprising that the passage where the students most often mentioned emotional responses and paid attention to the use of language was the excerpt from chapter 16 of *Sense and Sensibility*, which showcases Marianne's transport at walking among dead leaves in the autumn.<sup>396</sup> The use of sentimental elements in the passage from Wollstonecraft's novel may also explain what some students read as poetic. Although the excerpt from More's famously dry and moralistic novel unsurprisingly gave rise to the fewest instances of aesthetic reading, the passage from chapter 7 of *Sense and Sensibility* also garnered a comparably low number of such responses.

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395 For instance, Hilary Havens states unequivocally that "the purpose of this collection is not an aesthetic defense of these novels" in the introduction to *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing, 1790-1820* (13).

396 Her transport is arguably exaggerated and treated with ironic distance by the other characters, including Elinor whose perspective tends to be constructed as the point of reference for the reader throughout the novel, which was not always perceived by students, as discussed below.

The following sections detail these results, and contextualize them with theory and previous research done for this dissertation. Focusing on the reception of didactic elements (1), aesthetic responses (2) and the students' personal stances on the texts (3), data analysis gives credence to Rosenblatt's claim that any text may be read aesthetically, even though certain cues may direct toward a particular kind of reading act (1994: 27, 81). As with the other sources used to study the reception of these novels in the rest of this dissertation, responses vary along a spectrum of reactions, which taken together illustrate general trends here underlining that the reception of moral didacticism does not necessarily preclude an aesthetic experience of the work for these students, much like in the early reviews. In the discussion that follows, minor errors in language have been corrected in the quotes given for ease of reading, with more important corrections indicated in brackets.<sup>397</sup>

### 1. Perceiving Moral Didacticism

In the context of this study, a response to didacticism was considered to be any comment on the lessons to be gleaned from or offered by the texts, thus including perceived didactic intent and effect, which mirrors the inclusion criteria used to select novels for the didactic corpus based on the early reviews. More subtle references to didactic quality were also taken into consideration, such as the mention of the author's "goal" or "message"—keeping in mind that looking for a purported author's "message" is a common feature of responses to texts by inexperienced readers (Rosenblatt 113). As indicated above, responses to the passages by More and Wollstonecraft overwhelmingly reference didacticism; conversely, this is the case in only half as many reactions to the excerpts from *Sense and Sensibility*. Although the responses vary a great deal in content, there is a clear dividing line between those concerned with More and Wollstonecraft on the one hand, and Austen on the other. The former tend to designate the presence of didacticism in overt, unequivocal terms, while the latter evoke didacticism more covertly, largely matching the historical reception of the three authors in general and these novels in particular.

Responses to the passage from *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* show a clear reception of overt moral didacticism. One respondent, for instance, wrote that "the text of Hannah More is about what is morality," adding "this whole text is to me basically about what is 'good.'"

<sup>397</sup> The full responses without language corrections can be found in Appendix Chap. 9.4.

What moral, consciousness and virtue a person should have" (MW2). The vocabulary used here by the student strikingly recalls the definition of moral didacticism in fiction going back to Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* 4, the only difference being that Johnson actively calls for such moral didacticism in fiction, while the respondent's stance on its presence in the text is neutral. The student also comments on Charles' attitude toward his mother following his father's death, saying that it is one "of self-devotion and thankfulness, which are virtues that this character might represent through this text." She does not mention authorial intent as such, and the reading stance taken here illustrates Rosenblatt's transactional theory, which considers "the poem" (which Rosenblatt uses as a stand-in for any literary work) as "an event in time. It is not an object or an ideal entity. It happens during a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text" (12). This conception of reading considers both the content of the text and the reader's individuality to be of equal importance, which we see in the student's response through expressions such as "to me," which individualize her reading, and "might represent," allowing for a relative autonomy of the text independent of her own reading experience.

This kind of verbalization of the reading experience appears in other responses, but the reception of moral didacticism tends to be quite different. The majority of the students point to the presence of moral didacticism in the passage; however, their comments overwhelmingly remain within the diegesis rather than extrapolating to a possible lesson to be learned for readers. For example, a student discusses the vision of the "perfect wife" put forth by Charles' mother (MW27). She writes that "the description is really precise, there is no place for fate and chance: she enumerates the characteristics of the ideal wife and how he can choose her." Similarly, another student states that "the mother seems to warn [her] son about the woman he may choose to spend the rest of his life with" (MW7). The notion of advice appears in several responses (MW9, MW14, MW18m, MW22, MW25, MW28), always remaining within the framework of the diegesis. Commenting on the passages from both More and Wollstonecraft, one student writes that "We see here, how and what an adult, a father or a mother, can transmit, give, or teach to his progeny. I think the themes of these two texts are the ideas of transmission and heritage" (MW28). She goes on to discuss what

Charles' father taught him before his death: "the father is giving, even if he is sick, a lot of values to his son: 'affection,' 'wisdom,' 'piety,' etc."

The notion of moral didacticism is openly apparent in these responses, dealing largely with the contents of the diegesis.<sup>398</sup> This is not surprising since the respondents were given free reign in the content and form of their comments, and, as first-year students, have been taught the practice of close reading but do not master it or necessarily equate writing about literary texts to close reading the way a more expert reader such as a literary scholar might. This "naive" posture is interesting in and of itself, however, as it points to the immediately accessible and noticeable language of overt moral didacticism in this text. We may draw a parallel here with the ways in which More uses direct addresses to the reader in her book: as discussed in chapter 4, III, ii, the majority of references to "the reader" in *Cælebs* occur within the diegesis in the context of conversations between characters on the topic of reading. A defining feature of the passage appears to be in part that it addresses the questions of moral teaching overtly within the diegesis, and the fact that the students overwhelmingly picked up on this suggests that indeed such language elements are immediately visible to readers, including those whose main language is not English.

Responses to the extract from *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* similarly demonstrate a direct perception of the didactic quality of the text, specifically in the relationship between Maria and her daughter, to whom she is addressing her memoir in a long embedded tale within the novel. Again, most discussions of didacticism occur within the context of the diegesis. For instance, one student writes that Maria's memories "form lessons for the child to take into account while she will have to educate herself" (MW<sub>11</sub>). Here again, the notion of giving advice comes up regularly (MW<sub>6</sub>, MW<sub>7</sub>, MW<sub>10</sub>, MW<sub>14</sub>, MW<sub>17m</sub>, MW<sub>18m</sub>, MW<sub>22</sub>, MW<sub>25</sub>, MW<sub>29</sub>). The same student adds that Maria gives her daughter "advice related to her own experiences and tries to sum up, as if she was in a rush, the wisdom she passes out to her." Another student finds the narrative framework of Maria addressing her daughter "quite interesting because there is a pedagogic side" (MW<sub>15</sub>), while another points to the "instructive character of the letter" (MW<sub>19m</sub>); both keep the discussion focused on the filial

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<sup>398</sup> Some responses do consider the rhetorical nature of the texts, moving beyond the diegesis, although this is a minority occurrence. One student for example compares the types of education "advocated" by the texts rather than the characters themselves (MW<sub>20</sub>), and the response labeled MW<sub>28</sub> oscillates between the diegesis and the text as an entity.



relationship of instruction within the diegesis. Yet another student comments on the passage in similar terms to what MW2 wrote about the excerpt from *Cælebs*: "Thanks to this letter, we can have a reflection about what 'education' means," pointing to the centrality of the topic within the text (MW16). This same student goes on to state that Maria "needs to deliver principles of life" and "wants absolutely to lead her daughter to a right and good path." Terms heavily linked with morality are used here, such as "principles of life," as well as "right and good path."

Thus, the responses to Wollstonecraft's text in terms of moral didacticism may be paralleled to the reactions to the excerpt from *Cælebs*, suggesting that the passages' engagement with moral didacticism is overt and largely delivered through the diegesis—this matches the opening sentence of the passage, where Maria expresses that she is "uncertain whether [she] shall have an opportunity of *instructing* [her daughter]" (my emphasis). However, a key difference in the reception of the two passages is the relationship to politics. The possibility of an implied political message in More's text is discussed in some responses, with a student contrasting Wollstonecraft's "active feminist stance" with the conservative nature of the view of femininity portrayed in *Cælebs*, "through the impressive number of qualities which a woman is expected to possess in order to be considered a suitable wife," quoting a sentence from the text "suggesting that a woman's aims should only be making a husband happy, and maintaining a harmonious household" (MW24). Another student echoes this sentiment with a similar comparison (MW5).

Although some comments on the political ideology are made in relation to More's text, they are more frequent in responses to *Wrongs of Woman*, with several students extrapolating a political message to readers emanating directly from the author. For instance, aside from the responses labeled MW24 and MW5 already mentioned, one participant writes that Wollstonecraft's "vision of womanhood is very political" and that "she strongly denounces how poorly women were considered in society" (MW12). Another states that the passage is "about patriarchy that applies in a family" (MW23m), while a third opines that "this text criticizes a little bit the place of women in society" (MW4). The radical political tenor of the passage seems to have been more obviously visible than More's conservatism, possibly because More gives almost exclusive focus to the language of virtue in

spite of Charles' grief at his father's passing while Wollstonecraft also invokes the topic of oppression, and frames the morally didactic elements with sentimental effusions of emotions ("What is wisdom too often, but the owl of the goddess, who sits moping in a desolated heart; around she shrieks") and dramatic punctuation such as dashes.

The contrast in the reception of the two texts evokes the difference in treatment of the two authors by reviewers of the early twentieth century, who tended to classify novelists of the period as doctrinaire or didactic, the former epithet primarily used for male radicals and Wollstonecraft, and the latter mostly applied to female writers of varying political affiliation (see chapter 8, III). Nonetheless, the students do not oppose the two authors in the same way; rather, they see an overtly morally didactic quality in both, on top of which they are more likely to ascribe a politically charged intent to Wollstonecraft.

As has already been stated, there are significantly fewer references to moral didacticism in the responses on the two passages from Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Less than half of the responses suggest the reception of didactic intent or effect; when they do, the language used is not as assertive as in the responses to the excerpts from More and Wollstonecraft. One student perfectly encapsulates the difference between her expectations of novels of the period, possibly following from the previous lesson contextualizing the passages from *Cælebs* and *Wrongs*, and what she is faced with in the extracts from *Sense and Sensibility*. She writes: "Without any interpretation or attempts [at it], since it is written just after the Enlightenment, the writing can appear as a sentimental novel, full of moral advice and modest lessons. But, while considering the releasing period and the tendency to revolutionary thoughts, Jane Austen's novel may be seen as a hidden pamphlet against tight rules and women's purposeless position in society" (MW11). She goes on to illustrate her point with examples from both passages, pointing to the satirical treatment of Lady Middleton's attention to "the elegance of her table" and Marianne's sentimentalism.

The notion of "hidden pamphlet" is particularly striking, underlining a reading of Austen's writing as inherently seeped in ideology but framed in much less explicit ways than in *Cælebs* or *Wrongs of Woman*. The student defines the topics broached in the two passages as moral in essence, concerned with social rules and conduct in society. Indeed, she reads the portrayals of Sir John and Lady Middleton as a possible "criticism of both personas, as

they indulge in superficiality and eagerness for social recognition." The concerns here are of a moral or ethical nature, suggesting a reception of an underlying moral quality, expressed much more covertly than in More and Wollstonecraft.<sup>399</sup>

This reading is echoed by other students, with one arguing that Sir John is portrayed more favorably than Lady Middleton and "might represent what this class of people could be, if not preoccupied with vanity and appearances to an overwhelming extent" (A13). The same student also points to the contrast between Elinor and Marianne in the passage from chapter 16, seeing Marianne as "too susceptible" with "a definite overindulgence of spirit," compared to Elinor who "is more mindful of polite manners." She concludes that the portrayals of "very expressive characters whose manners are exaggerated" are "representative of the author's feelings about society and what she wanted to show to the readers." Another student writes about the excerpt from chapter 7 that she "can clearly see Jane Austen, the narrator, criticizing the society of the 18<sup>th</sup> century" through the "caricature" of Sir John and Lady Middleton (A14), and yet another concludes, following her reading of both extracts, that "only the association of sense and sensibility seems to be able to procure a full existence," pointing to the passages as illustrations of the moral question posed by the title of the novel (A20). Finally, siding with Marianne, another respondent wonders about the value of sensibility, concluding that "we might ask ourselves if owing to habit our sensibility isn't degraded. This passage in my opinion makes us aware that we do not marvel enough about the surrounding world" (A19m). In this last response, the text appears to induce a moral questioning, therefore having a morally didactic effect.

Two aspects of these responses are particularly striking, which at first glance may seem divorced from one another, but in light of the comparison with the responses to overt didacticism in More and Wollstonecraft's texts are arguably linked: the students who point to moral didacticism use very tentative language, and have a much greater tendency to ascribe a didactic intent to the author or the text than they did discussing the other passages, where their responses mostly remained focused on the diegetic level. The level of uncertainty in the wording of comments relating to moral didacticism is higher in the responses on Austen. One student uses the word "maybe" twice when stating what she believes to be Austen's aim

<sup>399</sup> Writing about Victorian literature, Jesse Rosenthal differentiates "moral quality" from "moralizing." The former is fully incorporated in the narrative, and appears rather covert, while the latter "seems separate, or separable" from the artistic product, and therefore overt (4).

in contrasting the Middletons and the Dashwoods (A6), while another uses the same term to introduce a possible explicitly didactic aim: "Maybe the author wants to give her point of view about the perfect family. Maybe she wants her readers to learn something about this description. This family is full of values and principles" (A15). A19m's response, already discussed, includes the modal auxiliary "might" in the reflection on habit and "degraded" sensibility, much like A11, who uses "may" and "can" twice respectively. The verb "seem" is also used to introduce what is believed to be a possible didactic intent by two students (A13, A20). This uncertainty as to what the text may be intending to tell the reader is epitomized in response A7, where the student admits that "from my point of view, and in light of this only extract, I can't understand what is the author's goal and what is her position about women's condition."

These marks of uncertainty regarding didactic authorial intent match the overall level of doubt found in the responses to Austen's texts, especially in comparison to More's. 44% of responses to the passage from chapter 7 of *Sense and Sensibility* include such elements. This is the case for 24% of responses to the passage from chapter 16 of the same novel, for 20% of responses to the excerpt from *Wrongs of Woman*, and only 14% of those to *Cælebs*. This may be ascribed to Austen's greater propensity to "narratorial 'indirection,'" which Lisa Wood contrasts with writers of antirevolutionary didactic fiction who "strove toward a single meaning and complete closure," illustrating the gap between the responses to Austen and More, known for her conservative propaganda in the form of tracts and pamphlets (Wood 16, Pichet-Renouil 20). The greater difficulty the students faced making sense of the extracts from *Sense and Sensibility* seems to have led them to consider the text and its meaning beyond the diegetic level, thinking about the experience the author might have planned for her readers. This is interesting to note on a pedagogic level—what Umberto Eco calls "closed texts" may actually require a more conscious effort to analyze past their surface meaning, while "open texts" immediately invite us to such reflection through their inherent ambiguity.<sup>400</sup>

Moreover, we find a proportionally greater variety of topics broached regarding what was received as morally didactic by students in the passages from Austen, compared with

<sup>400</sup> Faye Halpern makes this contention, stating that "difficult texts are valuable because they force students to do what they should be doing even with ostensibly simple ones: resist a desire to foreclose the meanings that a text might have" (113).

their responses on More and Wollstonecraft. The responses feature considerations about the social order (A6, A11, A13, A14), gender (A3, A10, A11), moral values and manners (A15, A11, A13, A20), echoing reactions to *Cælebs* and *Wrongs of Woman*, but also include musings on the inner-workings of memory (A5) and sensibility to nature (A19m, A26, A14). The last two types of response may not seem to be about moral didacticism, but the wording suggests the effect that the text can have on readers and their daily lives and actions, which I would argue is linked to the general concept of didacticism, if not obviously of a moral kind. After describing what takes place in the passage, one student concludes: "The contrast of the two views shows how memories and a past [experience] in some place can change your view about this same place" (A5). The use of the terms "shows" and "your" indicates the potential of a direct influence of the text on the reader.

Overall, the responses to the passages from the three novels show a marked difference in the ways in which moral didacticism is received. The excerpts from *Cælebs* and *Wrongs of Woman* generated explicit mentions of didactic intent, specifically among characters within the diegesis, while those from *Sense and Sensibility* led to more uncertain comments on the possible authorial intent and reflections suggesting didactic effect. Such a contrast reflects long-standing critical views of the style of these authors, More being strongly associated with overt didacticism, Wollstonecraft to explicit political activism, and Austen to indirection, irony, and layers of meaning. The majority of the responses suggest a reception of didactic intent rather than effect, although the line is sometimes blurred. According to these responses, More and Wollstonecraft overwhelmingly appear to be received as overtly didactic, while Austen is only partly received as didactic, and when she is, the suggestion is that her didacticism is more covert. Again, this is perfectly in line with their historical reception—Austen's engagement with morals and ethics is central to the work of certain scholars such as Jan Fergus or Enit Steiner, while others focus on other aspects of her work.<sup>401</sup> As we will see in the following section, however, students were able to reconcile

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<sup>401</sup> See the wide variety of topics broached in studies on Austen, such as her language use (Babb 1967, Page 1972), engagement with feminism (Kirkham 1983), portrayals of children (Selwyn 2010), or place within her contemporary literary marketplace (Mandal 2007). These works may mention the importance of morality in Austen's novels without making it central to their study of her art, illustrating that moral didacticism is likely to be deemed acceptable to literary critics if it is perceived as covert, a "moral quality" rather than "moralizing" (Rosenthal 4). The link made between Austen's writing and the male canonical moral philosophers of her time in a number of critical works also arguably confers intellectual legitimacy to the concern with morality expressed in her novels, as opposed to the often derogatory use of the term

overt moral didacticism and literariness in their readings in certain cases, departing from the critical tradition of opposing these two elements, particularly since the middle of the twentieth century, as discussed in chapter 8.

## 2. Aesthetic Responses

As stated in the theoretical discussion on the literary canon in the introduction to chapter 8, what constitutes the artistic dimension of a work of literature, its "literariness," is very difficult to define precisely. Terry Eagleton contends that literariness is not simply defined by critical consensus regarding its existence in a text or by a set of distinguishing features, but has to do with "a number of ways in which people *relate themselves* to writing" (8, author's emphasis). This evokes Louise Rosenblatt's definition of "aesthetic reading," in which "the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text," in order to evoke a work of art, as opposed to a more utilitarian approach to reading, where one focuses on "concepts to be retained, ideas to be tested, actions to be performed after the reading," which Rosenblatt calls "efferent reading" (1994: 24-25).<sup>402</sup> In aesthetic reading, textual features of language are particularly important, though Rosenblatt stresses that simply classifying formal elements in a text, removed from the emotional lived experience of the language, amounts to an efferent rather than an aesthetic stance (89). Nevertheless, comments on the formal construction of the texts are included in this coding category of aesthetic response, as evidence of the students' ability to focus on language in its own right, close to the previously dominant formalist school of criticism, even though this approach falls short of constituting aesthetic reading according to Rosenblatt (Eagleton 2-3). Aesthetic reading according to Rosenblatt's theory of reader response was also used to codify the data on all four texts submitted to the students, and the results suggest that noticing moral didacticism does not necessarily preclude reading the text as art.

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"didactic" or "moralizing," associated with feminine writing (Havens 5, Towsey 33).

<sup>402</sup> Efferent reading appears conceptually close to didacticism, but rather than being about didactic intent or effect, it refers to the reader's stance of actively looking to learn from a text. This distinction is the reason why the notion of efferent reading was not used as a coding category, since it may overlap but does not cover all the possible expressions of perception of moral didacticism in the responses.

A third of the respondents included discussions of specific elements of language used by Hannah More in the passage from *Cælebs* and/or their effect on their reading experience, and all of them also commented on the didactic nature of the excerpt. Two students focused their responses on the contrast between the passages from More and Wollstonecraft, one noting the "opposition between nature and culture," the former being associated with feminine education and the latter to masculine modes of learning (MW20), and the other identifying the inverse narrative structure of each text, with the mother as the narrator in the *Wrongs of Woman* as opposed to the son telling the story in *Cælebs* (MW25). This last student also used language evoking emotions at the end of her response, writing "I think the tone in both texts is very similar as it implies a form of longing and of familial love that is undeniable and unbreakable." Another student highlighted similar elements in his response, underlining the contrast in narrative structure with "the child that talks about the advice from his mother" on the one hand, and "the mother that is directly talking to her child" on the other. He did go on to express a personal emotional judgment on the passage from *Cælebs*, stating "I think this text is very lovely; it shows us the strong bonds between a family, and the mark that those bonds leave on our personality, because our experiences [shape] us" (MW18m). This response arguably blends the didactic with the aesthetic, showing how a strong morally didactic content may also be experienced emotionally as art.

At the other end of the spectrum of aesthetic responses, two students pointed to their emotional responses while reading the text, one stating that "we understand the pain of the young man who finds himself alone on his own after his father's death and his mother's illness" (MW26), and the other similarly reflecting that "we can read the sadness of the death and we can understand the narrator is sad in his life" (MW6). In these two examples, elements of the plot evoke an emotional response based on empathy and identification with the characters. Such responses do not show much critical distance, a way of reading and interpreting usually associated with literary criticism, yet several scholars, including Louise Rosenblatt and Faye Halpern, have suggested that identification with and empathy for characters is part of creating a personally and politically productive critical stance (Rosenblatt 1995: xviii, 40, Halpern 127).

Another response shows the student using identification as a primary entry into the text, writing about the protagonist in *Cælebs* that "even if it doesn't relate to our century, we can understand what he's speaking about. This text links many aspects of life: death, parental relation and love of body and mind" (MW3). She relates to Charles' relationship to his mother, but finds it difficult to understand his perspective on marriage "because in our society it isn't required to be married," and seems surprised that his mother listens to her son so attentively given the time period. Aside from this, the student states that "my first point of view of this text is quite positive because of the wealth of the text, the vocabulary but also the rhythm." She does not go into detail, but given her subsequent discussion of how she relates personally—or not—to the characters, the particular language used appears to be what triggers this process of identification, leading her to be immersed in the text, creating an aesthetic experience.

A final response blends discussion of literary form with emotional responses that go beyond identification with characters. The student writes that both texts made her "feel very uncomfortable," because the characters who speak are about to die, and "the words we read seem to be the last echoes of an already dead voice" (MW10). The student appears deeply involved in the reading experience here, and points to the qualities of the language used to create this effect. She also credits the extract from *Cælebs* with the ability to make her "think about what a young man could feel or which problems he could face in such a situation," which she ends up finding just as "interesting" as Wollstonecraft's feminism. It is also worth noting that this student attempts to frame the passages she reads in her knowledge of the historical and cultural context ("Could we see here the influence of a changing and anguishing society, shaken by the industrial revolution and debates questioning God's existence and the Church's role?"), and compares the passages to two canonical texts from the Victorian period, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). This shows a willingness to consider the texts presented to her in class as equally important in terms of literary tradition as what she may have already been exposed to. Free from the formal constraints of a traditional close reading in the context of these responses, the student mixes elements of literary criticism, including historical framing, language analysis, and emotional response.



A greater proportion of students responded aesthetically to the passage from *Wrongs of Woman*; this type of response features in 40% of the written reactions. The emotional responses to Wollstonecraft's text appear greater in intensity than those evoked by More's, which I argue is attributable to the aesthetics of sensibility deployed in this excerpt from *Wrongs of Woman*. In MW10, the student writes that "we can feel [in the character of Maria] the urgency to write down all her advice before she dies." The term "urgency" is not used by the student to describe Charles' mother in the passage from *Cælebs*, on which she comments as well, even though the character is also in the position of offering advice to her child in the face of perceived imminent death. This suggests that something in the way the text is written creates this sense of urgency. The student quotes the line "had I not wasted years in deliberating" as evidence that "the character herself seems naturally full of anxiety"—the anxiety of the character consequently appears to transfer to the reader through language, made perceptible for instance through the repeated use of dashes.

Evidence of strong feelings evoked by the text appear in several responses to Wollstonecraft's passage. A student explicitly states "I have empathy for the woman because of her miserable condition" (MW13). She adds that "she seems to be weary and bleak. She reminds me of a typical tragic character who is waiting for her gruesome fate." She compares this to Charles' sadness in More's text, which is expressed "in a totally different way." The emotional response to Maria's letter is much stronger than the reaction to Charles' dialogue with his mother, and the sentimental tone found in *Wrongs of Woman* appears central to it. Another student centers his response around the literary use of language in the text, pointing to the "pathetic" quality of the letter, the "hyperbolic expressions to illustrate how she suffered," and the "poetic" language used, such as "the spring tide of existence" or "the gay warblers of spring" (WM19m). The student does not specify what makes these particular expressions poetic, but analyzes from the perspective of the character that "she's undoubtedly aware that this may be her dying letter, therefore she's probably aiming to add lyricism and emphasis in order to sublime it." For this student, the sentimental aspect of the text overtakes but also arguably supports its didactic nature.

Strikingly, the remaining responses that include an aesthetic response explicitly link the literariness of the text to its didacticism, either in political or moral terms. For instance,

one student analyzes the contrast between negative and positive words, the former representing "the place of the woman in society" and the latter showing that Maria "thinks that she can be saved by thinking, acting independently and by ignoring censure" (MW15). She contends that there are more positive than negative terms in the passage, "confirm[ing] the fact that [Maria] believes in a world where women are not just some 'charwoman.'" The implication here is that Wollstonecraft uses language in order to support her feminist view, which another student also implies, in language even more evocative of an aesthetic response. In MW12, the student states that Wollstonecraft's "vision of womanhood is really political but also very poetic." She particularly underlines the dovetailing of poeticity with political ideology, describing the image of the "verdant meadow" as at once "very political" and "very powerful." She argues that nature is "used as a symbol of revolution, announcing the future changes and strife in the recognition of women in and by society." Elements strongly linked to poetry in the Romantic period such as nature are therefore seen here as deeply intertwined with the political views overtly expressed in the text.

Finally, three students emphasize the link between the use of literary language and specifically moral didacticism. One student links the epistolary genre with the idea of transmission: "To me, this literary genre is typically used to show a transmission, something that is passed to people," which is all the more obvious in Maria explicitly passing on "her own heritage" to her daughter in her letter (MW28). Another, amid a response centered around the relationship Maria has with her child and the feminist views expressed in the text, mentions that Maria gives her daughter "advice related to her own experiences and tries to sum up, *as if she was in a rush*, the wisdom she passes out to her" (MW11, my emphasis). The student expresses a feeling evoked by the language when she says that it seems like the character of Maria is in a rush when writing, and the emotional response is fully part of the intradiegetic moral didacticism seen in the text. Similarly, another respondent explicitly links the moral instruction in the letter to the emotional response it elicits in her, writing that Maria "needs to deliver principles of life; that's what makes this letter powerful" (MW16). The urgency that the text elicits for the student (Maria "needs") creates its "powerful" impression. She also comments that "there is pain concealed behind her writing, and we can learn how her female condition was," again linking emotion to instruction, though not moral

in this case. She finally posits that "there is constantly an opposition between the dark and obscure side (which is the pain, suffering) and the light, the positive vision and new horizon transmitted by the author to her daughter," analyzing how emotion is created through language and linked to the instruction of the narrator's daughter.<sup>403</sup>

The perceived presence of overt didacticism is therefore compatible with an aesthetic response, as these reactions show—although it must be remembered that the majority of students do not express their reactions in aesthetic terms. In the case of Wollstonecraft's text, sentimental language appears to particularly elicit such responses, in ways which are perfectly integrated into the perceived didacticism of the text, whether moral or political. This reflects Faye Halpern's argument that sentimental literature is constructed to elicit in readers strong emotional responses that are seeped in a particular ideological viewpoint (xvi).<sup>404</sup> Halpern contends that undergraduate students' propensity to identify with characters and look for a "simplified 'message'" in texts should be used to teach students to read critically, rather than directly dismissed as bad reading (111-112). She contrasts sentimental rhetoric, which we might think of as characteristic of "closed texts" using Umberto Eco's taxonomy, with irony, "the paradigmatic mode of difficulty" (Halpern 117). She states that "difficult texts are valuable because they force students to do what they should be doing even with ostensibly simple ones: resist a desire to foreclose the meanings that a text might have" (113). In a teaching context where students are asked to read texts in a language that is not their own, such straightforward tone may be helpful for them to become part of the narrative audience and develop a desire to keep reading in that language, a necessary step toward a more analytical stance.

The reactions to Austen's texts in relation to aesthetics demonstrate this all the more: aesthetic responses are significantly more prevalent in reactions to the passage from chapter 16, when Marianne uses sentimental language (52%), than in the excerpt from chapter 7 with the description of the Middletons (33%). The majority of the students take Marianne's

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<sup>403</sup> The conflation of narrator and author, considered in a narratological perspective as a "category mistake," illustrates the students' difficulty with taking distance from the text, which is particularly evident in the reactions to More and Wollstonecraft, as discussed in section 1 above (Birke and Köppe 6). These are evidence of narrative reading, with students being "swept up in the world of the novel," which may facilitate the emotional reactions expressed (Halpern 144).

<sup>404</sup> Halpern's monograph focuses on nineteenth-century American literature, but her analysis of the sentimental rhetoric largely applies to eighteenth-century British sentimental fiction.

effusions at face value, with only two hinting at the ironic framing of her language (A11, A24). Several students underline formal elements of the passage from chapter 16, focusing primarily on the contrast created between the characters (A1, A24, A29), and the link between the topic of nature and Romanticism as a literary genre (A4, A10, A13, A14, A18m, A19m, A24, A28, A29)<sup>405</sup>—although it is worth noting that one student astutely wonders about the definition of Romanticism in relation to the novel, after actually finding that apart from the countryside setting and the discussion of dead leaves, the texts do not fit the definition which had been studied in class in relation to the period's canonical poetry (A12). A student also discusses the arguable personification of the hills and calls Marianne's descriptions of nature an "ode" (A10). Others underline particular uses of language, such as hyperbole to discuss otherwise prosaic topics (A24), and exclamation marks as evidence of the "joy and lightness" of the character of Marianne (A16).

In contrast, one student makes a vitriolic comment on the use of language in the passage, writing that the characters "use so many unnecessary adjectives and pompous turns of phrases; nobody actually speaks like that" (A21m). This is a unique case, as aside from the reactions anchored in a formalist conception of the literariness of language, the dialogue between Marianne, Elinor, and Edward elicited a striking amount of responses blending emotions and attitude toward specific elements of language, illustrating Rosenblatt's definition of aesthetic response.

Several responses describe the language used by Marianne as "poetry" or "poetic" (A2, A5, A16, A20, A29), and/or invoke the notion of beauty (A5, A10) or lyricism (A16, A29). In addition, three students express specifically emotional responses to the representation of nature in the passage, with one stating that "nature seems wonderful and peaceful, almost imaginary, and then morbid at the end of the excerpt of chapter 16 with the remark: 'among the rest of the objects before me, I see a very dirty lane'" (A4). The contrasting visions of nature portrayed in the passage elicit striking language from the student, suggesting a strong emotional response. Another student writes of being "especially touched" by the way "Marianne is feeling and enjoying nature" (A9), and another illustrates the power of the language used in the text as she describes the way she was affected by both Marianne and

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<sup>405</sup> I exclude from this list the students who use "romantic" in the sense of relating to love and romance.

Elinor's perspectives. She writes that "on the one hand, we feel transported by the description of fall, and of the dead leaves. And on the other hand, I felt a bit surprised, and doubtful, because it is still a very strange passion, as Elinor perfectly says it" (A28). This response implies that the student may have an inkling that Marianne's sentimentalism is portrayed as exaggerated, especially in contrast to Elinor and Edward, and despite her relative confusion as to the portrayal of Marianne's sentimentalism, we see that the language used in the text elicits a direct emotional and aesthetic response.

There are significantly fewer reactions of the kind to the passage from chapter 7, with a proportion of aesthetic responses close to that found in the reactions to *Cælebs* (33% and 32% respectively). Moreover, only two students point to particular feelings evoked by the text. One mentions feeling discomfort with the depiction of Sir John, who appears to objectify the women in his life in order to bolster his masculinity, and shock at Lady Middleton's role as a wife, whom she sees as defined by "her ability to give birth" and confined to the home (A3). In contrast, the other student finds Sir John's "joyful attitude" described as genuine in the text "refreshing" amidst what she perceives to be a society otherwise prone to artifice (A25). All the other aesthetic responses to this passage hinge on the literariness of the language based on formal elements, such as the use of "but" to "create a break between the woman in the home with the family and the man always out" (A6). The ways in which the text constructs balance, parallels, or contrast between the descriptions of the characters also appear (A7, A12, A16, A24). Finally, a student underlines the cyclical nature of Sir John and Lady Middleton's occupation, and interprets that Sir John embodies sense in its physicality ("he is pragmatic and his senses come first: he likes noise") and Lady Middleton a certain kind of sensibility ("only elegance is important; she is vain"). She then notes that the name Middleton suggests that the characters "embody a middle[ground]. This state is sufficient to exist but not to live in a sustainable way," hence the need to combine in one both sense and sensibility (A20). This interpretation is unorthodox not least because of the implied definitions of "sense" and "sensibility," but it does demonstrate an attention to linguistic detail and a convincing effort at making a coherent meaning out of the elements that she was presented with in a formalist approach.

The responses to these two passages suggest that a number of students were sensitive to Austen's artistry. Nevertheless, the style that the largest amount of respondents were able to resonate with the most on an aesthetic level, combining formal literariness and emotional responses, was that associated with sentimentalism, as seen in the reactions to the passage from *Wrongs of Woman* and Marianne's language in chapter 16 of *Sense and Sensibility*.<sup>406</sup> While More's text may arguably be too straightforward, or closed, to elicit a great number of aesthetic responses, the extract by Austen describing Sir John and Lady Middleton appears to have been too difficult; the responses to *Cælebs* are the ones with the fewest instances of misreading, while conversely the passage from chapter 7 of *Sense and Sensibility* gave rise to the most confusion, with some students explicitly expressing their perplexity (A7, A28). Thus, the dual status of these respondents as first-year undergraduate students and English language learners is clearly central to their responses to these texts: the majority found it difficult to make sense of the indeterminacy of Austen's texts and/or their subtle but pervasive irony.

Nonetheless, the fact that these students are unlikely to have been exposed to much scholarly criticism about English literature, and particularly about Mary Wollstonecraft or Hannah More, makes their responses particularly illuminating in the multiple ways in which the perception of moral didacticism and aesthetic responses interact. Overall, the trends in the responses do not materially deviate from the general critical reception of the texts of the past one hundred and fifty years, with proportionally more moral didacticism perceived in More and Wollstonecraft, and more aesthetic responses to Austen, both in terms of emotional engagement in the reactions to chapter 16 and formalist analyses of literary language especially regarding chapter 7.

However, in all cases aesthetic responses and moral didacticism coexist, and at times inform one another, just like in the early reviews of the novels of the didactic corpus. As we will see in the last section of this chapter, the students' attitude toward the didacticism that they perceive in the excerpts varies, painting a rather nuanced picture of possible stances on

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<sup>406</sup> Sentimentalism is enacted in fiction through "pathos and extreme emotion" according to Eleanor Ty (1993: 48).

moral didacticism in literature, echoing early reviewers and nineteenth-century critics' outlook on the topic, as discussed in chapter 8.

### 3. Appraising Moral Didacticism

The coding section entitled "judgment" includes any personal stance that the students took regarding the texts; they would often be considered out of place in a traditional close-reading assignment, but here the students were explicitly encouraged to comment on the excerpts in whichever way they saw fit. "Judgment" is the coding category where proportions vary the least among the four passages, oscillating between 61% and 68% of responses featuring evidence of it. This element of the data includes evidence of possible reactions to moral didacticism by actual readers today that we might compare to former reviews and scholarly appraisals, as these often include explicit or implicit judgments from their authors. As we will see, students' appraisals relate to both overt and covert didacticism, hinging on whether or not the didactic elements they perceive align with their own values. The students' responses consequently illustrate Rosenblatt's claim first made in 1938 that "the teaching of literature inevitably involves the conscious or unconscious reinforcement of ethical attitudes" (1995: 16).

Finer codes were developed to analyze the instances of personal judgment from the students. Aside from evidence of positive or negative reactions, the concepts of authorial and narrative reading were used in addition to that of resisting reading. Authorial and narrative reading are derived from Peter Rabinowitz's notions of authorial audience and narrative audience, also taken up by Faye Halpern and James Phelan. Phelan defines the former as "the hypothetical group for whom the author writes—the group that shares the knowledge, values, prejudices, fears, and experiences the author expected in his or her readers, and that ground his or her rhetorical choices" (Phelan 7). Authorial reading therefore refers to responses that accord with the authors' intended reception of the texts, to the extent that it is possible to define it, using the text, the paratext such as prefaces, and research on the authors and their works.<sup>407</sup> By contrast, the narrative audience adopts "an observer position within the storyworld." Engaging in a sort of willing suspension of

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<sup>407</sup> Authorial audience is close to Wolfgang Iser's implied reader, a construct that "embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effects" as laid down by the text itself (34).

disbelief, as stated earlier, "the members of the narrative audience regard the characters and events as real rather than invented, and, indeed, they accept the whole storyworld as real regardless of whether it conforms to the actual world" (7). Narrative reading is the evidence of this posture as seen in the written responses. Finally, the concept of resisting reading is used, derived from Judith Fetterley's resisting reader. Rooted in feminist criticism, the notion of resisting reader proposes to read against the grain of the traditionally male-authored text, "to begin the process of exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted in us" (xxii). Although all the texts submitted to students were written by women, instances of such reading in their responses is deeply rooted in a resistance to traditional gender roles, making the use of this concept particularly relevant, more so than the more general concept of "reading against the grain" often used in reader-response theory (Iser 8, Halpern 144, Sell 2).

In the responses to the extracts from *Cælebs in the Search of a Wife* and *Wrongs of Woman*, the majority of students who express an opinion attempt to read authorially, in spite of their sometimes erroneous or oversimplified knowledge about the cultural context of the works. Half of the respondents to the passage from *Cælebs* fall into that category.<sup>408</sup> One student, for example, states that "the son gives a good picture of what a person whose actions are dictated by [their] moral should do" (MW2), in line with More's explicit aim expressed through her homodiegetic narrator to illustrate sound family morals translated into daily actions and "correct the practice" of those who fail in these (*Cælebs* ix). Several students judged positively the portrayals of filial relationship in both texts (MW7, MW9, MW10, MW18m, MW28), with two particularly commenting on the mother's role in each: one finds the passage from *Cælebs* to be "a positive message for the women that are trying to raise their child alone" (MW23m), and another states, when discussing *Wrongs of Woman*: "I personally like this text: I am a boy, but I think that a mother can be also a best friend, who can 'exercise your mind' with advice, in a relationship of trust" (MW17m). Another student comments on the gendered dynamics of reading *Cælebs* as a woman, and empathizing with its male lead, already quoted in section 2. She combines narrative and authorial reading, which Halpern contends is necessary to literary criticism (144). Writing about both texts, the student claims that "it's easy to understand that the children to whom those words are

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<sup>408</sup> Peter Rabinowitz argues about authorial reading that "most people actually do read—or attempt to read—this way most of the time," and that it is the basis of most academic papers and classroom teaching (30).



addressed will suffer from their parents' absence, as they embody a crucial guide to succeed in life" (MW10).

These students react positively overall to the moral didacticism that they identify in the texts, finding elements that resonate personally with them. This is also true when it comes to the feminist underpinning of Wollstonecraft's text, with three students explicitly endorsing the views of gender inequality expressed in the passage (MW5, MW10, MW12). For instance, MW12 found the political elements of the text "very powerful, how she senses and encourages the changes to come for women, saying how lonely, hard and dangerous the battle is going to be and how brave they will have to act."

In contrast, MW14 comments on the "very progressive" nature of the passage rather neutrally, paraphrasing the text and not particularly expressing a personal stance, and MW6 resists the text on a narrative and ideological level. The latter wonders "why the mother had not given her the advice before dying rather than write to her," sensing the missing piece of context: Maria has been separated from her infant daughter and has not had the opportunity to teach her face to face. This student also resists the text's portrayal of the role of the father, calling it "very negative," because for her "both parents are equals in the education of a child." Interestingly, this resisting posture is progressive in terms of gender norms and therefore faithful to the spirit of the novel, showing that the passage is indeed open to varied interpretations, in spite of its rather "closed" nature (Eco 7).

More's passage garnered more resisting readings, all similarly centered on gender dynamics. One student points to the "negative vision of women" in both texts, but her stance on *Cælebs* appears more resistant than on *Wrongs*. In the latter, she underlines that "being a mother seems not to be easy," while in the former she qualifies the text's assertion that "the fairest creature is a fallen creature" as "horrific because [More] [acts] as if women were devilish creatures" (MW22). This reading misunderstands the use of "fallen creature" by More in the Evangelical Christian context, which considers creatures of any gender to be inherently fallen; nevertheless, the implication that the confines of proper femininity as they are portrayed in *Cælebs* are highly circumscribed is verifiable. Similarly, three other students resist the vision of womanhood and love presented by Charles' mother, which they find reductive (MW5, MW26, MW27). MW27 takes issue with the secondary place that love and

affection have in Charles' mother's definition of the perfect wife. She states: "I personally do not agree at all with that point of view. For me the starting point of a relationship are feelings, points in common with the other person, and not the social status, the level of education or even less beauty."

Interestingly, one of the students who offered a resisting reading of More's text also comments on Charles' love of literature that "we understand from the beginning that it was the father who transmitted this love for literature to him, which tends to show that literature is valued by being transmitted because this is how it achieves its ultimate goal: to enrich mankind" (MW26). She does not explicitly give her stance on this view of literature which very much allows for a measure of moral didacticism, but the lack of resistance to the idea when she does reject other aspects of the text suggests that she is not averse to this perspective. This posture echoes the more explicit take expressed by a different student commenting on the passage by Wollstonecraft, who states regarding the fact that Maria's letter is addressed to her daughter that "I think that this point is quite interesting because there is a pedagogic side" (MW15). These two comments illustrate explicitly what we see implicitly in the vast majority of these responses: the students do not hesitate to personally and emotionally engage with the moral and political sentiments expressed in the texts. They take a variety of stances, informed more or less convincingly by the often limited historical and cultural knowledge at their disposal. The texts clearly resonate with them, something which has been described as an important element of what makes a work enduringly canonical (Eagleton 10, Tompkins 37). This is rather ironic given that these two novels are by no means canonical, which consequently supports the calls of certain scholars to continue broadening the scope of the literary canon (Tompkins xiv-xv). We see such a call answered in the increasing inclusion of previously discarded works in the recent editions of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, as discussed in chapter 8.

The responses to the passages from *Sense and Sensibility* were somewhat more difficult to categorize according to the codes used for the other two texts: determining what constitutes authorial reading is less straightforward when the author's writing is known for its indeterminacy. Here, I describe as authorial reading instances where students note the ironic treatment of the portrayals of the Middletons in one way or another, while reactions

that considered the portrayal to represent an ideal were classed as misreadings. Similarly, responses which questioned Marianne's effusions of sensibility as excessive were deemed authorial reading. Given the form of this particular passage—dialogue with very little narrative intervention—it is difficult to consider that students who were transported by Marianne's language without challenging its implication fully misread the extract. In these cases, the reactions were labeled narrative reading.

Five responses to the excerpt from chapter 7 of *Sense and Sensibility* which include the expression of a personal stance on the characters or the texts as a whole fall under the category of authorial reading. These students see in the text a moral and social critique of the Middletons (A11, A13, A14, A20, A24). One student considers that Austen "wants to show us how ridiculous society at the time was," showing both Sir John and Lady Middleton as self-centered, "tak[ing] satisfaction from their own business before considering others" (A14). The other readings similarly highlight the moral limitations of the couple, but underline the nuance in the kinder portrait of Sir John in comparison to his wife (A11, A13, A20, A24). The difference between the two is expressed in resolutely moral terms, pointing for instance to "Sir John's genuineness" as opposed to "Lady Middleton's superficiality" (A11) and "vain" nature (A20).

The gender dynamics at play are also discussed, with one student opining that "the text is interesting for the father's description. In the family, he has got a position of power, but contrary to Wollstonecraft's text, he doesn't use authority: he manages all receptions, and wants also the reputation of a good [head of the family]" (A17m). The student does not give a definitive stance on this portrayal of masculinity, but the comment astutely underlines the complexity of this character, who is portrayed as morally ambivalent—creating a contrast with the much more frankly satirical description of Lady Middleton, as other students note. These responses do not necessarily state outright their agreement with the social critique that they analyze in the passage, but the comments laced with questions of moral principles suggest that they do not actively resist the text, and that the passage elicits moral questionings, which a number of scholars have argued are central to Austen's novels (Butler 1987: 182, Mandal 2007: 94, Page 7, Rigberg 5).

This excerpt gave rise to the most instances of misreadings, which is reflected in the stances that the students took. One student senses that there was more to the text than she could see. She writes that "at first, the Middletons are presented as welcoming and sophisticated, in a huge and beautiful house. But my understanding is that it hides something" (A7). She quotes the passage that gives her this feeling, but she does not articulate what might be the underlying attitude toward the couple expressed by the narrative voice, and she concludes that she "can't understand what the author's goal is and what is her position about women's conditions."<sup>409</sup> This response highlights the difficulty of the text for a number of students, which is also visible in the five cases where a personal stance is expressed based on a misunderstanding of the passage. These misreadings center on the perception that Sir John and Lady Middleton are portrayed as a family ideal of perfection (A3, A15, A22, A27). This understanding leads one student to ascribe a morally didactic intent to Austen based on "her point of view of the perfect family" (A15). In contrast, the others resist this depiction, one finding it "shocking" in terms of gender dynamics (A3), another stating that the couple is "cliché" (A22), and the last expressing distrust of "these kinds of stories that look perfect (at first view) with couples that love each other, with no problems" (A27).

Finally, one last instance of resisting reading based on misreading stands out. Commenting on both excerpts, one student erroneously claims that "the purpose of the texts are romanticism and love story," which he opines are "well represented in the texts because it is a matter of feelings or marriage" (A23m). He expresses ambivalence, first resisting the texts, not being "a big fan of those stories because there are no big issues all along the novel and you cannot relate to the characters because they don't have the problems that you have." However, he maintains that what "is important with Jane Austen is the influence that she had on British literature. So for me you have to read what she has done to understand the British literature of this era." This shows a belief in the traditional literary canon, here read for strictly efferent rather than aesthetic reasons. He also writes that the passages "are a great

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<sup>409</sup> The reference to the question of women's condition may have been an expectation created by the previous class, which included a discussion on the topic based on the excerpts from Hannah More and particularly Mary Wollstonecraft.

representation of Jane Austen's style," illustrating how efferent reading is possible even when focusing on elements of language and the author's artistry (Rosenblatt 1994: 89).

Overall, these reactions often involve discussions of moral qualities and faults, especially in cases where the students read authorially to some degree, picking up on the irony and nuance of Austen's writing. Strikingly, the vast majority of the students who express a personal stance on the excerpt from chapter 16 of *Sense and Sensibility* do notice that Marianne's sensibility is depicted through language and/or framed within the dialogue so as to show its excessive tendency. This reinforces the argument that verbal irony within the narrative voice is more difficult for English language learners and first-year students to apprehend than more obvious literary elements such as sentimental language and obvious contrasts.

Only one student read the text narratively, pointing out the contrast between Marianne and Elinor's relationships to nature, but exclusively taking on Marianne's perspective. She comments on Elinor and Edward's reactions to Marianne's rapturous comments on the leaves at Norland and the landscape before them, and concludes that "her mates are not as sensitive as she is!" (A9). The exclamation mark suggests that the student sides with Marianne here, especially as she explains that "this text particularly touched [her] in the way Marianne is feeling and enjoying nature."

The other students all interpret the contrast between Marianne and the other two characters in the scene as evidence that the former's sensibility is to some degree exaggerated (A10, A11, A13, A19m, A20, A24, A28), with one also noting the hyperbolic style Marianne uses to express her feelings about dead leaves (A24) and another the way in which the character's language is used to ridicule her "emotionalism" (A11). One student comes to a surprising conclusion, suggesting that she may be misreading the terms "sense" and "sensibility" from the title of the book. She writes that Marianne "seems to symbolize the combination of the senses and the sensibility seems to be able to procure a full existence," and illustrates this claim with evidence of her "raptures in front of dead leaves" which she finds "of a disconcerting poetry" (A20). Ironically, the student appears to resist Marianne's sensibility ("disconcerting poetry"), but misunderstands "sense" as exclusively referring to the physical senses. Another student sides with Marianne regardless, therefore resisting the

perception that the text presents her with. She argues that "despite everything this Marianne remains an original character to me!" and "embodies a modern character, a woman [unashamed of] her deep sensitivity without being weak or a caricature" (A10). Marianne's openness seems to appeal to this student, unrestrained by what might be thought of her. This relates to the notion of behavior in society, and therefore to moral didacticism.

Three responses show a combination of narrative reading and authorial reading, both transported by the poeticity of Marianne's language and aware of the implications of the contrast between her and the other characters (A19m, A24, A28). For instance, one student reflects that Marianne's passion for dead leaves is "an utterly uncommon interest" which may lead us to "consider her a madwoman, disconnected from reality" (A19m). Nevertheless, he goes on to redeem Marianne's conduct, wondering "if owing to habit our sensibility isn't degraded." The text elicits an ethical response in him, which borders on ecocriticism ("This passage in my opinion shall [make us aware] that we're not marveling enough about the surrounding world"). These reactions show that emotional transport does not preclude authorial reading and critical distance, supporting Rosenblatt and Halpern's argument in favor of creating space for spontaneous emotional responses in the literature classroom (Rosenblatt 1995: 71, Halpern xviii).

These responses also include discussions of a moral nature, as do a number of the reactions to the passage from chapter 7. A13 and A24 provide striking examples. In the former, the student argues that Marianne's overwhelming sensibility is a "weakness," showing "childishness" and "a definite tendency toward overindulgence of spirit." In contrast, she finds Elinor "more mindful of polite manners than she is," analyzing the contrast between the characters in terms of moral philosophy and social conduct. She directly links this to a morally didactic intent on the part of Austen, claiming that the characters' portrayals "are representative of the author's feelings about society and what she wanted to show to her readers." Her fellow student expresses a very similar viewpoint, contending that "Marianne strongly believes in the distinctiveness of her own emotions [...], as she is not wise enough to have learnt to control or conceal them." She notes that in contrast, "though more reserved, Elinor displays shrewdness that is more befitting of the society that they belong to, in which exercising restraint is valued." This analysis supports her positive appraisal of the excerpts,

stating that they "demonstrate [Austen's] ability to both provide insight on and contrast the characters that are portrayed."

The responses to the passages from *Sense and Sensibility* illustrate a variety of readings, interpretations, and judgments on the part of students. As we saw with the reactions to the excerpts from *Cælebs* and *Wrongs of Woman*, perception of moral didacticism, personal engagement with questions of morality through positive or negative appraisal, and aesthetic appreciation do not necessarily go hand in hand, but neither are they automatically divorced from one another—far from it. Strikingly, overt and covert didacticism both elicited comments of a moral nature, whether the students agreed with or resisted what they perceived to be the moral underpinning of the texts, much like we find in the early reviews discussed in chapter 1.

## Conclusion

This study of responses written by first-year undergraduate students shows them treating moral didacticism in a variety of ways, from enthusiastic to resisting, demonstrating that for this cohort as a whole, the presence of moral didacticism in a literary text, whether overt or covert, is neither positive nor negative on principle. In addition, perception of moral didacticism does not preclude an aesthetic response to and appreciation of a work in its literariness. In terms of the history of the critical reception of moral didacticism, this stance is closest to what we see in the early reviews to these novels, though critics from the *Monthly* and the *Critical* put greater emphasis on the necessity of a sound moral discourse within novels, as detailed in chapter 1.

These students were relatively "naive" readers at the time of data collection, which was confirmed by their rather limited expertise of cultural and literary history as well as by the greater difficulty they faced reading Austen, especially as English language learners. Nevertheless, their reactions remain largely unencumbered by the anti-moral didacticism stance found in much of literary criticism since the beginning of the twentieth century, which leads many scholars to continue stating that the interest they take in a genre of fiction presenting a clear moral stance, such as didactic or sentimental novels, is decidedly not artistic (see chapter 8, III). Though this may very well be the case, as literary criticism is no

longer only about determining what the best works of fiction are, this sort of disclaimer perpetuates the notion that moral didacticism at best does not hinder artistic achievement, but certainly does not support it and often obviates it. My argument is not to say, on the contrary, that the perception of moral didacticism necessarily makes a work aesthetically successful, but simply that we might consider it neutrally as a possible component of a text, neither inherently positive or negative.

It is worth noting that since I, as the teacher, provided the texts to respond to, the students may have been likely to assume that the excerpts had intrinsic literary worth.<sup>410</sup> Yet, as we have seen, many did not hesitate to resist them, whether in their content or form. Moreover, the responses demonstrated that the passages spoke to many of the students' concerns, be it family relationships, gender dynamics, or the way we relate to nature as a society. The last two are of particular moment in our current time, with the post-#metoo resurgence of feminism in mainstream culture and the growing anxiety over the climate crisis. Speaking to social concerns of a particular era, however different from the ones pertaining to the time when a text was first published, is central to a work of literature enduring with the canon, according to Eagleton (10).

As Geoff Hall notes, case studies such as the one presented in this chapter are neither generalizable nor "easily open to cross-checking," given the importance of the situational context (202). Indeed, 29 participants within a French undergraduate classroom is too small and specific a sample to draw definitive conclusions about today's reception of moral didacticism in fiction, and the passages from the novels presented to the students are too short to elicit a claim about the pertinence of including either lesser known work by More or Wollstonecraft within the taught literary canon. Nevertheless, according to Hall, such studies yield valuable insights into a specific situation that may be a "useful source of hypotheses" for further research, and the results in this chapter do argue in favor of broadening the scope of the canon in teaching as well as in research, as is the current trend within the university (201).<sup>411</sup> Given that undergraduate students in part grow up to be literary scholars, this study

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410 On the necessity to keep in mind in what context responses to texts have been elicited when doing reception work, see Price (2000: 12).

411 See discussion chapter 8, IV.



also offers hope for a possible reappraisal of moral didacticism in critical discourse in the relatively near future (Hunter xiii).

## Conclusions from Part 4.

Chapters 8 and 9 have studied the evolution of the reception of moral didacticism, anchoring the rest of this dissertation historically. The perspectives found in literary history and anthologies from chapter 8 tend to be ones of register and style rather than genre, with comments on the communicative function and aesthetic effect of features implied to constitute didactic language found in novels from both corpora. The chapter highlighted the evolution of critical sensibilities over time, ranging from a general approval of a morally instructive communicative function throughout the nineteenth century, especially when combined with stylistic competence, to the fall from grace of the communicative functions of literature coinciding with a drastic reduction of the scope of the canon in the mid-twentieth century. The perception of ideologically charged authorial intent has also been shown to become increasingly gendered and politicized over time, with moral didacticism becoming more often associated with female conservatives and moderates across the two corpora, largely divorced from political discourse, more likely to be attributed to male radicals.<sup>412</sup>

Tracing the evolution of the reception of both corpora sheds light on the intersecting factors at play in the intense, if in the end rather short-lived, erasure of the majority of novels which had previously been popular and/or well received by literary critics. Clearly perceptible ideology, including but not limited to moral instruction, came to be viewed as a stylistic flaw, with aesthetics taking precedence over other perspectives on literary texts. What has been termed the "Great Forgetting" of female-authored literature certainly affected the women novelists of the corpora in the middle of the twentieth century (Siskin 195); in addition, the vast majority of these novels, whether initially received as didactic and female or male-authored, were evicted from scholarly discussions on the novel in that period, which may be attributed to the overt moral discourse permeating much of late-eighteenth-century fiction (Butler 1987: 53, Hunter xiii).

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<sup>412</sup> Marilyn Butler's *Jane and the War of Ideas* (1987) illustrates this, centering the "didactic leaning" of Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Pride and Prejudice* as an illustration of their resemblance with "more programmatically conservative women's novels" (xiv-xv).

Nevertheless, the study implies that the features characteristic of the didactic subgenre as delineated in chapters 6 and 7, including structuring motifs and elements of plot emphasizing the moral ideal of genteel Englishness, when combined with the appropriate stylistic artistry, were subsumed into the dominant culture epitomized by the literary canon. Indeed, the most canonical novels from either corpus today were received as didactic upon first publication, and successfully so. This highlights the clear shift in critical attitudes from the late-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, from a differentiation and balance of register and style perspectives on narrative fiction to the post-Romantic almost exclusive centering on the latter and contempt of the former, in spite of an overall consensus relating to stylistic expectations illustrated by the type of praise given by early and later critics in that regard.

Nonetheless, chapter 9 underlines the possibility of moving beyond the biases resulting from the evolution of this critical tradition. Written responses by first-year undergraduates majoring in Humanities demonstrate that the recognition of a didactic register, with its attending communicative purpose, can coexist with an aesthetic experience of a literary text leading to stylistic praise. This stance mirrors to a large extent that of early reviewers, for whom moral tendency and composition were two distinct—though at times interrelated—categories of assessment. However, the perception of contemporary students differ substantially from that of the *Monthly* and *Critical* contributors in their ideological leanings, illustrating important cultural and political changes from the past 250 years, especially in terms of gender (in)equality.

Likewise, analysis of the students' responses in comparison with early reviewers' underscored the importance of ideology in informing one's reading experience, of which stylistic appraisal is one component. As such, these responses from admittedly naive readers compared to literary critics encourage scholars to reconsider the inherited tradition of disdaining overt ideology in literary texts, including moral didacticism, as inimical to stylistic prowess. This implies recognizing critical attitudes, including our own, as time and culture specific, in addition to taking into account historical and cultural context when analyzing texts, regardless of their position within the canon, as opposed to decontextualizing some works "into an unsocial, unspecific, timeless zone called art" (Butler 1987: xii).

## General Conclusion

Studying moral didacticism in fiction from the perspectives of early reception, textual analysis, and reception over time highlights the extent to which readers' perceptions of the same texts can vary, stressing the historically and culturally situated nature of the critical tradition that we have inherited. The very term "didactic" is likewise subject to varying uses, reflecting the reader's interpretive outlook, including register, genre, or style.

The study of the early critics' discourse suggests that perception of moral instructiveness largely has to do with specific ways of framing depictions of proper behavior within the narration, in addition to explicitly commenting on morality, a widespread practice visible in didactic novels and beyond in the period. The range of the perceived recipients of moral instruction as well as of narrative action and setting is shown to be much more circumscribed than in their counterparts from the reference corpus. Exploration of the reviews positions young ladies of the gentry and middling ranks as the core intended target of such instruction, though young men of the same social standing and parents may also be considered to benefit from didacticism in fiction by critics. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the novels themselves demonstrate that protagonists in didactic novels tend to remain within the borders of England, a geographical constraint that symbolizes compliance with the moral ideals of female and male gentility anchored in domesticity, mirroring the early reviewers' conception of the intended readership. These works are more likely than the ones from the reference corpus to feature a heterodiegetic narration and more widely feature comments on virtues relating to proper conduct. They also commonly address readers directly, though rather unexpectedly this practice does not necessarily coincide with an overt expression of authorial authority; in fact greater evidence of such vertical construction of the author-reader relationship is more common in the reference novels, illustrating the greater difficulty with which female writers could invest such elements of language. These pervasive topics and linguistic features constitute the register specific to didactic novels.

In terms of generic markers, these novels are more likely than the reference ones to center on a genteel heroine whose narrative trajectory is structured around the country estate as the endpoint, predominantly depicting a positive example of the Proper Lady ideal,

with few to no transgressions of the latter's defining virtues. In euphoric plots, the protagonist is rewarded with marriage to a man embodying the True Gentleman, and rakish characters' vicious tendencies are not portrayed as explicitly or extensively as in the reference novels. Didactic novels are also more likely to include prefatory material. These elements constitute the core of the didactic subgenre of narrative fiction as it was received by the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, from which some of the novels classified as didactic may deviate in part, as is often the case in literary genre analysis (Fowler 38). Elements which one may have expected to be specific to this subgenre, such as explicit closing moral commentary, in fact appear to be constitutive of late-eighteenth-century narrative fiction more widely, characterized by overt expressions of moral and/or political ideology. Further research including Gothic and historical novels should be conducted to confirm this conclusion. Likewise, systematic comparison of novels received as didactic and conduct books from the period would be fruitful to complement our understanding of the genre and register of didactic fiction.

Importantly, perception of moral didacticism does not necessarily translate into a wholly positive or negative assessment in the early reviews. Didacticism is compatible with aesthetic praise, just as an absence of the former does not preclude the latter, as long as the overall tendency aligns with the reviewers' values. Early perception of moral didacticism was consequently in large part independent from stylistic considerations, even though reviews usually commented on both, and morally sound *tendency* (but not necessarily *instruction*) was essential to a good review. Students' reactions demonstrate a similar stance, though their responses reflect the cultural changes that have occurred since the novels' first publication, as evidenced by their widespread concern with gender equality.

The centrality of style in literary commentary, and especially in the seminal works of literary history published within academia in the middle of the twentieth century, has led to a common disparaging use of "didactic" when describing a novel or its author. Analyzing early reception shows that moral instruction was not inimical to positive stylistic assessment for the precursors of literary criticism, and provides valuable context to the relatively short lived but very effective "Great Forgetting" of women writers and more largely heavily ideological fiction of the late eighteenth century (Siskin 195). Likewise, the case-study of

contemporary students' reactions to passages from texts deemed didactic at various points in time emphasizes the weight of the literary tradition and its perception of aesthetics on scholars, which more "naive" readers have not yet internalized. The multifarious trajectories of the novels of the didactic corpus in relation to the literary canon, alongside the spectrum of opinions expressed by the reviewers of the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, illustrate the value of divorcing register and genre analysis from stylistic appraisal. Common traits connecting products of the canon and the archive are thus brought to the fore, emphasizing that hypercanonical authors such as Austen cannot be wholly removed from their context, in contrast to what the canonization process tends to do (Mandal 2007: 216).

Starting this study with early reception therefore allows for a reappraisal of the place of didacticism within late-eighteenth-century fiction, as well as in the development of the nineteenth-century novel. The didactic corpus's coherence illustrates the continuity between the views expressed in the *Monthly* and the *Critical* and what has been recognized as constitutive of the Victorian ethos, with a focus on what Anthony Mandal calls "middle-class propriety" (2014: xxi).<sup>413</sup>

The present study, which combines reception and textual analysis, also underlines the value of mixing methods. Analyzing reviewers' and authors' discourse in prefatory material underscored the complexity of the evolving relation to readers in the context of the growing book market. In addition, the use of corpus stylistics allowed for a systematic exploration of the novels' vocabulary, giving greater weight to, or, alternately, disproving, hypotheses derived from previous more localized close readings. For instance, systematic study of vocabulary use related to morality and instruction nuances the assumption that the didactic register hinges on these topics. While the theme of conduct is indeed more prevalent in novels received as didactic by early critics, morality as a philosophical concept is widespread in both corpora, suggesting that the latter characterize the register of late-eighteenth-century novels set in contemporary Britain more widely. Likewise, direct

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<sup>413</sup> It is nonetheless important to note that the values uniting the didactic novels reflect the opinions expressed in the early reviews, which do not necessarily align with the wider readership, given for instance the greater popularity of novels from the reference corpus in the years following their initial publication. The same is true for the views of individual authors, many of whom were much more radical than the fairly conservative unifying features of the corpus suggest.

addresses to readers have been shown to be a pervasive feature of novels of the period, providing context for more limited earlier analyses of moral didacticism in fiction.

Alternating between corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches within the computer-aided analysis study further solidifies the conclusions drawn. While the corpus-based portion made it possible to test—and largely disprove—hypotheses based on previous understanding of didacticism, the corpus-driven section widened the perspective, bringing out of focus the topics of morality and instruction as core features of the didactic register in favor of questions of gender and class.<sup>414</sup> These were shown to be much more central to the distinction between the two corpora, leading to a reappraisal of the types of characters and narrative trajectories which cogently unite the novels received as morally instructive into a didactic subgenre of eighteenth-century fiction.

Computer-aided analysis widens the scope of inquiry one person can reasonably undertake, increasing the conclusions' validity in terms of genre and register analysis compared with smaller-scale studies. This type of research gives a wider perspective which can inform the conclusions drawn from research with a narrower focus. As Alastair Fowler notes, theoretical categories of fiction are subject to change over time (Fowler 9). Going back to early reception allows for the historicization of the often fraught notion of didacticism, further complemented by the exploration of reception over time, from didactic novels, perception of didacticism and canon formation, to contemporary students' reactions. This participates in increasing our understanding of an important part of the fictional landscape of the period, just as it provides precise context for the later uses of and perspectives on the notion of didacticism in fiction.

On the whole, studying moral didacticism in fiction from a variety of standpoints underlines the value of broadening the scope of the literary canon, already reflected in current tendencies within academia, in research as well as teaching. Texts or perspectives on texts that have been considered to be lacking in terms of aesthetic value may actually speak to some of the concerns of today's students. This is likely to support their intrinsic

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414 The process of moving beyond a corpus-based approach yielding interesting but negative results, to a corpus-driven method allowing for the specificities of the didactic corpus in terms of vocabulary frequency to emerge is detailed in my article "‘Replete with instruction and rational amusement’?: Unexpected Features in the Register of British Didactic Novels, 1778–1814' (2021).

motivation and engagement, which is particularly valuable when studying works culturally and historically removed from us (Abdalla 33, Kolb 32).<sup>415</sup> Rhetoric which critics tend to find unsubtle may also be used to advantage at undergraduate level, in order to contextualize and question the negative connotations descriptive terms may have acquired, and participate in providing a nuanced picture of literary history and criticism, allowing perspectives of register, genre, and style to coexist without taking away from the aesthetic value of the reading experience.

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<sup>415</sup> Louise Rosenblatt notes that "an intense response to a work will have its roots in capacities and experiences already present in the personality and mind of the reader," an important element to keep in mind when selecting texts to study (1995: 41).



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Reading the British Didactic Novel (1778-1814) :  
A Corpus and Reception Study

**Abstract**

This dissertation explores the notion of *didactic novel* through the reception and textual study of two corpora of works of fiction published in Britain between 1778 and 1814. It starts with early reception, building a corpus of novels perceived to be morally instructive by the critics of the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* upon first publication. This "didactic" corpus is compared to another set of novels, published in the same time period, which were not deemed instructive, although they may be considered morally unexceptionable. The early reviewers' discourse is first of all analyzed, showing moral instructiveness to be as important a criterion of literary merit as composition and style at the turn of the nineteenth century. Textual comparison of the corpora, using a combination of computer-aided analysis and close reading methods, demonstrates that both sets of novels use overtly ideological language related to moral philosophy, challenging the contemporary conception of moral didacticism as overt "moralizing," deemed to cause literary mediocrity. In fact, textual comparison highlights the main dividing line between the corpora to be the presence of specific topics and motifs rather than a particular style of language. Through these common topics, the didactic novels form a subgenre of fiction which upholds a clearly circumscribed moral ideal, based on gendered models of proper genteel Englishness. A study of the corpora's fluctuating relationship to canonicity underlines the evolution of the definition of didacticism and the place carved out for it in literary criticism, from a welcome element to an utterly distasteful feature of texts. Conversely, the analysis of contemporary students' written reactions to excerpts from three didactic novels shows that perception of an obvious moral tendency is not inimical to an aesthetic experience. Overall, this dissertation invites us to reconsider the definition and critical treatment of the didactic component of late-eighteenth-century novels, through a recognition of the historically situated nature of its disdain in literary scholarship.

**Keywords:** moral didacticism, genre study, corpus stylistics, reception, reader-response, canonicity

**Résumé**

Cette thèse explore la notion de *roman didactique* à travers la réception et l'étude textuelle de deux corpus d'œuvres de fiction publiées en Grande-Bretagne entre 1778 et 1814. L'étude s'ancre dans la réception initiale par la construction d'un corpus de romans perçus comme moralement instructifs par les critiques de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review* lors de leur première publication. Ce corpus « didactique » est comparé à un autre ensemble de romans, publiés à la même époque, qui n'ont pas été jugés instructifs, bien qu'ils aient pu être considérés comme simplement moraux. Le discours des premiers critiques est tout d'abord analysé, montrant que l'instruction morale constituait un critère de mérite littéraire au même titre que la composition et le style au tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. La comparaison textuelle des corpus, grâce à l'association de méthodes d'analyse assistée par ordinateur et de micro-lectures, démontre que les deux séries de romans utilisent un langage ouvertement idéologique lié à la philosophie morale, remettant en question la conception contemporaine du didactisme comme un discours « moralisateur » manifeste, perçu comme une preuve de médiocrité littéraire. En réalité, la comparaison textuelle met en évidence que la principale ligne de démarcation entre les corpus est la présence de thèmes et de motifs spécifiques plutôt qu'un style de langage particulier. À travers ces thèmes communs, les romans didactiques forment un sous-genre de fiction qui défend un idéal moral clairement circonscrit, illustré par des modèles genrés d'une anglicité convenable (*proper Englishness*). L'étude du rapport ambivalent des romans des deux corpus au canon littéraire souligne l'évolution de la définition du didactisme et de la place qui lui a été faite dans la critique littéraire, passant d'un élément bienvenu à une caractéristique absolument rebutante des textes. À l'inverse, l'analyse des réactions écrites d'étudiantes contemporaines à des extraits de trois romans didactiques montre que la perception d'une instruction morale claire ne s'oppose pas à une expérience esthétique. Dans l'ensemble, cette thèse nous invite à reconsidérer la définition et le traitement critique de la composante didactique des romans de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, en reconnaissant la nature historiquement située du dédain dont elle fait souvent objet dans la recherche littéraire.

**Mots-clés :** didactisme moral, genre littéraire, stylistique de corpus, réception, *reader-response*, canonicité.



**Reading the British Didactic Novel (1778-1814) :  
A Corpus and Reception Study**

**Appendices**

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Appendix Intro. List of Novels Perceived as Morally Instructive and Entertaining Unavailable in Digital Format, Chronological Order

1. PRATT, Samuel Jackson. *The Tutor of Truth* (1779)
2. KEIR, Elizabeth. *Interesting Memoirs* (1785)
3. BURKE, Anne. *Ela: or, The Delusions of the Heart* (1787)
4. KEIR, Elizabeth. *The History of Miss Greville* (1787)
5. THOMSON, Anna. *Fatal Follies: or The History of the Countess of Stanmore* (1788)
6. BONHOTE, Elizabeth. *Darnley Vale; or, Emelia Fitzroy* (1789)
7. BONHOTE, Elizabeth. *Ellen Woodley* (1790)
8. PINCHARD, Elizabeth. *The Blind Child, or Anecdotes of the Wyndham Family* (1791)
9. GUNNING, Susannah. *Memoirs of Mary, A Novel* (1793)
10. WEST, Jane. *The Advantages of Education, or, The History of Maria Williams* (1793)
11. PEACOCK, Lucy. *The Visit for a Week; or, Hints at the Improvement of Time* (1794)
12. SMITH, Charlotte. *The Wanderings of Warwick* (1794)
13. MOORE, John. *Edward. Various Views of Human Nature* (1796)
14. WEST, Jane. *A Gossip's Story, and A Legendary Tale* (1796)
15. PILKINGTON, Mary. *Obedience Rewarded, and Prejudice Conquered; or, The History of Mortimer Lascells* (1797)
16. DALLAS, Robert Charles. *Percival* (1801)
17. MELVILLE, Theodore. *The White Knight* (1802)
18. BURNEY, Sarah Harriet. *Geraldine Fauconberg* (1808)
19. WEST, Jane. *The Refusal* (1810)
20. HAWKINS, Laetitia-Matilda. *The Countess and Gertrude* (1811)
21. BURNEY, Sarah Harriet. *Traits of Nature* (1812)
22. JACSON, Frances. *Rhoda* (1816)
23. MACKENZIE, Mary Jane. *Geraldine* (1820)
24. KELTY, Mary Ann. *The Favourite of Nature* (1821)
25. BARBER, Elizabeth. *Dangerous Errors* (1822)
26. KELTY, Mary Ann. *Trials* (1824)
27. LAURENCE, Miss H. *London in the Olden Time* (1825)

Appendix Chap. 4.1. Co-occurents of HONO(U)R in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
pon	20	18	33	0.1
of	63474	913	25	3.2
Pon	12	12	23	0.1
your	6979	165	21	3.4
do	4289	108	1616	3.3
bound	128	19	15	2.7
sense	609	35	13	2.3
Theodore	18	9	12	1.8
me	10948	191	12	4.1
have	12334	209	11	3.8

Appendix Chap. 4.1.1. Concordance Lines of "Pon (my) honour" in the Didactic Corpus

1778evelina	He! he! he! very good,	<b>pon honour</b>	cried the fop; - " well, so I
1778evelina	'tis most admirably hit off,	<b>pon honour</b>	! " I could almost have cried, that such
1778evelina	He, he, he! -well,	<b>pon honour</b>	, " cried Mr. Lovel, " you gentlemen of
1778evelina	Why, Ma'am, no,	<b>pon honour</b>	, " answered he, " I can't absolutely say
1778evelina	woman! " repeated Mr. Lovel; "	<b>pon honour</b>	, Jack, you have made a most unfortunate
1778evelina	abruptly from the window; "	<b>pon honour</b>	, this is pleasant enough; but I don't see
1778evelina	but too happy to obey you; but,	<b>pon honour</b>	, I can't speak a word, if you won't
1778evelina	fellow in my life, as that Captain:	<b>pon honour</b>	, I believe he came here for no purpose
1778evelina	done nothing but fight all his life,	<b>pon honour</b>	, Sir, I can't think of it! " "
1801belinda	is Percival, of Oakly-park, I think,	<b>pon my honour</b>	, " replied Mr. St. George, and he then
1801belinda	's the true way. " " But,	<b>pon my honour</b>	, " said St. George, " I should like of
1801belinda	cried Mr. Rochfort: "	<b>pon honour</b>	, 'tis a deal too much trouble. A lady,
1801belinda	said Rochfort: "	<b>pon honour</b>	, he deserves it from us, Sir Phil, and I
1801belinda	that's worth all the rest,	<b>pon honour</b>	! " repeated Rochfort; " and we'll leave it
1801belinda	And a history piece, too,	<b>pon honour</b>	! " said Rochfort: " a family history piece
1801belinda	a family history piece, I take it,	<b>pon honour</b>	! it will turn out, " said Rochfort;
1801belinda	the words, " family history piece,	<b>pon honour</b>	! --family history piece, damme! "
181uselfcontrol	to dimple her cheek. " No,	<b>pon honour</b>	, " replied the beau, " the women are

Appendix Chap. 4.2. Co-occurents of PRUDENCE in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
common	450	12	7	1.6
delicacy	290	9	6	4.6
guard	146	7	6	5.4
wisdom	95	6	6	4.2
forbore	58	5	5	1.8
temper	357	9	5	4.2
generosity	166	6	4	4.7
integrity	102	5	4	2.2
and	56256	234	4	3.7
maxims	19	3	4	1.0

Appendix Chap. 4.3. Co-occurents of FASHION in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
of	63474	525	39	3.5
world	1553	55	30	2.1
the	84346	524	13	4.3
rank	240	15	12	3.4
manners	457	19	12	3.3
men	798	21	9	3.5
gay	205	12	9	3.4
in	29712	206	9	4.7
public	409	15	9	4.0
a	36277	236	8	4.7

Appendix Chap. 4.4. Co-occurents of FASHION in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
of	72302	304	27	3.6
fashionable	81	9	12	4.3
Hume	18	6	11	0.3
young	1838	20	8	3.9
ladies	355	10	8	2.8
people	760	12	6	2.9
handsome	188	7	6	5.1
beauty	389	9	6	4.3
men	808	12	6	2.6
the	97133	274	5	4.2

Appendix Chap. 4.5. Co-occurents of INFORM in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
that	24955	333	26	3.4
had	17622	253	24	4.6
him	10414	162	19	2.9
credibly	7	7	15	0.0
he	21560	251	13	4.5
was	25613	284	13	4.6
received	822	30	12	5.1
arrival	295	19	12	4.3
servant	434	22	11	4.7
been	5889	86	9	3.1

Appendix Chap. 4.6. Co-occurents of DIRECT in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
to	76185	526	18	4.2
towards	758	23	11	1.1
road	253	13	9	6.3
opposite	144	10	8	1.0
the	97133	570	8	4.9
given	818	20	8	2.2
cover	64	7	7	3.1
steps	194	10	7	3.5
immediately	855	19	7	3.5
where	2096	29	6	3.3

Appendix Chap. 4.7. Co-occurents of FORM in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
resolution	300	30	28	2.2
plan	330	29	26	3.1
of	63474	455	14	5.0
idea	563	23	13	1.7
character	963	28	12	3.8
contrast	58	10	12	1.6
opinion	790	25	12	2.5
attachment	292	15	10	2.9
which	11942	113	9	5.0
had	17622	147	8	3.1



Appendix Chap. 4.8. Co-occurents of FORM in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
resolution	358	24	20	1.4
plan	303	18	14	2.2
project	141	13	13	2.2
judgment	285	16	12	2.7
which	14486	122	11	4.9
idea	669	20	10	2.7
connexion	70	8	9	3.4
attachment	274	12	8	1.9
opinion	632	17	8	4.0
habits	201	10	7	3.9

Appendix Chap. 4.9. Co-occurents of KNOWLEDGE in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
of	63474	509	55	3.1
world	1553	37	17	3.2
literature	79	10	12	4.3
character	963	21	9	3.4
certain	579	16	8	2.4
acquired	123	9	8	3.0
knowledge	428	14	8	6.3
acquire	54	7	8	1.0
which	11942	88	8	4.3
accurate	18	5	8	1.2

Appendix Chap. 4.10. Co-occurents of KNOWLEDGE in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
of	72302	394	37	3.3
acquired	104	8	9	1.2
possess	133	8	8	4.4
thirst	25	5	8	1.2
world	1337	18	7	3.4
languages	17	4	6	3.2
scientific	8	3	5	0.7
intuitive	10	3	5	0.0
without	2716	23	5	3.2
thorough	11	3	5	0.0

Appendix Chap. 4.11. Co-occurents of TEACH in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
to	71305	146	10	3.8
them	4645	24	8	3.2
teaches	16	3	6	9.7
lesson	64	4	5	3.2
experience	172	5	5	2.0
lessons	27	3	5	5.0
virtue	378	6	5	6.2
me	10948	29	4	1.1
learn	163	4	4	5.8
will	6259	20	4	2.2

Appendix Chap. 4.12. Co-occurents of TEACH in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
us	1700	21	11	2.1
you	19467	72	9	4.1
to	76185	188	8	3.4
teach	122	6	7	6.3
will	6786	31	6	4.7
—the	70	4	5	5.5
music	156	5	5	4.2
what	5770	25	4	4.4
philosophy	86	4	4	4.8
learn	233	5	4	6.2

Appendix Chap. 4.13. Co-occurents of EDUCATION in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
of	63474	293	13	4.2
been	5889	55	12	2.9
liberal	97	9	10	3.1
has	3829	39	10	3.2
fitted	44	7	10	3.1
received	822	17	9	2.9
a	36277	172	9	4.9
birth	183	9	8	3.8
children	486	12	7	2.8
had	17622	92	6	3.9

Appendix Chap. 4.14. Co-occurents of EDUCATION in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
of	72302	255	12	4.2
birth	235	11	11	2.5
daughters	123	9	10	4.1
liberal	100	8	10	2.5
and	66748	219	8	4.2
habit	143	7	7	2.0
manners	421	10	7	3.2
excellent	236	8	7	2.9
talents	196	7	6	5.7
given	818	12	6	3.4

Appendix Chap. 4.15. Co-occurents of OUGHT in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
to	71305	707	77	2.5
be	14747	214	46	2.8
I	38099	323	24	3.8
have	12334	139	20	3.9
not	18826	178	17	3.6
what	5153	63	11	3.2
ought	523	15	7	7.1
you	19710	140	6	4.5
think	2431	31	6	3.9
do	4289	42	5	4.3

Appendix Chap. 4.16. Co-occurents of OUGHT in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
to	76185	996	118	2.6
be	16398	327	77	2.9
I	48062	475	27	3.8
have	13187	175	21	3.8
not	18825	211	17	3.1
you	19467	201	13	4.6
we	3452	62	13	2.5
what	5770	85	13	3.0
ought	700	25	11	7.2
am	4218	56	7	6.3

Appendix Chap. 4.17. Co-occurents of MUST NOT in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
"	63825	234	28	5.1
you	19710	106	24	3.7
be	14747	75	16	3.8
You	1657	24	14	1.5
expect	406	12	11	1.3
we	3264	24	8	3.2
betray	75	5	6	2.2
I	38099	104	6	4.0
must	3214	18	5	7.3
.	78172	175	4	5.4

Appendix Chap. 4.18. Co-occurents of MUST NOT in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
be	16398	101	22	3.5
you	19467	106	19	4.0
I	48062	177	15	4.3
must	3440	36	15	7.2
"	52121	178	12	5.4
You	1923	21	9	3.0
!	14388	63	8	5.4
we	3452	26	8	2.0
tell	1266	15	7	4.8
We	630	11	7	4.2

Appendix Chap. 4.19. Epithets Attached to "reader(s)" in the Didactic Corpus

1778munster	As her character is peculiar, the	<b>indulgent reader</b>
1778munster	supported themselves by the sale of jewels. The	<b>intelligent reader</b>
1788mary	squeeze her hand, and look unutterable things?	<b>Gentle reader</b>
1796hermsprong	provide. There may be, especially among my	<b>fair readers</b>
1796hermsprong	Mr. Glen's felicity; and you, my	<b>dear readers</b>
1796hermsprong	; and it is not impossible but I may have	<b>lovely readers</b>
1796hermsprong	to gratify a laudable curiosity, I will tell my	<b>fair readers</b>
1796hermsprong	withdraw it angrily, as undoubtedly most of my	<b>fair readers</b>
1796hermsprong	OVID de amore informs us, and I inform my	<b>fair readers</b>
1796hermsprong	an explanation necessary to any one of my	<b>male or female readers</b>
1796hermsprong	"And pray," say a thousand of my	<b>fair readers</b>
1798wrongs	I will live for my child!" A	<b>few readers</b>
1808cælebs	majestic simplicity, as far removed from the	<b>careless reader</b>
1808cælebs	establishing the omnipotence of love, that the	<b>young reader</b>
1808cælebs	intimation that human nature is corrupt; that the	<b>young reader</b>
1808cælebs	the passage, however, will inevitably dazzle the	<b>feeling reader</b>
1811self-control	every virtue that can exalt or adorn humanity.	<b>Gentle reader</b>
1814patronage	to Lydia." <i>Sold! Gave</i> , perhaps some	<b>innocent reader</b>
1814patronage	We regret that we cannot gratify some of our	<b>courteous readers</b>

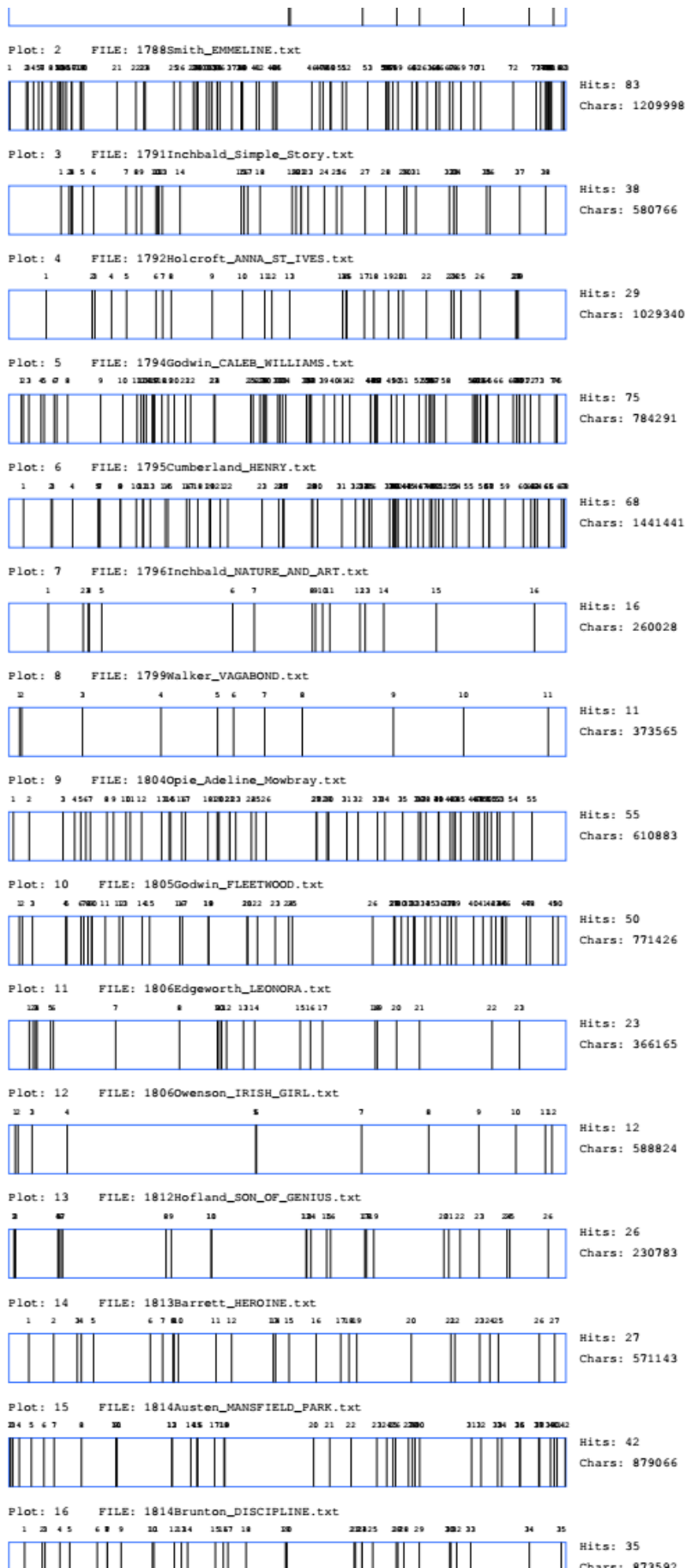
Appendix Chap. 4.20. Epithets Attached to "reader(s)" in the Reference Corpus

1791simple-story	Milner it was so united. Yet let not our	<b>over-scrupulous readers</b>
1794caleb	mind of such a stretch of depravity, as to	<b>many readers</b>
1795henry	of, and force being into nature, that no	<b>well-bred reader</b>
1795henry	beautiful enough to warm the imagination of the	<b>animated reader</b>
1795henry	me, I yet do not despair but that the	<b>candid reader</b>
1795henry	the lovely Isabella (for lovely she was,	<b>gentle reader</b>
1795henry	hint, which we think fit to give to the	<b>sagacious reader</b>
1795henry	But let me insert one caution to my	<b>youthful readers</b>
1795henry	that, against the force of truth, the	<b>unguarded reader</b>
1795henry	not in act, may in the judgment of my	<b>candid readers</b>
1795henry	Hints at their peculiar Usefulness. I HOPE the	<b>candid reader</b>
1795henry	But are there not also	<b>fastidious, angry, querulential readers</b>
1795henry	slip the time of applying it? Mark now,	<b>candid reader</b>
1795henry	properties of degenerated nature. If any of my	<b>female readers</b>
1795henry	here let it be remarked for the edification of my	<b>female readers</b>
1796nature&art	we must circulate libels, madam, to gratify our	<b>numerous readers</b>
1796nature&art	and Agnes Primrose are its heroines. But you,	<b>unprejudiced reader</b>
1805fleetwood	vain; and, if, like a dissertation for	<b>popular readers</b>
1806irish-girl	origin; with what success we leave it to the	<b>impartial reader</b>
1812son-genius	child which thou gavest me." My dear	<b>young reader</b>
1813heroine	at 24, Swallow Street; and should the	<b>curious reader</b>
1813heroine	which she sat down to peruse. But,	<b>gentle reader</b>
1814discipline	therefore, was educated to be married. Let no	<b>simple reader</b>
1814discipline	My reader, especially if he be a	<b>male reader</b>





Appendix Chap. 5.2. Concordance Plot for "Conduct" in the Reference Corpus



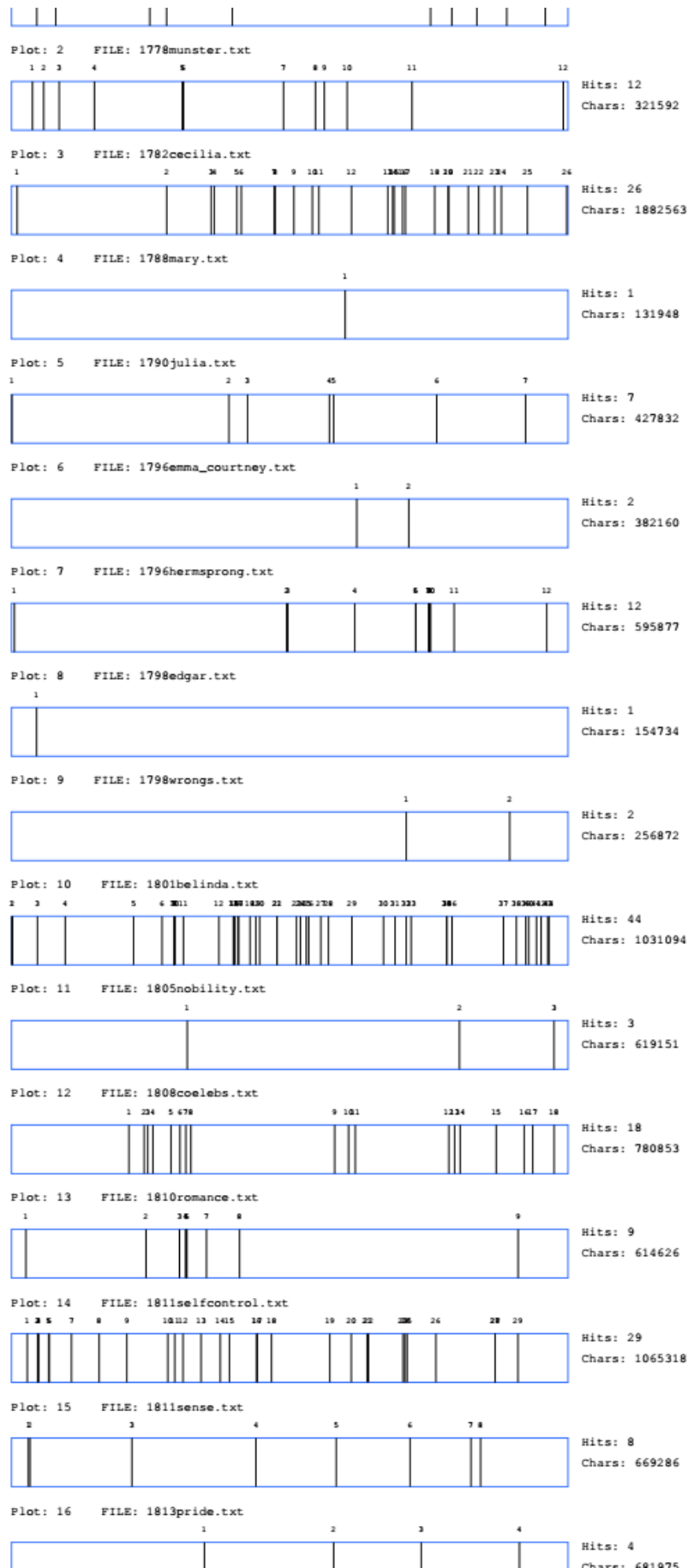
Appendix Chap. 5.3. Co-occurrences of "Conduct" in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurrence	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
his	21534	314	29	3.4
of	63474	665	20	4.1
her	34704	406	20	3.9
towards	683	26	10	1.5
principles	300	17	9	5.0
rectitude	46	8	8	4.8
future	456	18	8	3.9
tenor	27	6	7	2.7
propriety	164	11	7	3.4
to	71305	630	7	4.8

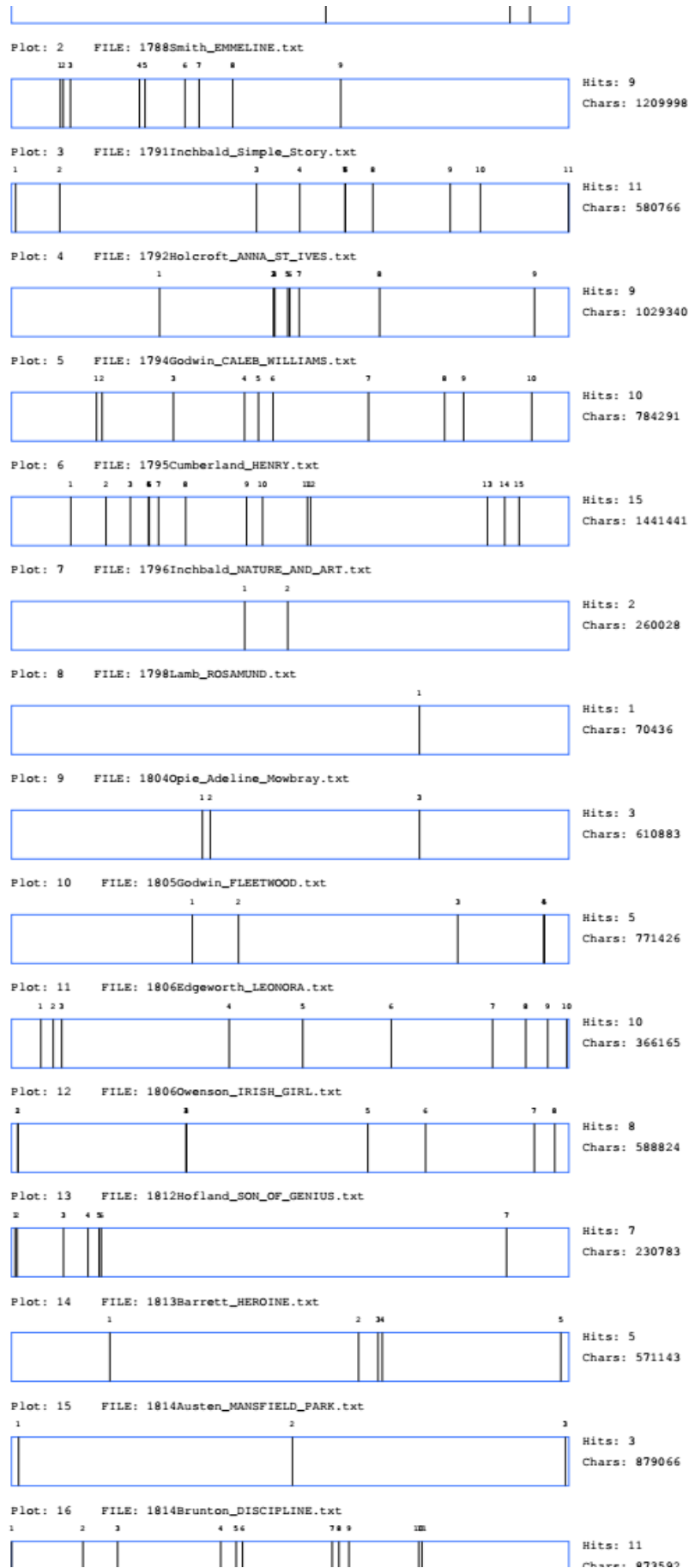
Appendix Chap. 5.4. Co-occurrences of "Conduct" in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurrence	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
her	31023	268	12	3.7
propriety	131	13	12	3.8
of	72302	535	12	4.0
towards	758	22	9	2.4
resent	39	6	7	3.0
to	76185	519	7	4.9
your	7305	74	6	3.4
principles	244	10	5	3.5
sentiments	314	11	5	5.5
improper	81	6	5	0.7

## Appendix Chap. 5.5. Concordance Plot for "Prudence" in the Didactic Corpus



## Appendix Chap. 5.6. Concordance Plot for "Prudence" in the Reference Corpus



Appendix Chap. 5.7. Co-occurrences of "Prudence" in the Didactic Corpus

Co-occurent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
common	450	11	8	1.2
wisdom	95	6	7	4.2
delicacy	290	8	7	4.2
and	56256	156	6	3.5
temper	357	8	6	4.8
virtue	378	8	6	3.1
generosity	166	6	6	4.7
integrity	102	5	5	2.2
guard	146	5	5	5.6
propriety	164	5	4	5.0

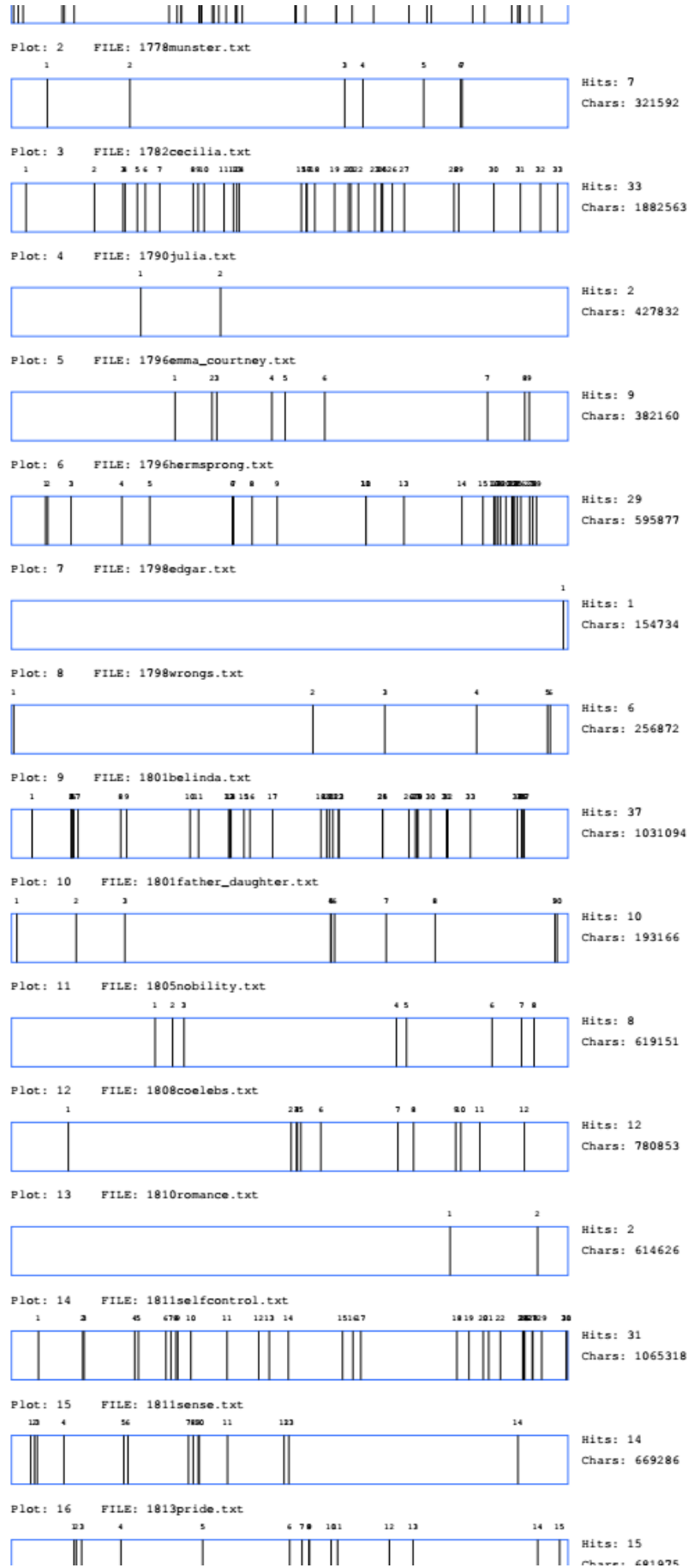
Appendix Chap. 5.8. Co-occurrences of "Prudence" in the Reference Corpus

Co-occurent	Frequency	Co-frequency	Score	Average Distance
necessity	274	5	4	6.2
cold	293	5	4	2.4
fortitude	153	4	4	2.0
unfeeling	65	3	4	6.3
fairly	67	3	4	4.0
where	2096	10	4	6.5
common	449	5	3	2.0
Susan	479	5	3	8.0
caution	103	3	3	3.0
point	536	3	3	3.2

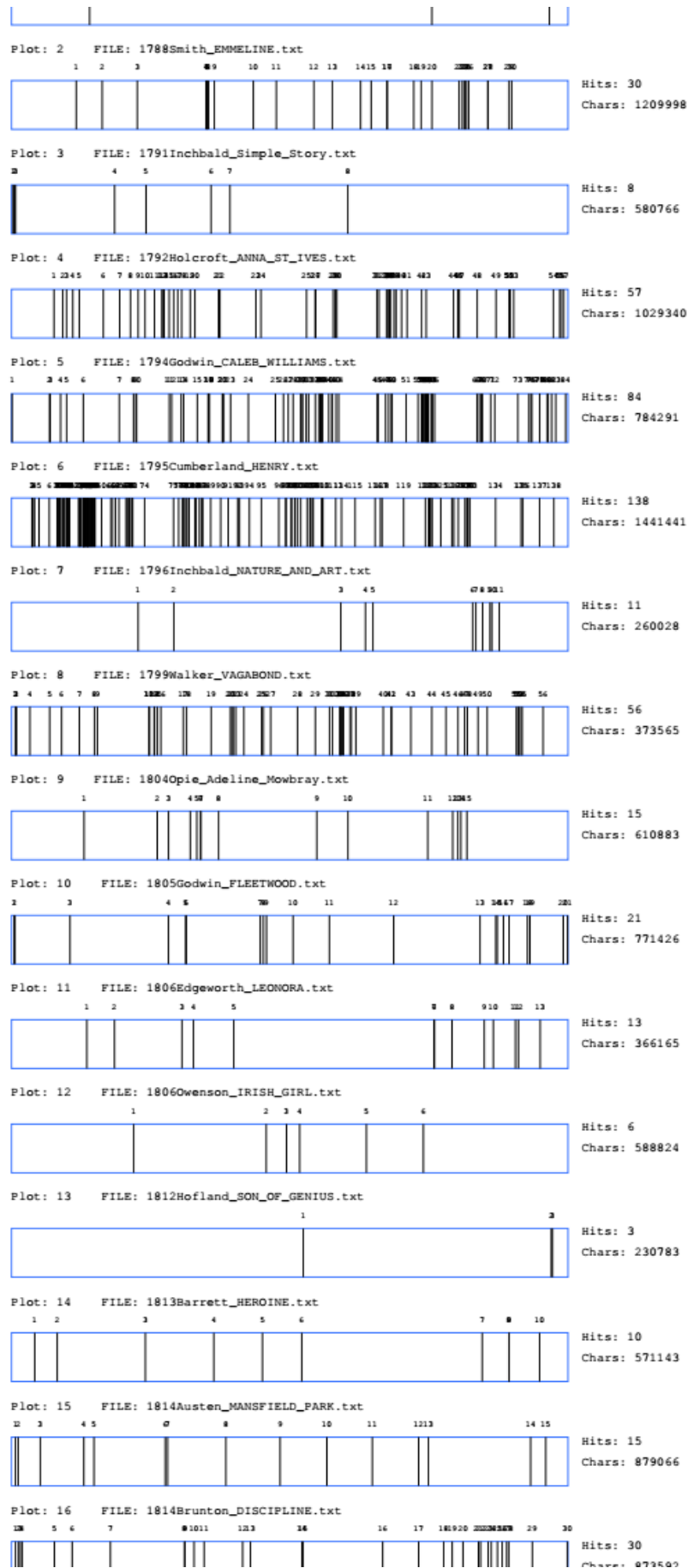
Appendix Chap. 5.9. Concordance Lines with "Prudence" and "Cold" as Co-occurents in the Reference Corpus.

<i>Emmeline</i>	It is only your Stoic	prudence, your cold	and unfeeling bosom, which can arm itself
<i>Anna St. Ives</i>	wise people knew how to be cool.	Prudence and wisdom were cold	blooded qualities. Good or harm, of any
<i>Mansfield Park</i>	my last like a woman of spirit. No	cold prudence	for me. I am not born to sit still and do nothing
<i>The Wanderer</i>	between Elinor, and a compound of	cold caution, and selfish prudence	? Oh, Harleigh! How is it you thus can love all

Appendix Chap. 5.10. Concordance Plot for "Justice" in the Didactic Corpus

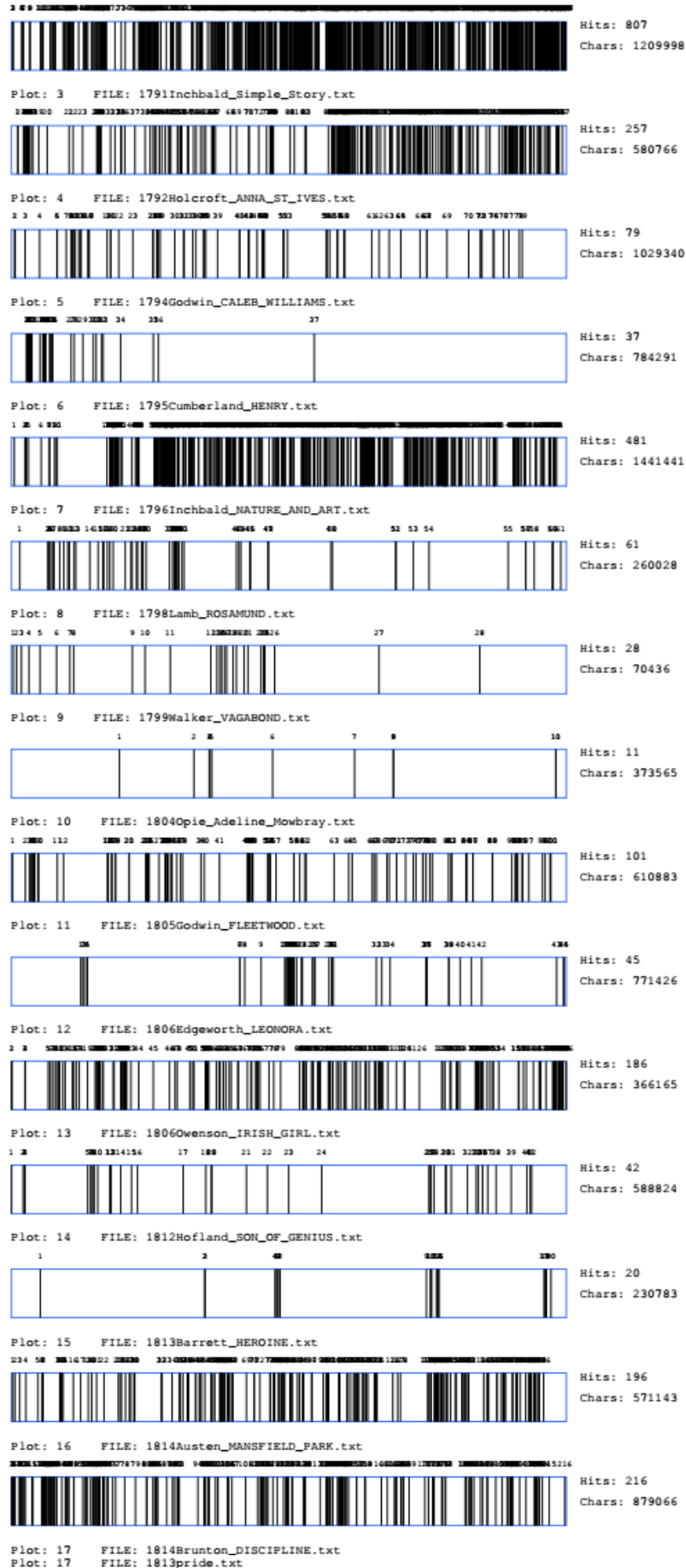


Appendix Chap. 5.11. Concordance Plot for "Justice" in the Reference Corpus

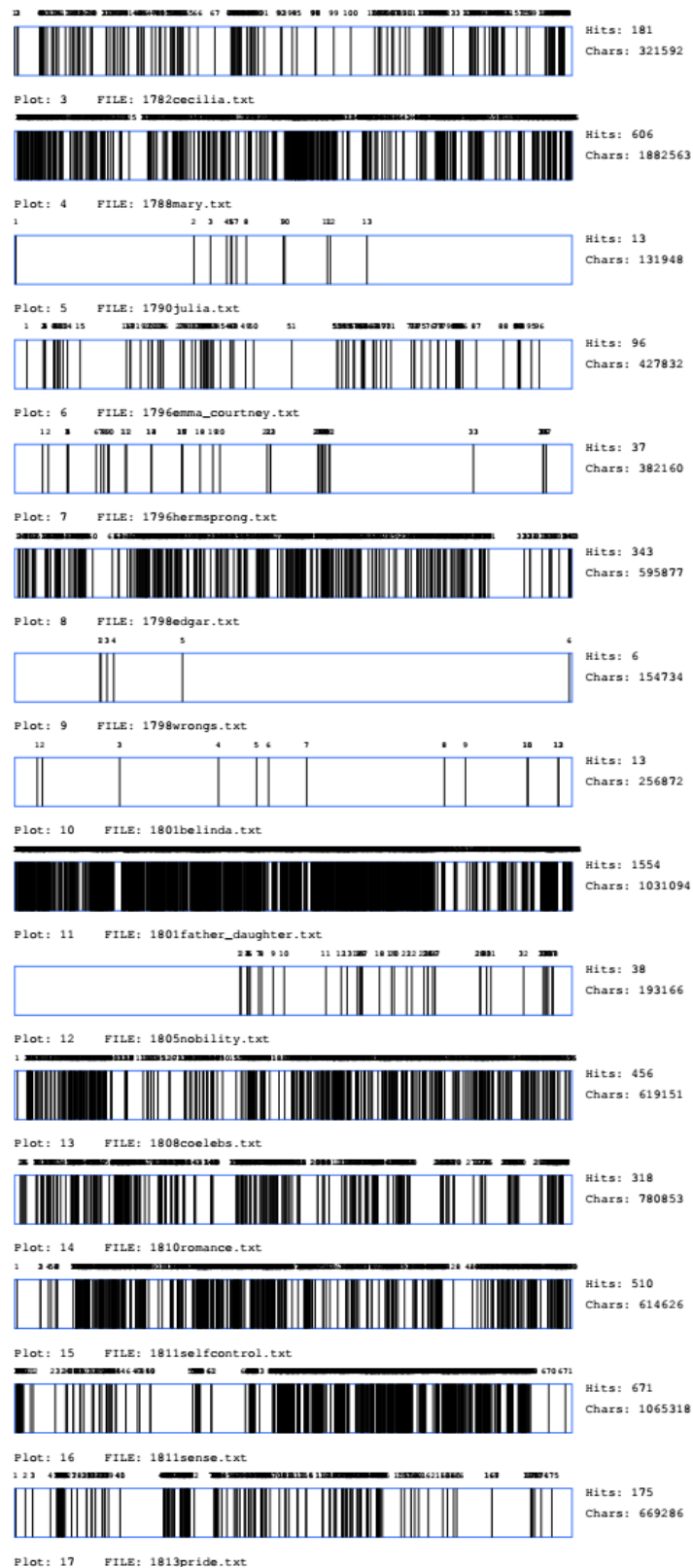




Appendix Chap. 5.12. Concordance Plot for "Lady" in the Didactic Corpus



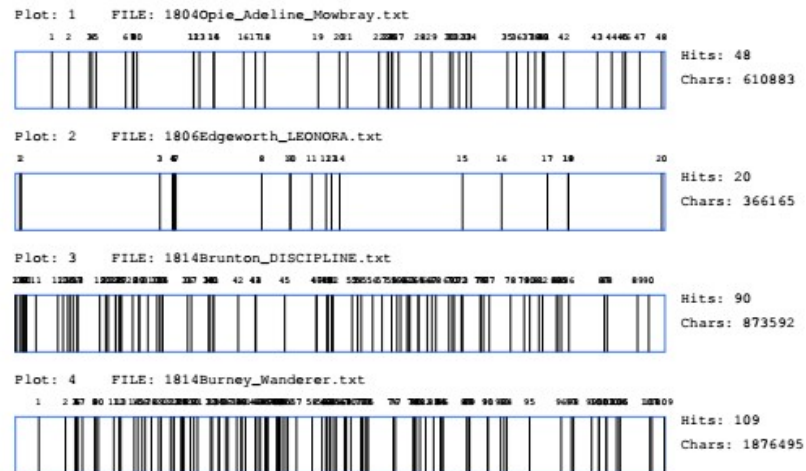
Appendix Chap. 5.13. Concordance Plot for "Lady" in the Reference Corpus



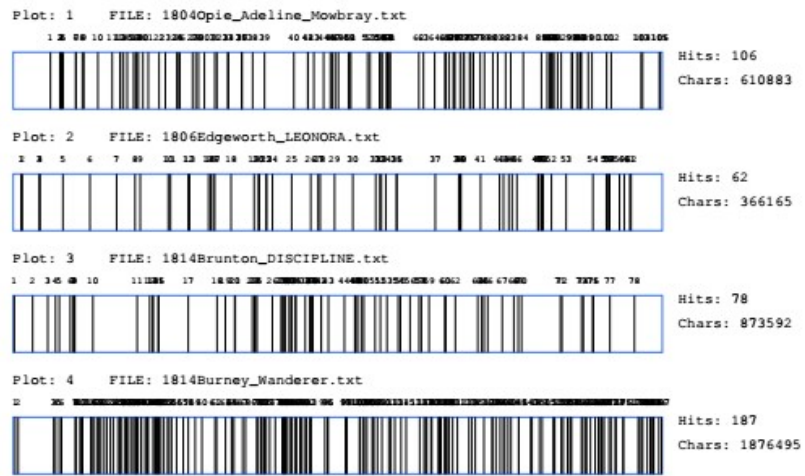
Appendix Chap. 5.14. Concordance Plot for "my" in the ReferenceBBEO Corpus



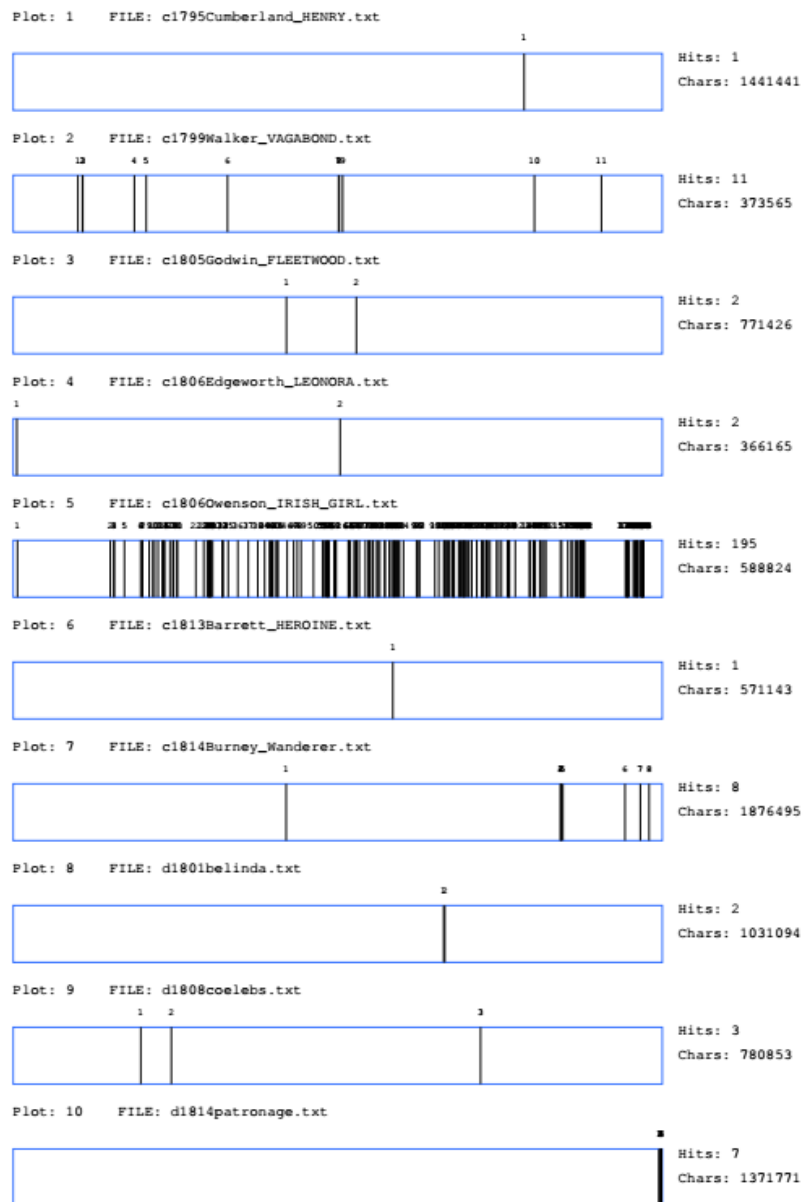
Appendix Chap. 5.15. Concordance Plot for "self" in the ReferenceBBEO Corpus



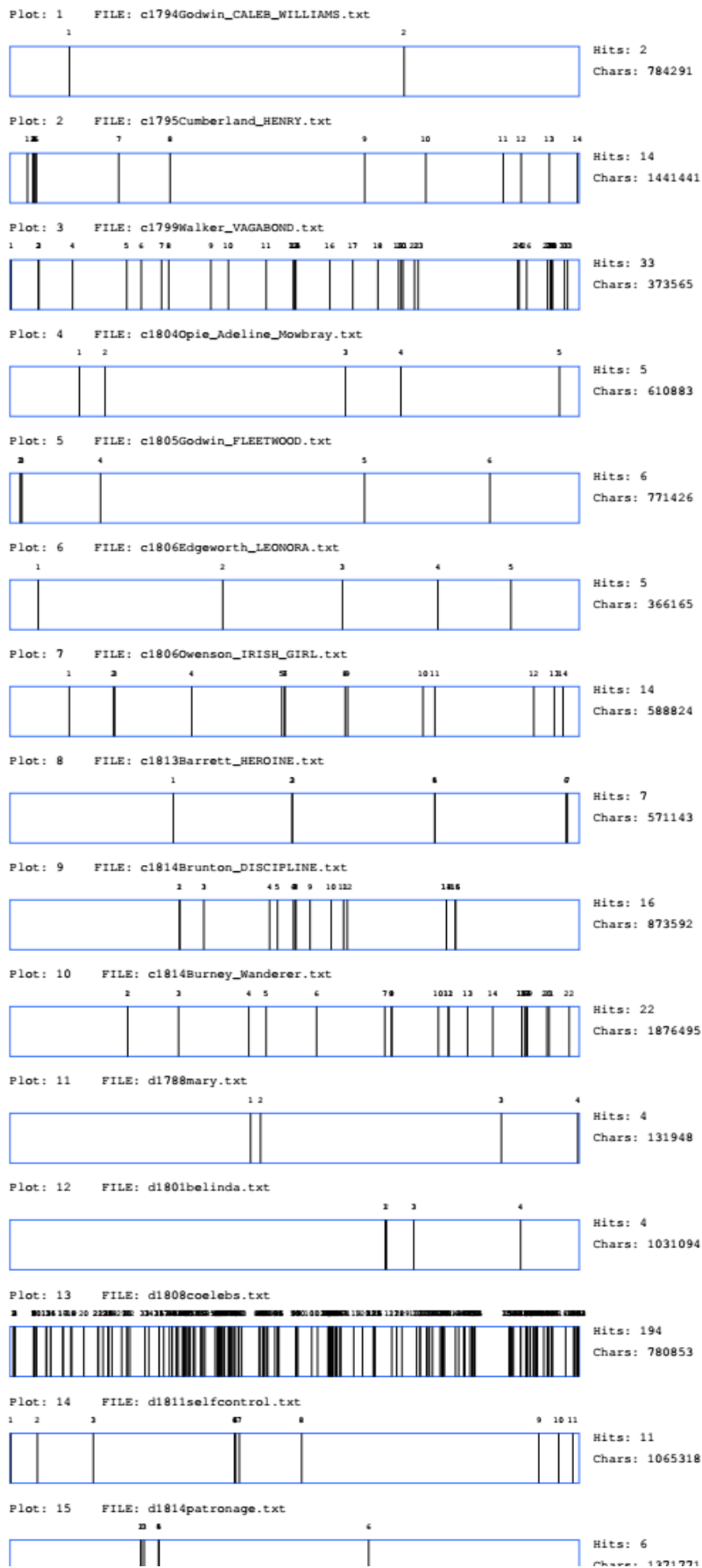
Appendix Chap. 5.16. Concordance Plot for "feeling" in the ReferenceBEO Corpus



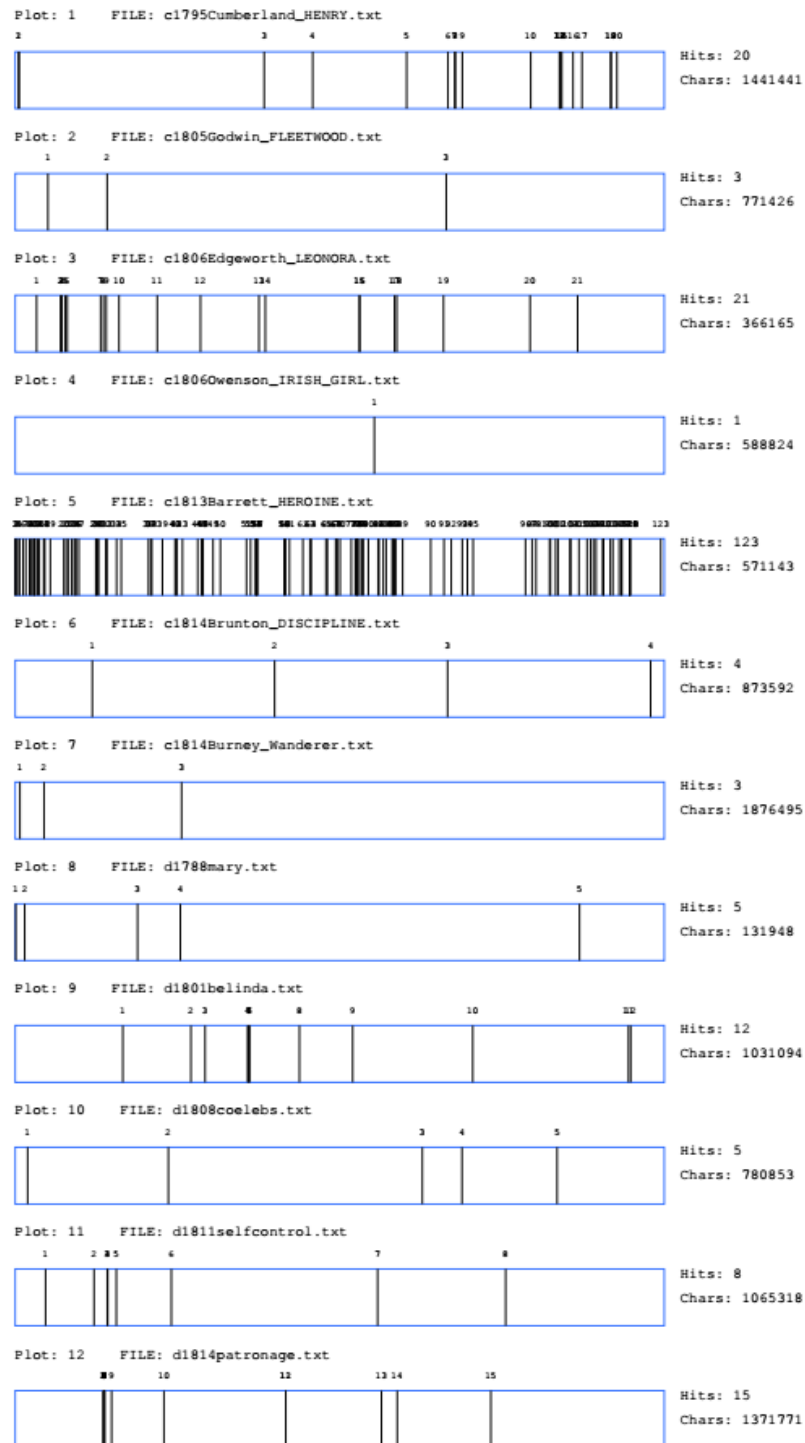
Appendix Chap. 5.17.1. Concordance Plot for "Priest" in the Intent15 Corpus



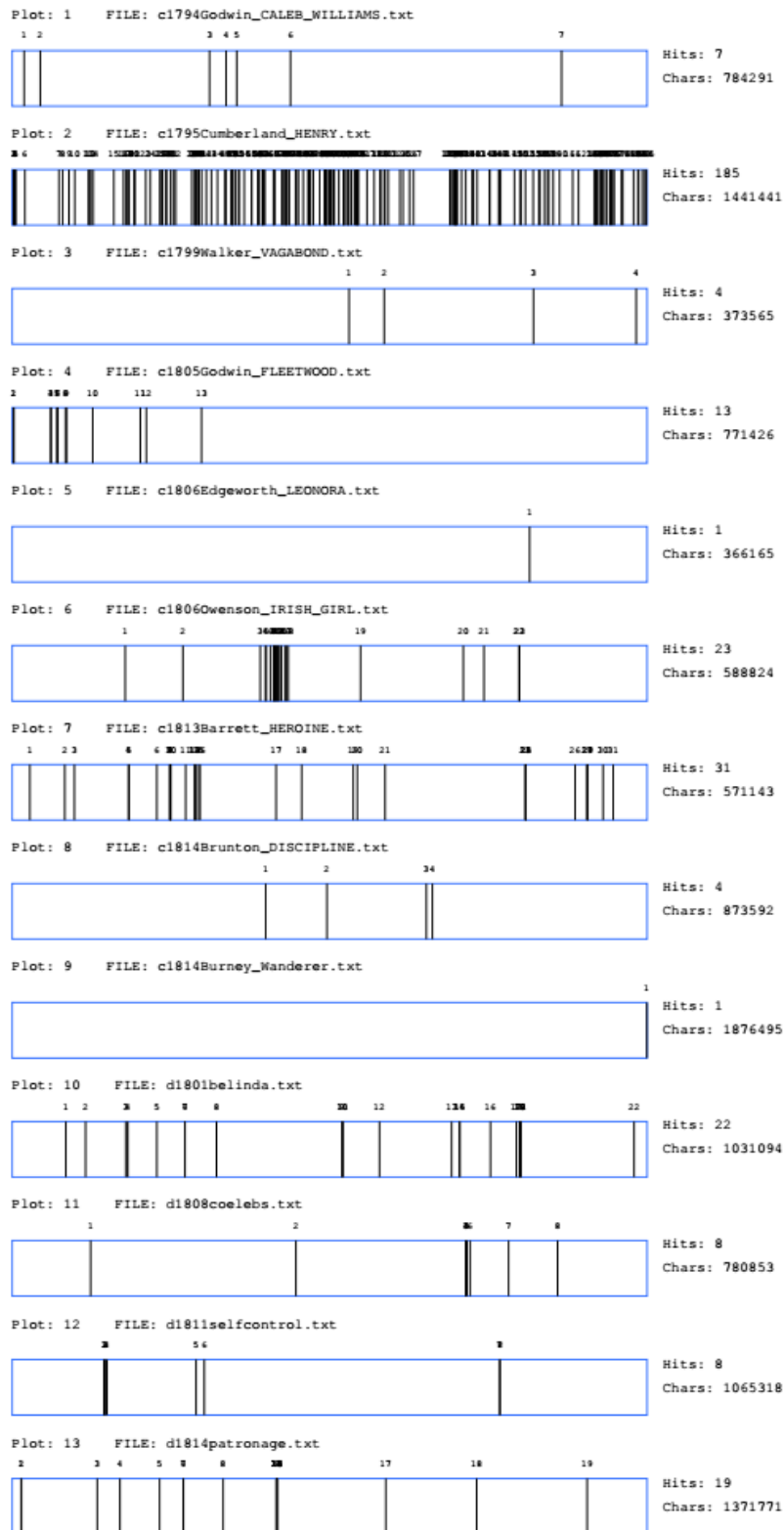
Appendix Chap. 5.17.2. Concordance Plot for "Religion" in the Intent15 Corpus



Appendix Chap. 5.17.3. Concordance Plot for "Heroin" in the Intent15 Corpus

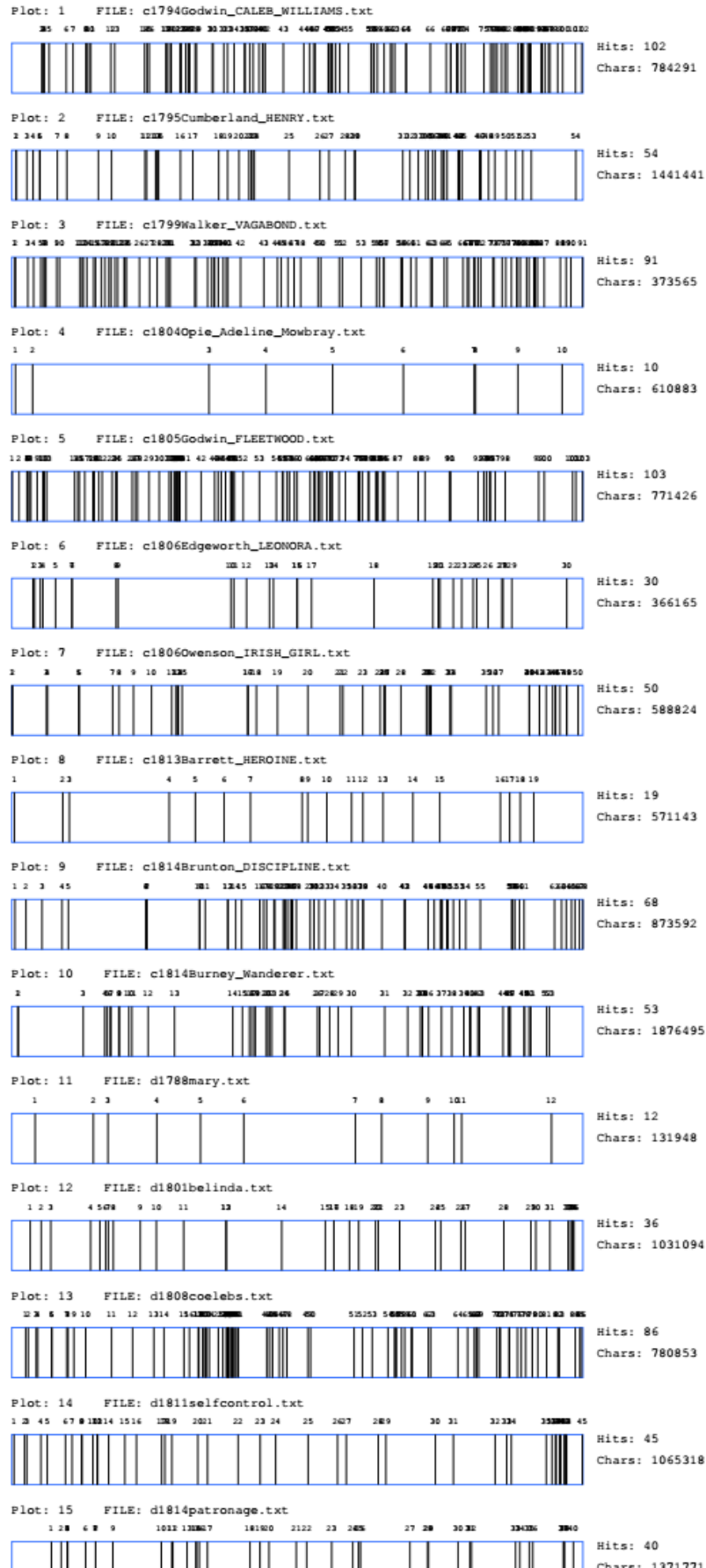


Appendix Chap. 5.17.4. Concordance Plot for "Hero" in the Intent15 Corpus

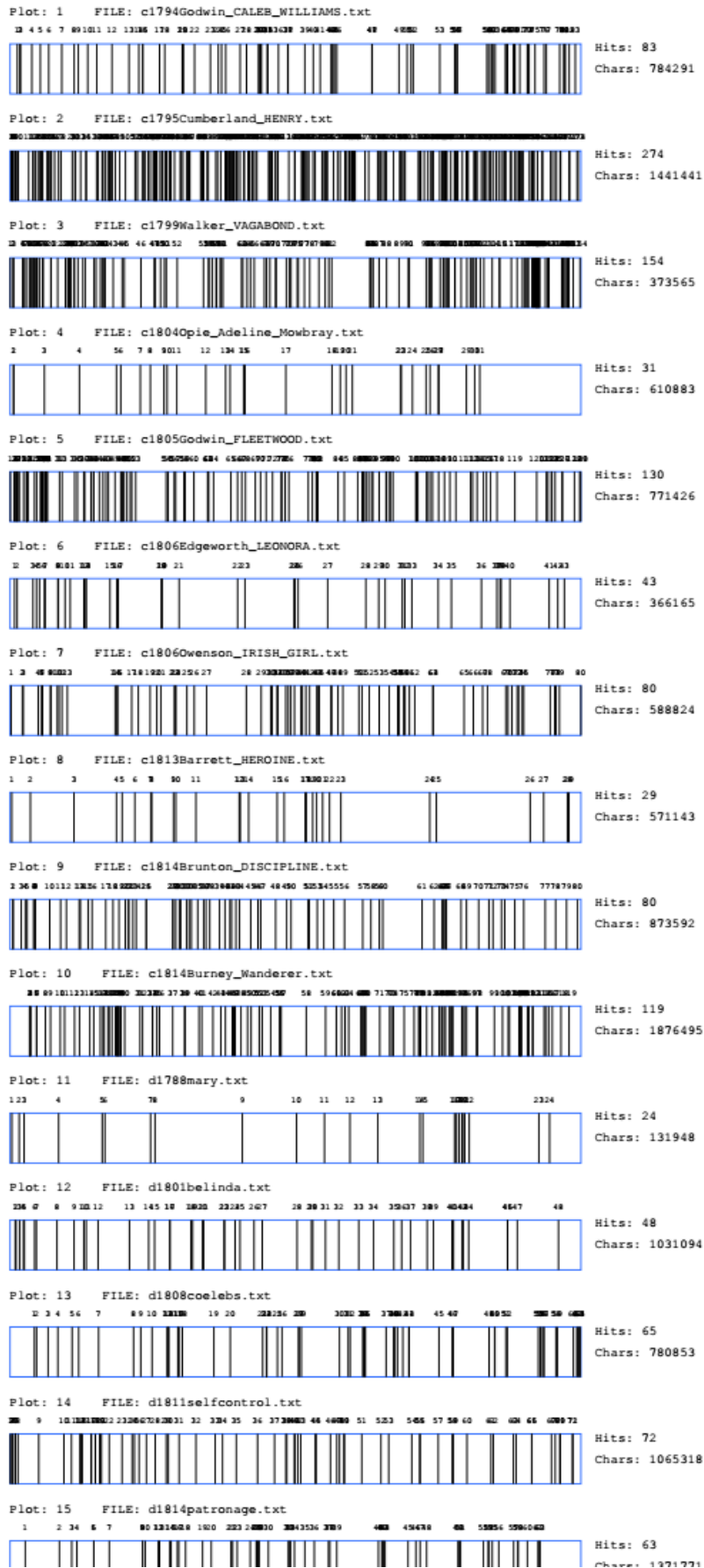




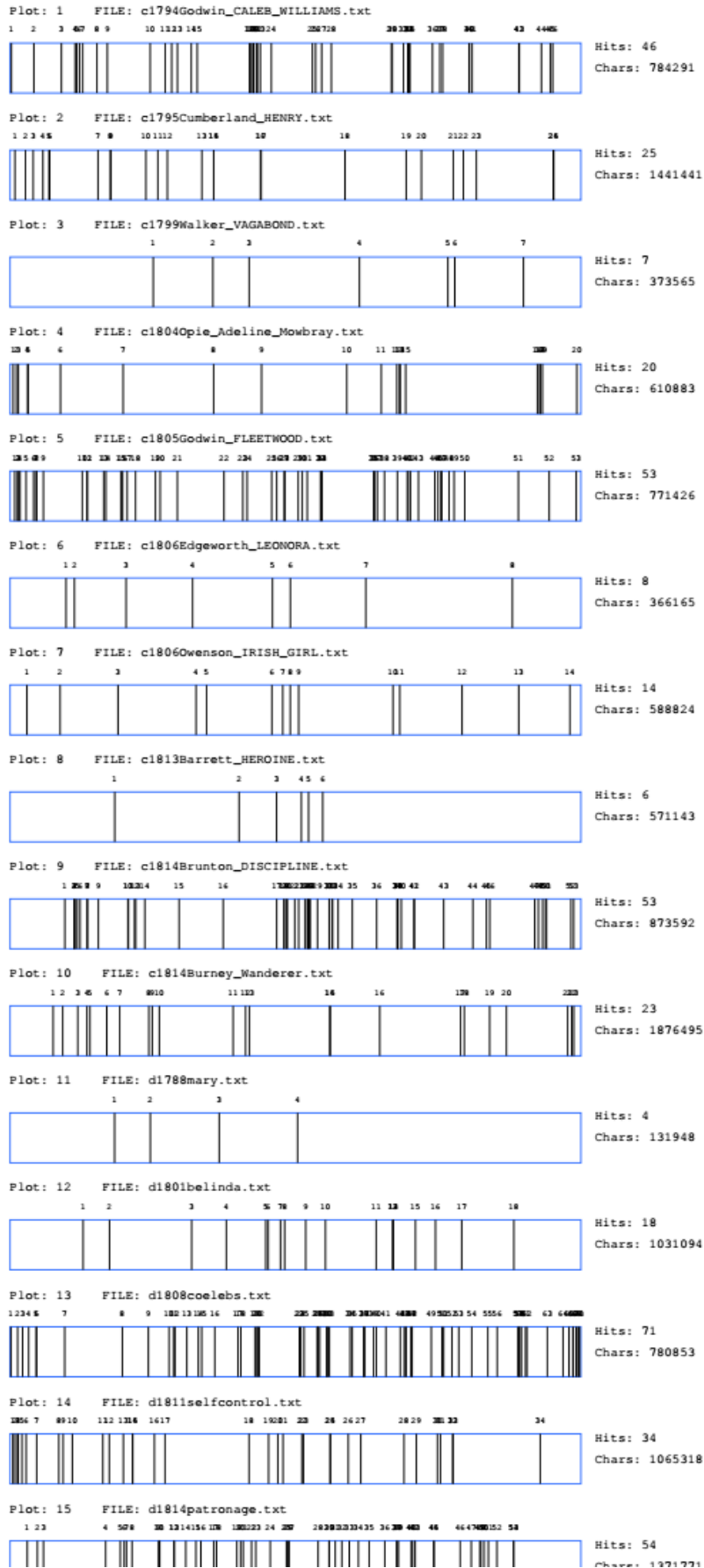
## Appendix Chap. 5.17.5. Concordance Plot for "Human" in the Intent15 Corpus



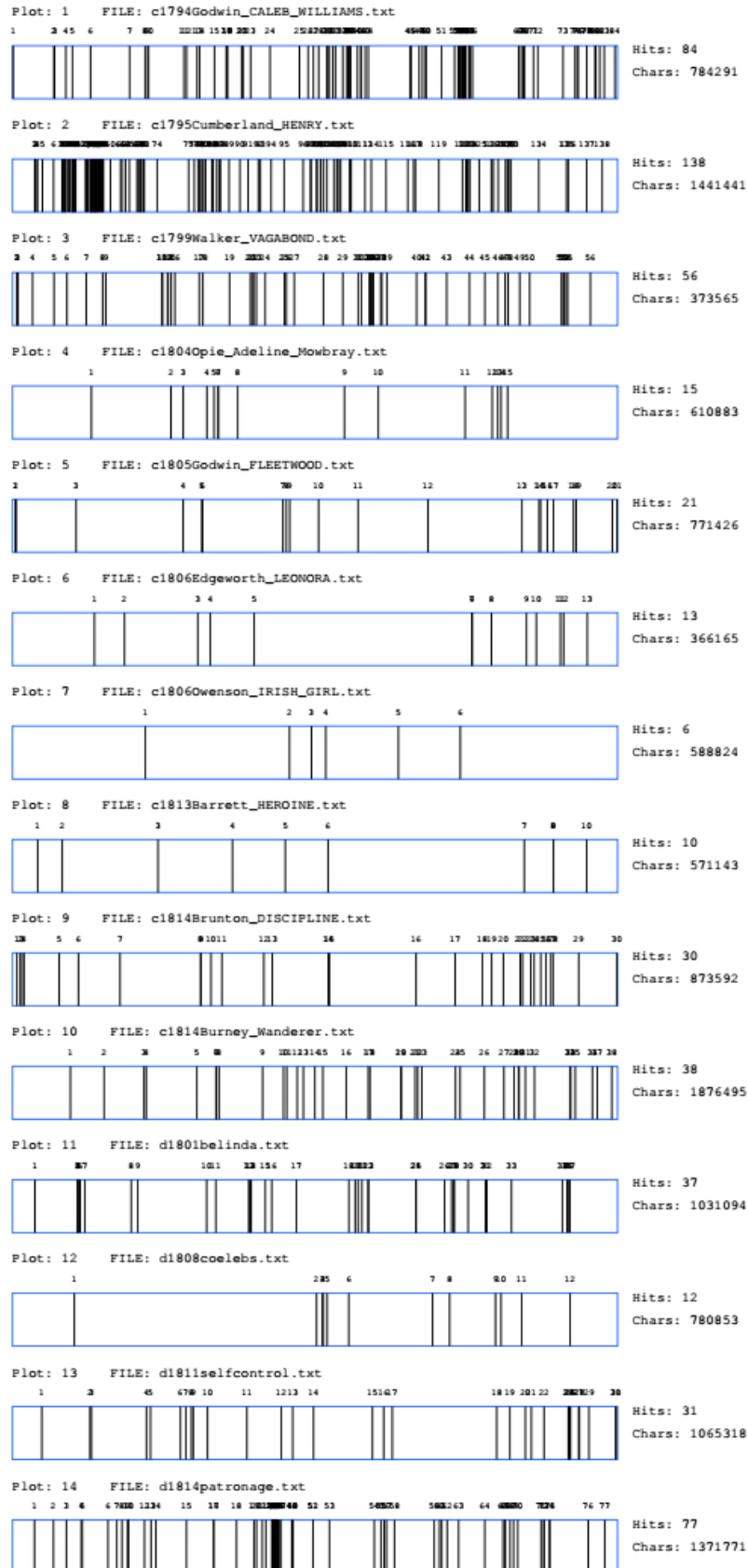
Appendix Chap. 5.17.6. Concordance Plot for "Character" in the Intent15 Corpus



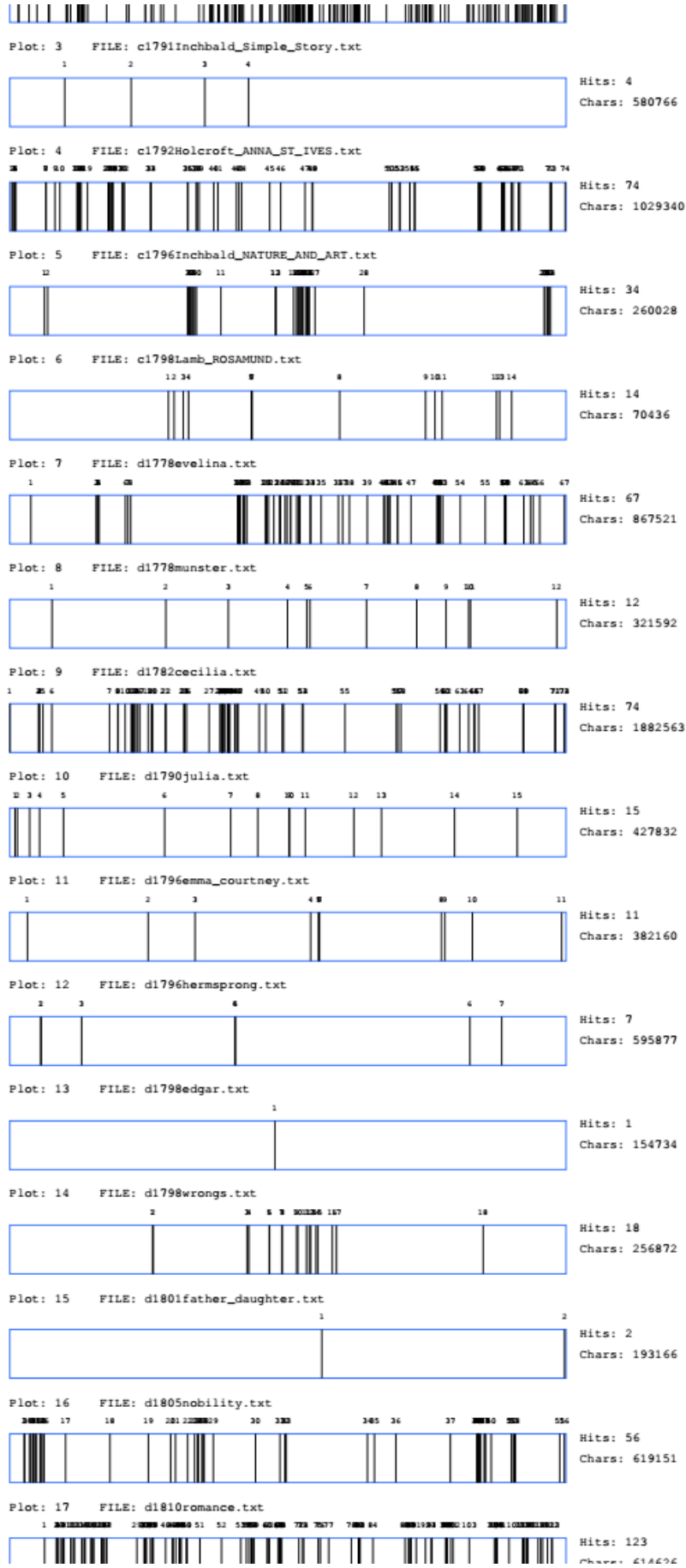
Appendix Chap. 5.17.8. Concordance Plot for "Habit" in the Intent15 Corpus



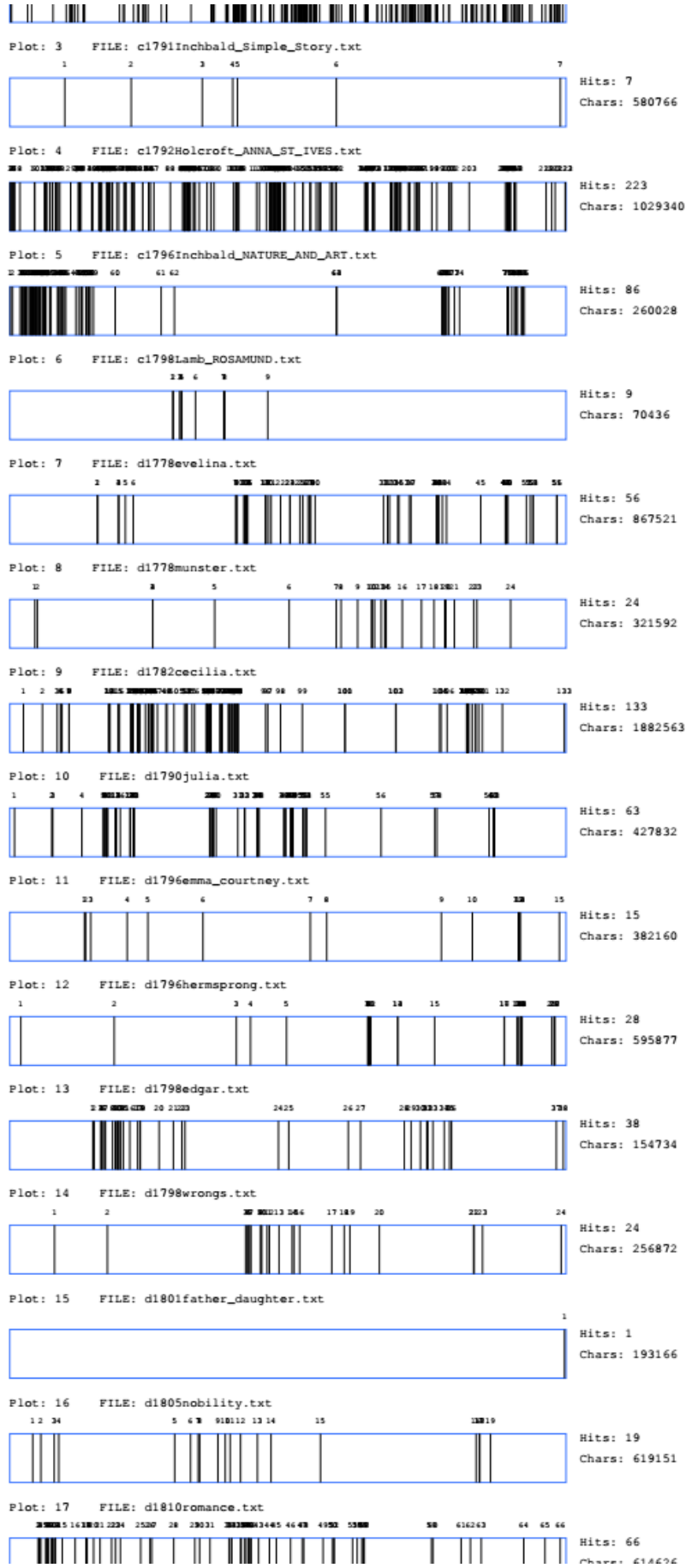
Appendix Chap. 5.17.9. Concordance Plot for "Justice" in the Intent15 Corpus



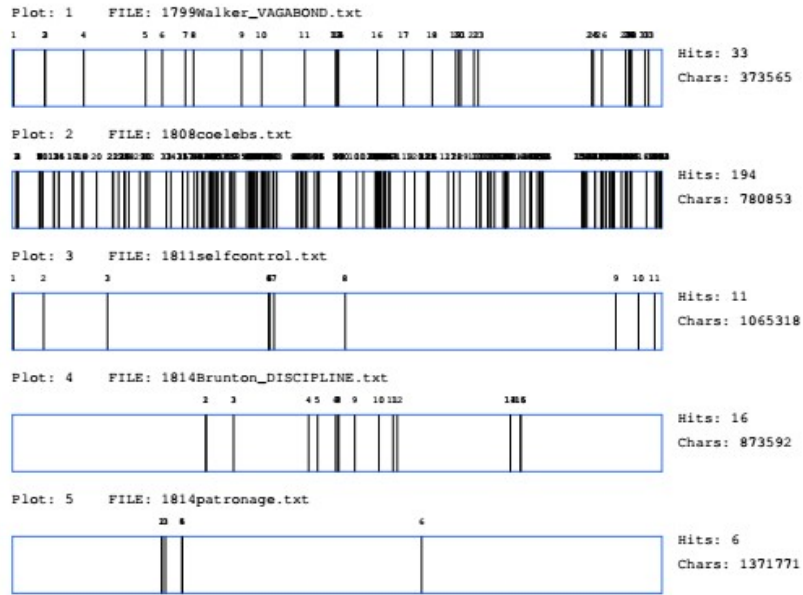
Appendix Chap. 5.18.1. Concordance Plot for "Sister" in the Effect9 Corpus



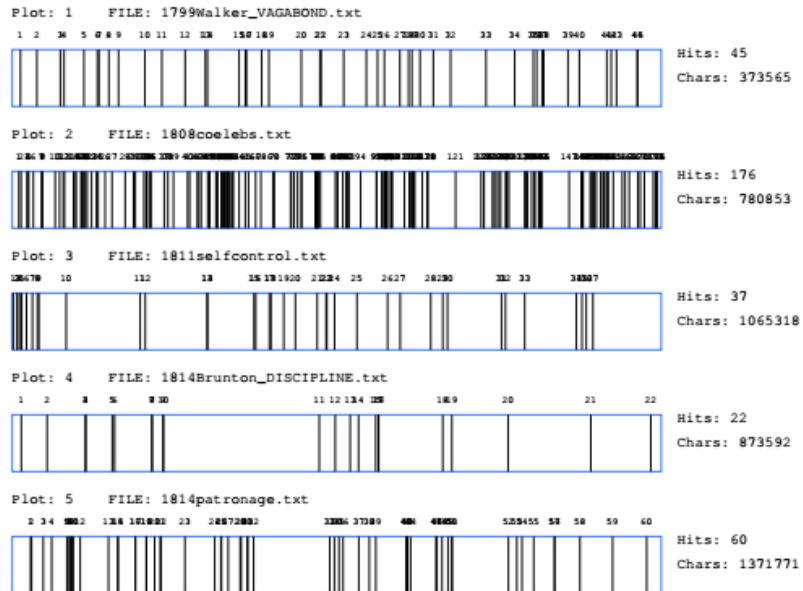
Appendix Chap. 5.18.2. Concordance Plot for "Brother" in the Effect9 Corpus



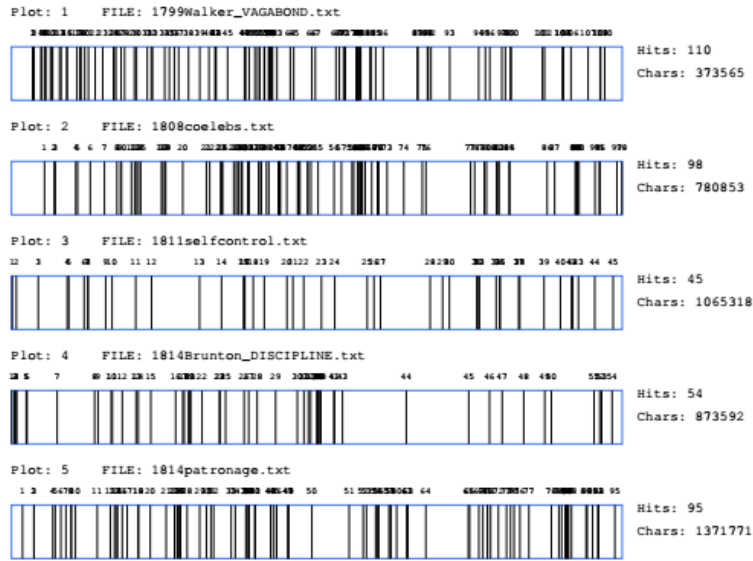
Appendix Chap. 5.19. Concordance Plot for "Religion" in the Overt5 Corpus



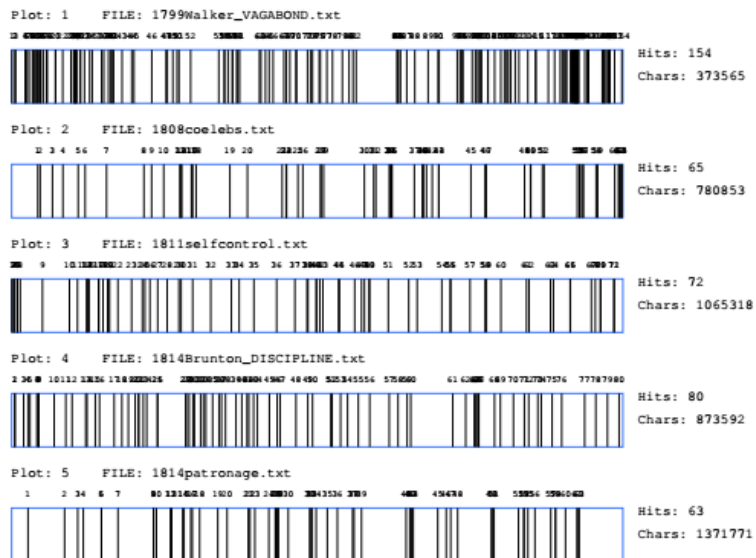
Appendix Chap. 5.20.1. Concordance Plots for "Principle" in the Overt5 Corpus.



Appendix Chap. 5.20.2. Concordance Plots for "Truth" in the Overt5 Corpus.

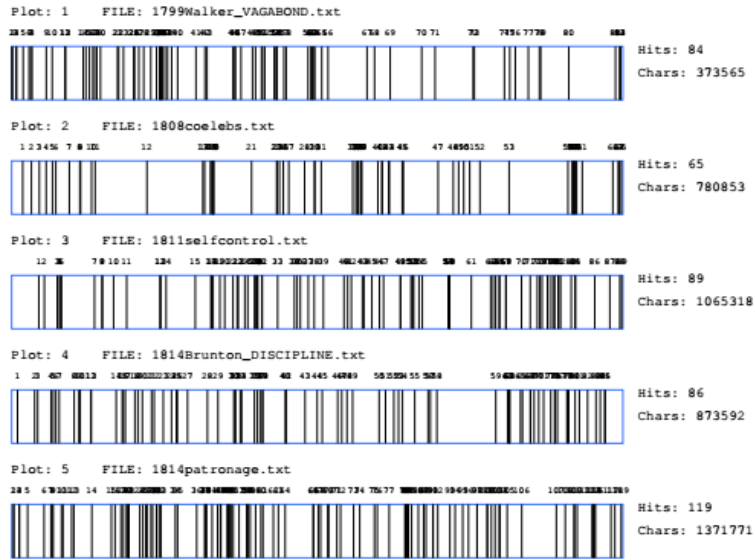


Appendix Chap. 5.20.3. Concordance Plots for "Nature" in the Overt5 Corpus.

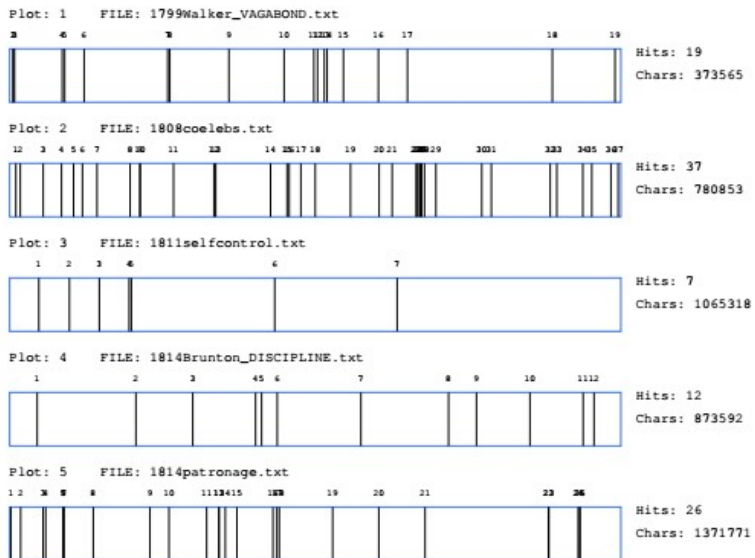




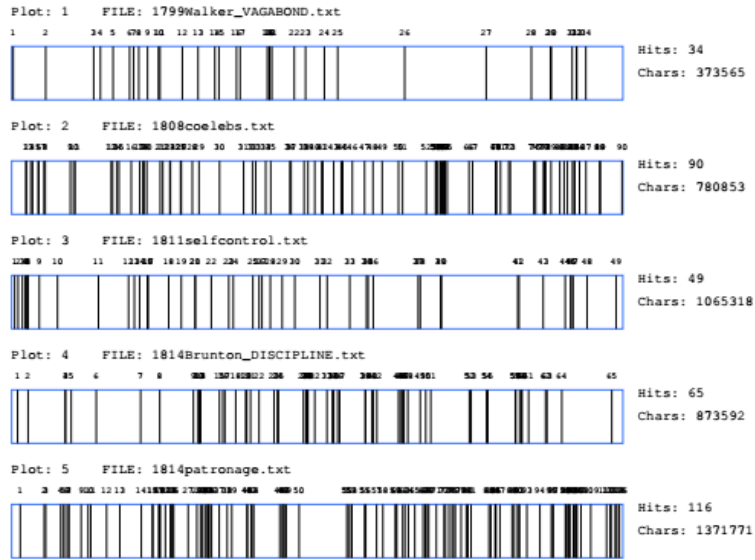
Appendix Chap. 5.20.4. Concordance Plots for "Right" in the Overt5 Corpus.



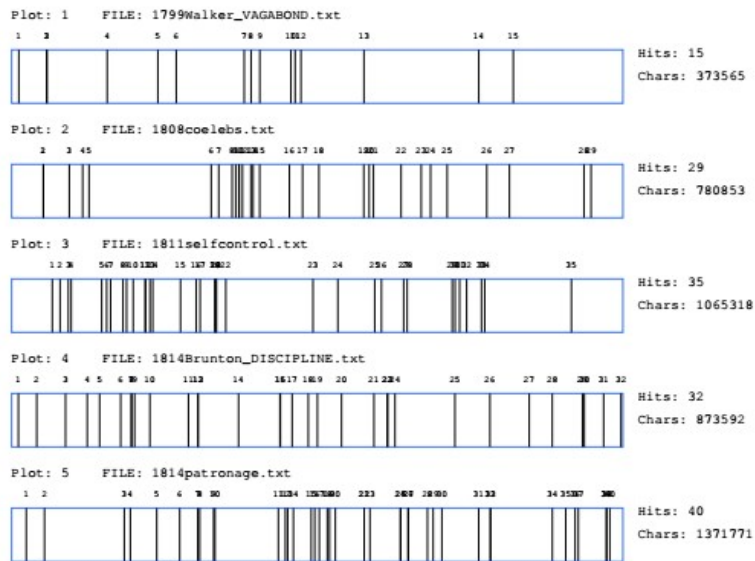
Appendix Chap. 5.20.5. Concordance Plots for "Moral" in the Overt5 Corpus.



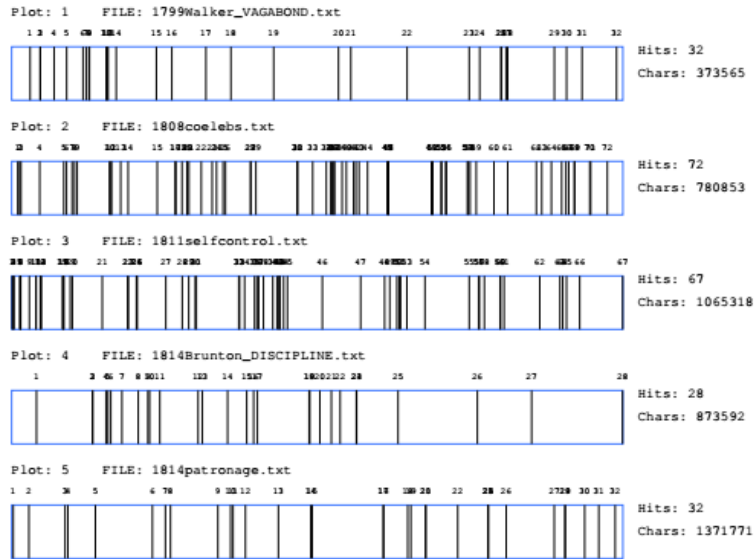
Appendix Chap. 5.20.6. Concordance Plots for "Sense" in the Overt5 Corpus.



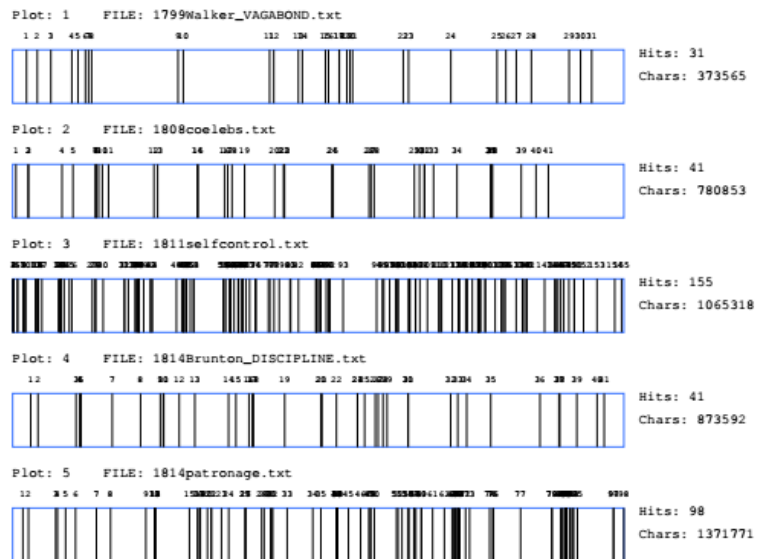
Appendix Chap. 5.20.7. Concordance Plots for "Value" in the Overt5 Corpus.



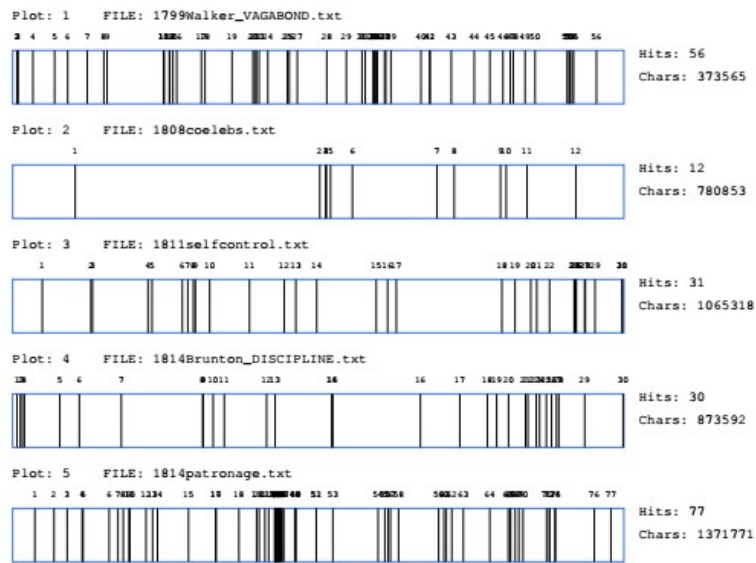
Appendix Chap. 5.20.8. Concordance Plots for "Virtue" in the Overt5 Corpus.



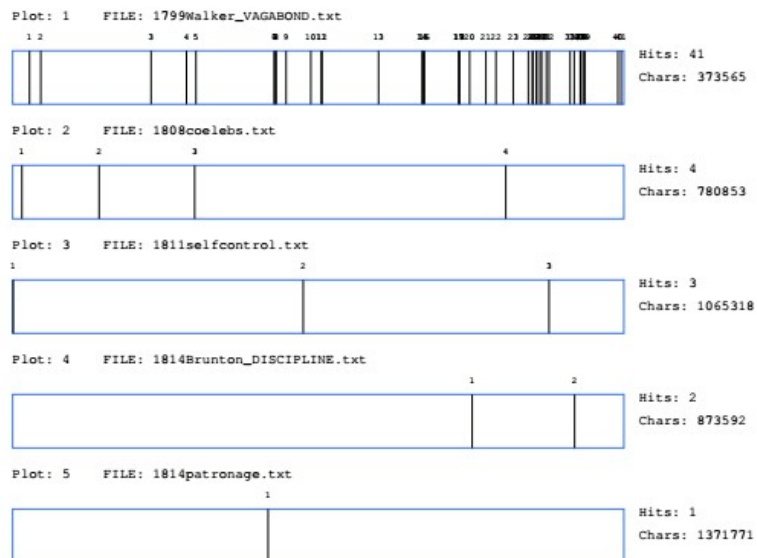
Appendix Chap. 5.20.9. Concordance Plots for "Passion" in the Overt5 Corpus.



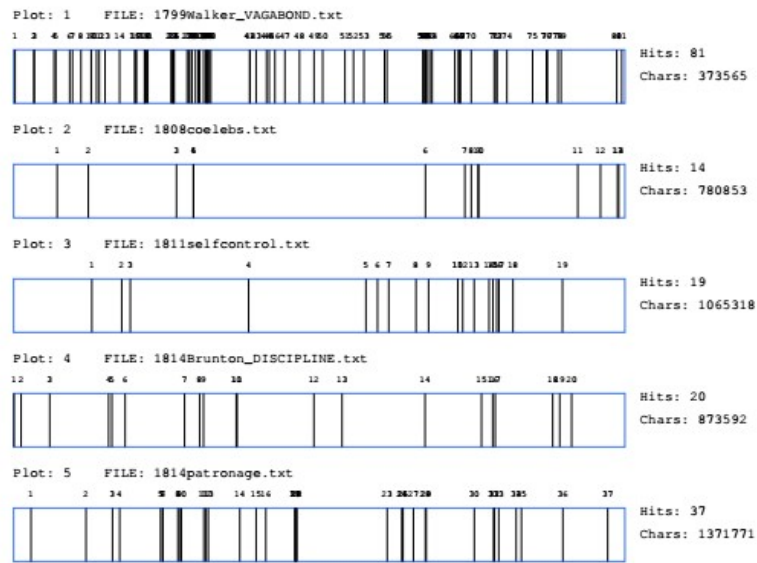
Appendix Chap. 5.20.10. Concordance Plots for "Justice" in the Overt5 Corpus.



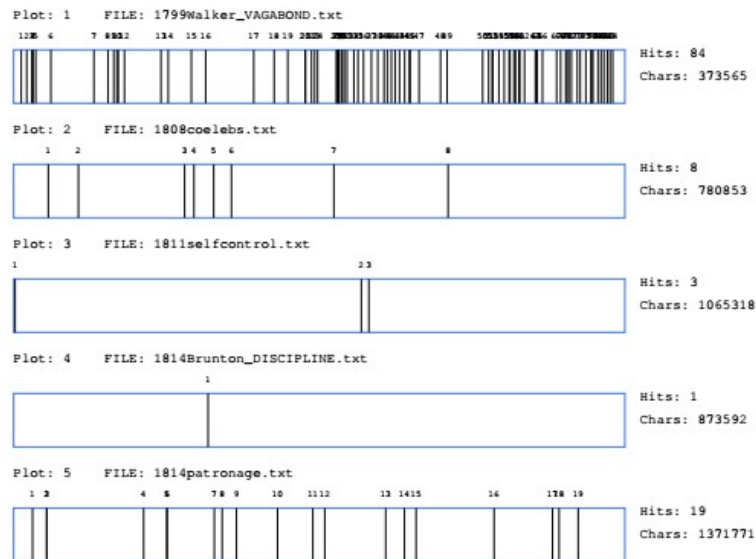
Appendix Chap. 5.21.1. Concordance Plot for "Equality" in the Overt5 Corpus.



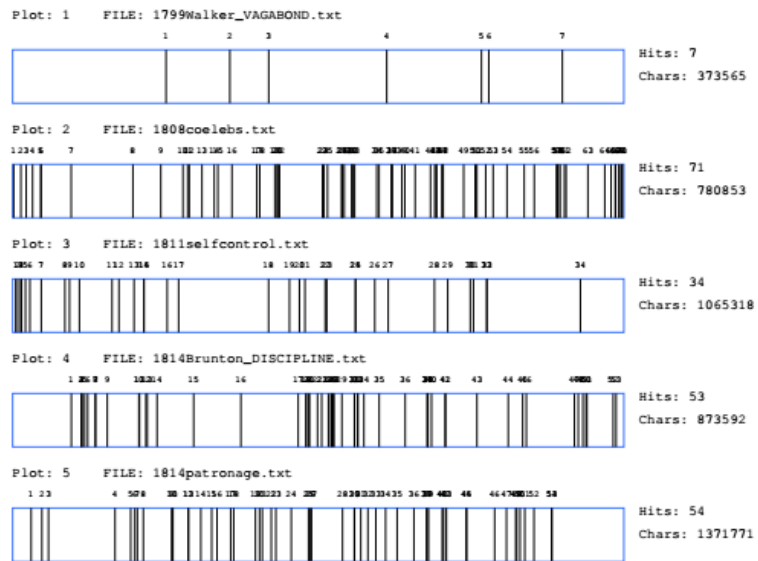
Appendix Chap. 5.21.2. Concordance Plot for "Liberty" in the Overt5 Corpus.



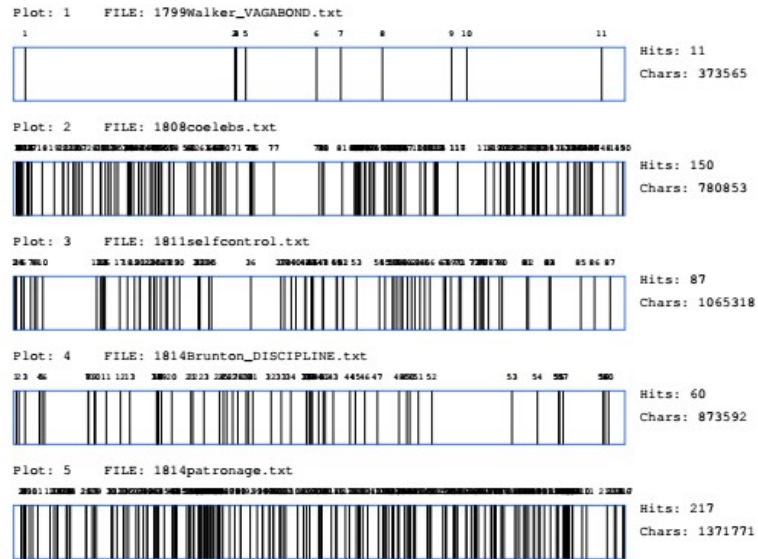
Appendix Chap. 5.21.3. Concordance Plot for "Philosopher" in the Overt5 Corpus.



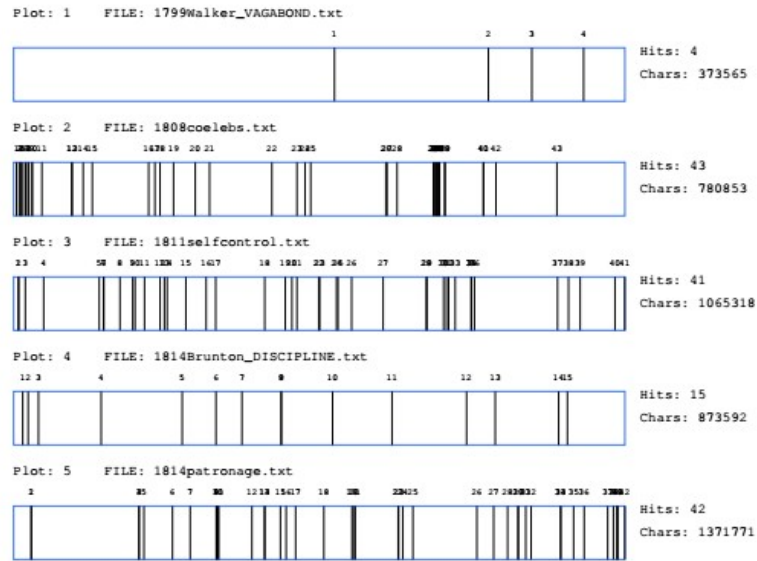
Appendix Chap. 5.22.1. Concordance Plot for "Habit" in the Overt5 Corpus.



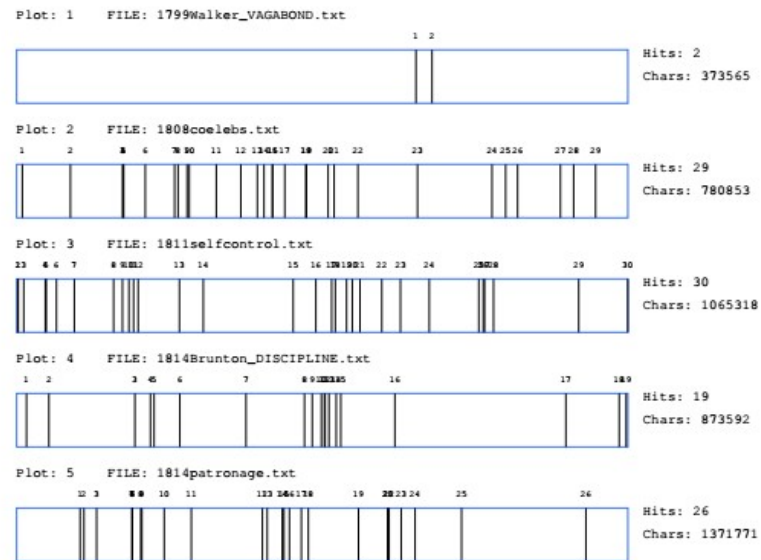
Appendix Chap. 5.22.2. Concordance Plot for "Character" in the Overt5 Corpus.



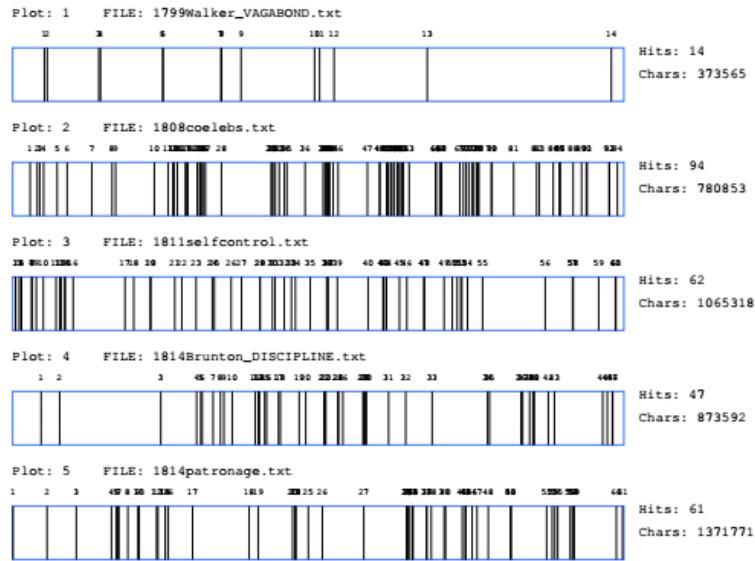
Appendix Chap. 5.22.3. Concordance Plot for "Domestic" in the Overt5 Corpus.



Appendix Chap. 5.22.4. Concordance Plot for "Useful" in the Overt5 Corpus.



Appendix Chap. 5.22.5. Concordance Plot for "Duty" in the Overt5 Corpus.





Appendix Chap 9.1. Consent Form

Formulaire de Consentement

Nom de famille :.....

Prénom :.....

Genre : masculin / féminin / autre

Il m'a été proposé de participer à une étude sur les réactions de lecture.

L'investigatrice Juliette MISSET m'a précisé que je suis libre d'accepter ou de refuser.

Afin d'éclairer ma décision, j'ai reçu et compris les informations suivantes :

- 1) Je pourrai à tout moment interrompre ma participation si je le désire, sans avoir à me justifier.
- 2) Je pourrai prendre connaissance des résultats de l'étude dans sa globalité lorsqu'elle sera achevée.
- 3) Les données recueillies demeureront strictement confidentielles.

Compte-tenu des informations qui m'ont été transmises :

J'accepte librement et volontairement de participer à la recherche "Students' Reader

Responses to

British Texts, 1778-1829"<sup>1</sup>

cocher les cases appropriées en fonction de votre volonté :

Oui

Non

Date :

Signature du participant :

Date :

Signature de l'investigatrice:

---

<sup>1</sup> The original time frame for my dissertation was 1778-1829. It was reduced to 1778-1814 for reasons which I explain in the General Introduction.

Notice d'information

Strasbourg, le 13/09/2018.

Cher étudiant, chère étudiante,

Vous êtes sollicité-e dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche doctorale soutenu par l'Université de Strasbourg. Il s'agit d'une étude en didactique et littérature sur les expériences de lecture face à des textes littéraires britanniques du tournant du XIXe siècle. La responsable scientifique est Juliette Misset, doctorante sous la direction d'Anne Bandry-Scubbi (professeur d'université à l'Université de Strasbourg).

Cette étude aura lieu au sein du cours LV90AM3A, à partir de travaux réalisés pendant le semestre. Ces travaux sont obligatoires dans le cadre du cours, indépendamment de votre participation à l'étude. Si vous acceptez de participer, vos travaux écrits sur les textes du tournant du XIXe siècle travaillés en cours serviront à mieux cerner la façon dont peuvent être reçus ces textes d'une période relativement ancienne pour le lectorat de nos jours.

Votre participation à ce programme sera anonyme et les informations recueillies confidentielles et utilisées dans le cadre strict de cette étude. Seule la chargée du cours LV90AM3A qui mène la recherche accédera aux informations concernant les participants. Les résultats globaux pourront vous être communiqués sur simple demande à l'adresse suivante :

[jmisset@unistra.fr](mailto:jmisset@unistra.fr)

Ce projet a été soumis à la déléguée à la protection des données de l'Université de Strasbourg et conformément à la réglementation il est inscrit au registre des traitements de l'université. Si vous souhaitez de plus amples renseignements sur cet aspect vous pouvez contacter la déléguée à la protection des données de l'université à l'adresse suivante :

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Si vous êtes d'accord pour participer à cette recherche, merci de remplir le document « formulaire de consentement ». Vous avez la possibilité de retirer votre consentement à tout moment sans avoir à donner de justification.

En espérant une réponse positive de votre part, je vous remercie de l'attention que vous porterez à ma demande.

Pour toutes informations relatives à ce programme, vous pouvez me contacter à l'adresse suivante : [jmisset@unistra.fr](mailto:jmisset@unistra.fr)

Juliette Misset



**Mme Juliette MISSET,**  
Doctorante  
EA 2325 - Savoirs dans l'espace anglophone :  
représentations, culture, histoire (SEARCH)

**Céline CLEMENT**  
Présidente du comité d'éthique  
pour la recherche

Strasbourg, le 10 octobre 2018  
Objet : Décision du comité d'éthique pour la recherche (CER)  
Référence dossier : 201802

Mme MISSET, Chère Collègue,

Affaire suivie par :  
**Florian FRITSCH**  
Responsable du département  
Administration de la recherche  
Direction de la recherche et de la  
valorisation  
[florian.fritsch@unistra.fr](mailto:florian.fritsch@unistra.fr)  
+33 (0)3 68 85 15 19

Vous avez déposé le projet intitulé « *Reading the Didactic Mode: Exploring First-Year University Students' Reader Responses to British Texts, 1778-1829* » pour évaluation par le comité d'éthique pour la recherche de l'Université de Strasbourg.

Le Comité d'éthique pour la recherche Unistra déclare par la présente :

**que le résultat de l'examen éthique de ce projet de recherche est POSITIF.**

Votre projet est désormais enregistré par le comité d'éthique pour la recherche sous un numéro d'accréditation unique que vous pourrez communiquer à toute entité vous le demandant :

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Les membres du comité d'éthique pour la recherche de l'Université de Strasbourg vous souhaitent un travail de recherche fructueux.

**Université de Strasbourg**  
4 rue Blaise Pascal  
CS 90032  
F-67081 STRASBOURG cedex  
Tél. : +33 (0)3 68 85 00 00  
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La présidente du comité d'éthique pour la recherche,

Céline CLEMENT



## Appendix Chap. 9.4. Student Responses to the Passages from *Cælebs* and *Wrongs of Woman*

### MW<sub>1</sub> – More and Wollstonecraft

Both texts speak about the family of the narrator. In the first text the narrator is a woman and in the second text the narrator is a man. We can see the relation between the narrator and his parent. In the text of Mary Wollstonecraft we can see the narrator isn't happy in her family. She doesn't like her brother because he is loved by both of her parents, so he became arrogant "he became the despot of his brothers, and still more of his sisters". With this sentence, we can see the domination of the brother on the other brothers and sisters. It shows the place of the woman in this family, who is inferior to the man. The mother is inferior to the father, and the sisters are inferior to the brother.

In the text of Hannah More, the narrator doesn't have a brother or sisters. His father is dead and he has a mother who speaks with him about his future marriage. He speaks about what the woman must look like, what she has to be. What strikes me the most in both texts is the theme of the family and the woman.

### MW<sub>2</sub> - More

I'd say that the text of Hannah More is about what is morality. Firstly, the character of the father is said to be a great and honorable man, which is why his son during the whole way through his illness, because he deserved it by being "the most affectionate father, the most enlightened companion and the most Christian friend". Then the son gives a good picture of what a person whose actions are dictated by its moral should do. After his father's death, his mother is all alone and sad, which is why he chooses to give up on the joys that life can bring him, to be with her and take good care of her. That is an attitude of self-devotion and thankfulness, which are virtues that this character might represent through this text. And after him, the mother whose priority is to see her son happy and enjoying himself in a healthy and fruitful marriage. This is where arrives the description of the ideal bride, someone not perfect but with consistency. This whole text is to me basically about what is "good". What moral, consciousness and virtue a person should have. These requirements might still fit to our actual society since they are pretty universal (kindness and devotion) except maybe religion which is present in the text but not that important in the 21st century.

### MW<sub>3</sub> - More

I'm going to focus on an excerpt of the Hannah's More book entitled *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*. My first point of view of this text is quite positive because of the wealth of the text, the vocabulary but also the rhythm. I want to notice how the narrator's feelings are transliterated. Indeed, even if it doesn't relate to our century, we can understand what he's speaking about. This text links many aspects of life: death, parental relation and love of body and mind.

In a first part the narrator explains the death of his father who was an inspiration model for him "I lost him, and in him the most affectionate father, the most enlightened companion, and the most Christian friend." 1.5-6. This loss makes him realize how our loved ones are important "we can never have but one mother, and postponed from time to time the moment of leaving home." 1.10-11. Those two feelings reported on the first two sections are so touchy for me because it's not an unknown sentiment. The second part is harder for us to keep because in our society it isn't required to be married but however the narrator makes us aware of the situation. It seems a bit controversial for him to marry because of his love for books, literature, knowledge: "I was desirous of first putting myself in a situation which might afford me a more extensive field of inquiry before I ventured to take so irretrievable a step" 1.12-14. Nevertheless, his mother looks quite listening with him which caught me for the period: "Do not indulge romantic ideas, of super-human excellence. Remember that the fairest creature is a fallen creature. Yet let not your standard be low." 1.27-29.

#### MW4 - More and Wollstonecraft

These two texts talk about the women condition at the end of the XIX century (1798 and 1809).

The first (1798) is written by a woman so this is her point of view. She tells a story and in this one we can see that women are at the service of the men of the house. In fact the mother and the girl owed unconditional submission to orders from the father and his son. This text criticizes a little bit the place of women in society but this is maybe because the author herself is a woman so maybe can't she has the same impact on the public. Maybe she won't be taken seriously as she is a woman.

The second (1809) is also written by a woman so thanks this text we can have the point of view than the first. In this text Coelebs the narrator, talk us about his future wife and his criteria about she. He doesn't want to have a woman with a rigid education but he wanted to have a woman who can think and discuss with him. I think that Hannah More's book is a revelation about changes in attitude. As well the narrator is a man and he wanted a woman who can think by herself so it reveals that women can start to write freely.

The fact that Hannah More can talk about the women condition freely as Maria Wollstonecraft is a proof that between 1798 and 1809 there is an evolution.

#### MW5 - More and Wollstonecraft

The extracte from the chapter seven of the book from Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, published in 1798, is speaking about a woman who's addressing herself to her daughter. The mother wants her daughter to be free and to be strong enough to brave the

society where girls/women don't have this freedom (l. 5-7, l. 13). The mother expresses her regrets about her life and her difficult childhood with her father who was way too authoritarian (l. 25-27). Through these words, she is trying to give her daughter what she never had : have the pleasure to do what she really wants. In the 18th century, women only had a role as wife, mother and "housekeeper" and this text shows how they wanted more (which is totally understandable), how they felt oppressed about these life-conditions... women weren't free to decide what they'll do with their lives and it was "normal" for everyone, that one half of the human beings had to listen to the other half... except for women as this mother, who had the strength to combate the sexism of the society. Other women, to the opposite, thought that a woman or the "race of females" ( *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, chapter 2, l. 32) had to fulfil their role of mother, wife, cooker, etc...

Charles' mother , in the extracte from the chapter 2 of *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809), written by Hanna More, thought like this. Her son, Charles, describes how she often said to him that a woman had especially to be "a friend, a companion, and a wife" for her husband (l. 38) and that she prefers the kind of education "which tends to consolidate a firm and regular system of character" and not the one "which smothers a woman with accomplishments" (l. 36-37). Those words are showing that some women at this time thought, that their only role in life was to take care of their husbands and children.

So these two texts show how there were different types of people who had totally different thoughts about the purpose and accomplishment of a life. It also shows that the fight for women-rights wasn't supported by all the women.

#### MW6 - More and Wollstonecraft

I understand that both are centred on the theme of the family. The first text is more focalised on the father and the second is more focalised on the mother. For me, the first is sadder because the narrator talks about the death of his father and he seems very affected by this moment of his life. In the first text, the death of the father seems a trigger for the character and his mother because the mother and the narrator are not the same philosophy of life. I have the impression the narrator wants to concentrate his life on the studies and the knowledge with the books of his father and the mother wants that he concentrates on the marriage and his future wife who must be chosen with many criteria. In the second text, it is the advice and the story of the mother that seems put forward. The mother wants to explain to his daughter how she has to live his life. I have the impression the mother wants to create a better life for her daughter because her life to her had been not attractive and completed. For me, the first text uses more the feels because we can read the sadness of the death and we can understand the narrator is sad in his life. I understand the impression of the narrator not to be understood and not heard by her mother. The second text is more complicated, and I have no sense for me because I ask why the mother had not given her the advice before dying rather than writing her. And the second text is very negative on the role of the father while for me both parents are equals in the education of the child.

## MW7 - More and Wollstonecraft

In both texts, there is parents that gives advices to their childrens through an argumentation. For the first text, this is a letter in the form of memors, and in the second one this is a dialogue. As a first step, we can understand that the links between the mother (who is the speaker) and her daughter in *The Wrongs of Woman* seems to be good "my dearest daughter" as the relationship of the son and his father in *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*. In *Wrongs of Womens* the mother gives to her daughter her conception of motherhood, maybe based on the experience she had as a child that wasn't love as much as her brother. She explains having a sad childhood and gives advices to her daughter explaining her mistakes and her values, and her way to understand existance through experiences. In the second text, it is also a way of giving advices but the goal is not the same. The mother seems to warn his son about the women he may choose to spend the rest of his life with. What strikes me the most is how the titles of the books the extracts were excepts from can be understand in a way just by the reading of theses lines. In *Wrongs of Womens*, there is an explanation of a bad motherhood, and the bad women's conditions espacially for wifes "but took care to remind her of the obligation, when she dared, in the slightest instance, to question his absolute authority.". And the second extract "*Coelebs in search of a wife*" deals with how to choose a good wife.

## MW8 - More and Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798)

Mary Wollstonecraft has got two daughters (Fanny and Mary). *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* has been published by her husband: William Godwin (posthumously).

Maria tells her daughter (maybe Fanny), through this extract, how to be happy and to distance herself from men even if she's a wife. Mary often mentions feelings, in the first and second paragraphs for example: "misery", "anxiety", and "sorrow".

We also understand why Mary such words uses: her childhood (last paragraph) has irritated her and she doesn't agree with the way that her mother and her sisters have been treated = she is an advocate of women's rights.

What was the impact of women during the Enlightenment? How did they fought to be heard?

## Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809)

Hannah More was a moralist and she often dealt with religious subjects. *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* is an English Novel. I think that "Coeleb" is an ancient English word, as I didn't find it.

The author makes a comparison with the "gay and busy world" and the "country" (3. paragraph). She also compares "architecture" with "character" (4. paragraph).

She wants an educated wife for her son and a woman who believes in God, religion.

I don't understand the link between the mother's grief after her husband's death and her wish for her son's wife... Maybe because Charles (her son) has been nice with her after his



father's death, she thanks God for having given her a son with morality = she wants the best for him.

→ the two texts, the authors (female) want women to be educated and to take part in the all day life. It is a real revolution for this era.

I also think about Emily Davison who was a suffragette and fought for votes of women in the United Kingdom in the last century.

#### MW9 - More and Wollstonecraft

These two texts are presenting some similarities, that's why it's interesting to compare them. The first one was written in 1798 by Mary Wollstonecraft, a British writer and philosopher. It's an extract from her book Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman. The second one is extracted from the novel Coelebs in search of a wife, written by Hannah More and published in 1809.

In the first text, the narrator is a woman called Maria. She is telling her own story, addressing to her daughter. She wants to explain her how complex life can be, and the way she grew up in an unbalanced and poor family. The other text is narrated by a young man, who also describes his life, the good and respectable education he receives and the relation with his parents. Maria had a brother, who was the family's "deputy tyrant", and parents who didn't care about her. On the other side, Coelebs is a single child, loved and respected by his father and mother.

Maria speaks directly to her daughter, while in Hannah More's text, we are reading advices from a mother to her son, through his storytelling. Seeing how the two mothers are both looking for the well-being of their child, in two different ways of course, pleased me and I think it's the biggest common characteristic of the extracts.

#### MW10 - More and Wollstonecraft

Both extracts have been written by a woman, showing the increasing presence of their voices in society thanks to literature. Inherited from the Enlightenment time period and its literary salons, often organized by women as Ms de Scudéry?

Both texts made me feel very uncomfortable. Speaking ones seem inconsistent, as if they were at the verge of disappearing (which is actually the case), and the words we read seem to be the last echoes of an already dead voice. Wollstonecraft's : delicate situation, we can feel the urgency to write down all her advices before she dies. The character herself seems naturally full of anxiety "had I not wasted years in deliberating". More's: dead father- mother seems to lose her minds " when she was in tolerable spirits". both families are broken, dislocated. Could we here see the influence of a changing and anguishing society, shaken by the industrial revolution and debates questioning God's existence and the Church's role?

The two mothers speaking throughout the texts warn their children against the opposite sex. According to the first text, men represent a huge barrier, because they are used to follow their father's example, which is often the tyrant one. They submit women to their "unreasonable, inconsistent and contradictory" will, In the 2nd one, women are shown as possibly bad spouses, and though a source of misfortune, as they can trap young men thanks

to their charms and after reveal themselves as "greatly deficient either in sense or conduct". It's easy to understand that the children to whom those words are addressed will suffer their parents' absence, as they embody a crucial guide to succeed in life.

At the beginning I would have said that Wollstonecraft's text was way more interesting, as I found very original to read such advices given during the 19th century. The protagonist appears as a modern woman, strong enough to face her society and to detach from the patriarchal society she has been submitted to. She reminded me of Hester Prynne in the *Scarlet Letter*.

But, as I entirely read the second text, I finally found it very interesting too. Indeed, it's the first time I think about what a young man could feel or which problems he could face in such a situation. Being free thanks to making good choices is a matter for both sexes. What his mother told about "devilish" women trapping you thanks to wedding made me think of Bertha and Edward's marriage in *Jane Eyre*.

#### MW11 - Wollstonecraft

The mother is writing to attest of anecdotic memories from her existence. Those memories are dedicated to her daughter, and they form lessons for the child to take into account while she will have to educate herself alone, without the love and security of a mother, or a father, as her mother may be about to pass away. The mother submits these « memoirs » to the eyes and consciousness of her daughter. The aim of this process is to sensitise the young girl to the world, to prevent her from unwanted experiences or disappointments. The first paragraph provides a glimpse of the background and contextual setting of the story the mother is about to tell. She describes a disenchanting world while hoping for the best life for her daughter. She gives her advices related to her own experiences and tries to sum up, as if she was in a rush, the wisdom she passes on to her. The narrator seems to be an advocate for girls oppressed by a patriarchal society, as she explains that she had to endure man's authority and roughness since a young age.

#### MW12 - Wollstonecraft

What really struck me was how unapologetic Mary Wollstone's text was. Her vision of womanhood is really political but also very poetic, and even more so that it was addressed to her daughter. When, lines 4 to 6, she writes that "*The tenderness of a father who knew the world, might be great; but could it equal that of a mother—of a mother, labouring under a portion of the misery, which the constitution of society seems to have entailed on all her kind ?*", she strongly denounces how poorly women were considered in society. The verb "*entailed*" is essential here, emphasizing the fact that women were considered the weaker sex against their will.

Her description of her brother is also quite sarcastic: "*The representative of my father, a being privileged by nature—a boy*" (line 31-32). When I said I found her very political, I was especially referring to the last two lines of the excerpt, when she writes, line 44-45 "*I will not entice you to stray with me into the verdant meadow, to search for the flowers that youthful hopes scatter in every path; though, as I write, I almost scent the fresh green of spring—of that spring which never returns!*" . I found this very

powerful, how she senses and encourages the changes to come for women, saying how lonely, hard and dangerous the battle is going to be and how brave they will have to act. Also very strong is the nature here being used as a symbol of revolution, announcing the future changes and strife in the recognition of women in and by society. This text made me think of Olympe de Gouges' Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Femal Citizen, written not too long before Wollstonecraft's Wrongs of Woman, in 1791. I also think we can relate this text to contemporary issues, since women are still fighting for their rights today, and, knowing this, how it echoes Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's We Should All Be Feminist, in which the author denounces the same lack of rights and acknowledgement women are still suffering from today.

#### MW13 - More and Wollstonecraft

As I read both texts, I've been strike by the contrast between them. Indeed, in Hannah More's novel, the protagonist seems to be a member of the gentry. He received a good education in the University of Edinburgh and lived into a wealthy family. His parents were thoughtful and treated him with a lot of attention. Also, he was apparently an only child that's why we can suppose he was considered as his family prized possession. Whereas, the second text from Mary Wollstonecraft's book is a letter of an "old" woman addressed to her children where she is relating her tough youth among her family. As she was living in poverty with a despotic father, who was a former "man of war" she grew up without any sign of affection. Indeed she is comparing herself as a soldier of her father's army. Next, she is explaining that there was a hierarchy among the different members of her family and that she wasn't the one who received love and acts of kindness.

When it comes to compare those texts, I have empathy for the woman because of her miserable condition. She seems to be weary and bleak. She reminds me of a typical tragedy character who is waiting for its gruesome fate. While the young man is expressing his sadness in a totally different way. As he lost his beloved parents very recently, he is showing his gratitude to them

#### MW14 - More and Wollstonecraft

The first text is about a mother Maria who writes to her child about life experience. She describes her childhood to her daughter, and gives advice to her : be yourself and don't lead your though in your doubt. The second extract is about also a boy who lost his father. He lives with her mother. She wants him to get married and she gives her an advice about that : don't choose a girl only for her beauty, but a girl with respect, and education which means "cultivates reason", " direct feelings", "habituate to reflexion" (line 27) The common point with this two text is : two mother give advice to them child and they are in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the second text, we clearly see : the mother wants to have a girl with mind and not only beauty which means in this century : it was oft to married a woman only for her beauty, women doesn't have a lot rights and they can't contest the authority of her husband. The author shows us this mother like a strong women with faith. For this period, it's very progressive.

## MW15 - Wollstonecraft

Maria Wollstonecraft in the 7th chapter of *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* gives her point of view about the role of the woman in her society by recalling her history. Those words are addressing to her daughter. I think that this point is quite interesting because there is a pedagogic side. Also, I think that thanks to that fact, she can be more honest and express her real feelings about it, without the fear of being judged by anyone.

With explaining her observations she wants her daughter to realize that women are important, that the society doesn't recognize the value of the woman, that she can change it. So even if she has a really pejorative vision that we can see with the words 'unenjoyed' 'unimproved' 'irresolution' of the place of the woman in the society she thinks that she can be saved by thinking, acting independently and by ignoring the censure. So in the text we can see a contrast between pejorative words and positive words like 'happiness' 'enjoying'. And there are more positive than negative, so it confirms the fact that she believes in a world where women are not just some 'charwoman'.

The more explicit example that Maria has, to explain to her daughter that women should not be submissive anymore is her parents. Her father was a marine captain, he married and kept absolute authority in his home. Her wife loved the eldest more than the other children. The fact that she gives an example of her family shows that she has a different way to think even if she was educated in a patriarchal way.

This text reminds me the novel 'Eveline' by James Joyce. Eveline, the principal character is trying to escape her traditions and the patriarchal society of Ireland. Frank, her boyfriend wants to save her but she is not able to leave, James Joyce denounces this kind of alienation of Irish people.

## MW16 - Wollstonecraft

Thanks to this letter, we can have a reflection about what it means "education"

This letter appears as a necessity to the mother, it's like a duty that she takes. She needs to deliver principles of life, that's why it makes this letter powerful.

As we can see from chapter 7, the mother compares herself, and her condition, her story and she wants absolutely leads her daughter in a right and good path.

Firstly, we have an imperative form through the text: "Gain experience-ah! Gain it"

But also, phrase form like a proverb

"(...)Always appear what you are, and you will not pass through existence without enjoying its genuine blessings, love and respect."

The author wishes a better life for her child,

unfortunately during our reading we noticed that there are a lot of regrets in the letter: "Had I not wasted years in deliberating after I ceased to doubt, how I ought to have acted", "afford me more pleasure to revive the fading remembrance of newborn delight"

Moreover, there is pain concealed behind her writing, and we can learn how her female condition was...

Nevertheless, we can observe that this letter is full of hope, full of energy, a mother that she takes care of the education of her child, she has a strong volunteer to change things ..!

I will add something else, all along the text there is constantly an opposition between the dark and obscure side (which is the pain, suffering) and the light, the positive vision and new horizon transmit by the author to her daughter. For example, at the end of the text she said "I almost scent the fresh green of spring—of that spring which never returns!"

MW17m - Wollstonecraft

I chose the text of Mary Wollstonecraft. A mother address this text to her daughter. Firstly she speaks as a lovely mother « my dearest daughter, only such a mother, who will dare to break through all restraint to provide for your happiness » l. 5-6.

But I think that the relationship between the mother and her daughter is stronger and more complicated than a homely mother daughter relationship : as a matter of fact, she speaks as a best friend (« From my narrative, my dear girl, you may gather the instruction, the counsel, which is meant rather to exercise than influence your mind » l. 8 = she gives advices). The mother gives advices due to a personal experience of women in the British conservative society. In fact the power of introspection of the mother is strong (she understands that the patriarchal role of his father and later of his brother had a negative influence in a personal development : « He was to be instantaneously obeyed » l. 29).

I personally like this text : I am a boy, but I think that a mother can be also a best friend, who can « exercise your mind » with advices, in a relationship of trust without concessions.

MW18m - More and Wollstonecraft

This text is about a young man that think about his parents. As he is a single-child, his parents have a more important influence on him (he don't have siblings that can leave him a mark on). He is from a wealthy family, he had a good education.

He still live in his childhood house, because when his dad died, his mother was so desperate that he didn't want her to be alone. This man seems to be a very good person, we can say that by the way of how he loves his family and how he treats them.

This text is similar to the other text that we have to read, Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman, in the fact that there is the figure of a mother that is telling her child how to act, how to do, that gives him advice, suggest him how to deal with Life.

The structure is different because the Hannah More's text, there is the child that talks about the advices of his mother, and in the Mary Wollstonecraft's one, it is the mother that is directly talking to his child.

I think this text is very lovely, it shows us the strong bonds between a family, and the mark that those bonds leave on our personality, because our experiences models us.

This text (those texts actually) reminds me of a Rabelais's text that I studied two years ago. It is the letter that Gargantua wrote to his child Pantagruel. In this letter, he explain him what

is good to do or not in life, the subjects that he has to focus on, and a lot of advices about his behaviour.

In those three texts, parents are giving advices to their children. Maybe are they feeling that their children don't have enough experience in life to act as wisely as they expected them to ? Or maybe wants they just to be proud of them ?

Anyway, those text shows us how important the influence of the parents is for their child.

#### MW19m - Wollstonecraft

We will focus our analysis on Mary Wollstonecraft text.

First of all, this extract of "Maria, or the Wrongs of a Woman" strikes us owing to his pathetic aspect. Agonising, Maria finally releases a part of her life she never told to her daughter. The first point we could make out is the paradox between the will of the mother not to influence her daughter mind, and the way she insists on her misery. Indeed, she seem to compare herself to the father, as if she tried to regain her daughter fondness, calling her "my child, My dearest daughter", appealing her daughter mercy. Furthermore she used hyperbolic expressions to illustrate how she suffered, sacrificing everything "breaking all restraint", "portion of misery". I would say that despite the instructive character of the letter, Maria needs her daughter gratitude to pass away peacefully. I've also been struck by the poetic side of the expressions she used. As examples with "the spring tide of existence" or "the gay warblers of spring". She's undoubtedly aware that it may be his death letter, therefore she's probably aiming to add lyricism and empathy in order to sublim it.

#### MW20 - More and Wollstonecraft

- We are here facing two different types of education advocated. If Mary Wollstonecraft's text advocates austerity and difficulty for a woman to educate herself (« a mother schooled in misery »), Hannah More's text emphasizes the rigid side of male education. We can notice the lexical field of working in Wollstonecraft's text : « labouring » for instance. We can make the link with V. Woolf in *A room for one's own* in which she describes the construction of female university on the old fields, which required their mothers work, and the austerity of woman's life style (who are doomed to eat a frugal dinner against the sumptuous one in male's university.) Education has been won by the sweat of the mothers' front.

- The Nature seems to be the responsible of Wollstonecraft's education. When the Nature instructed her to bring birth to her senses (Christianity forbids the exaltation of senses), Coelebs learned with his father and with books. This fact emphasizes the opposition between nature and culture. When women have to learn from themselves, men are advantaged by culture. We can also notice the emphasizing of the religious side of males' education (as dictated by Coelebs' mother : « *Do not indulge romantic ideas, of super-human excellence. Remember that the fairest creature is a fallen creature.* » The senses are condemned (here, the view) and the beauty is characterized as something dangerous.) - "In character, as in architecture, proportion is beauty." "which inculcates principles, polishes taste, regulates temper, cultivates reason, subdues the passions, directs the feelings, habituates to reflection, trains to self-denial, and, more especially, that which refers all actions, feelings, sentiments,

tastes, and passions, to the love and fear of God" . Besides, the feminine education of Wollstonecraft seems pagan, dictated by Mother Nature.

#### MW21m - More and Wollstonecraft

The first text is an extract from the book « *Coelebs, in search for a wife* », Written by Hannah More in 1809. The second text is an extract from « *Maria, or The Wrongs of a Woman* », written by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1798.

The most striking thing about these 2 texts is that they were written by women, which was a pretty rare thing at that time (End of 18<sup>o</sup> century, beginning of 19<sup>o</sup> century).

In the first text, the narrator's mother describes what are the qualities of a good woman, because she wants her son to get married. In the second text, a woman is telling about her family, and especially the difference between her father and her mother, as well as between her brother and herself.

These two texts are both pretty feminists considering the time at which they were written, they're like precursors of modern feminism.

#### MW22 - More and Wollstonecraft

The two texts present similitude. First, in the two extracts, mothers make an advice to their child. What strikes me is the negative vision of women. For example in *Maria, or the Wrongs of Women*,<sup>15</sup> "a mother, labouring under a portion of misery". Be a mother seems not to be easy. In *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, the mother depicts women like <sup>127</sup> " a fallen creature". This metaphor is horrific because she makes as if women were devilish creatures. On the text from Mary Wollstonecraft, women are slave of their condition of mother. She warns her daughter. I think the two mothers have the expected behaviour of a mother. It reminds me the novel *The house of mirth* from Edith Warton. This novel is about the living conditions of women in the 20th century. Lily Bart (the main character) needs money and has to find a solution that's why she thinks of the possibility to marry Percy Gryce to escape her precarious condition, but she wants to be free. The women's emancipation was an issue for a long time.

#### MW23m - More and Wollstonecraft

The two texts have for main topic the place of women in the society and more specifically in a couple.

One of the two writings gives a positive message for the women that are trying to raise their child alone : the young boy has a great vision of his father but keeps a lot of respect for his mother after the death of his model.

In the other text the author talks a lot more about patriarchy that applies in a family : the father is so oppressing with his wife that even the children can't have a great image of her : Later even the older boy will have more respect from his father.

Those two texts are very influenced by the Enlightenment : the romantic literature talks about women's condition which was not the case for older literature, and this goes with what the enlightenment is defending and how they have influenced Europe and even a part of the world with their way of thinking.

#### MW24 - More and Wollstonecraft

I believe that both texts highlight an aspect of the condition of women in late 18th century to early 19th century England; though only one appears to take a slightly more active feminist stance. In the passage extracted from Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, the narrator recalls her childhood, with her father and eldest brother being assimilated to authoritative figures ("absolute authority", "deputy-tyrant"). It is clear that both of them benefit from being in the position of the (masculine) head of the family, which presents a contrast with the injustice of the women's situation ("and still more of his sisters"). On the other hand, the difficulty of women's situation in More's *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* is not as clearly depicted, but may be hinted at through the impressive number of qualities which a woman is expected to possess in order to be considered a suitable wife, or sentences such as "The education of the present race of females is not very favorable to domestic happiness", suggesting that a woman's aims should only be making a husband happy, and maintaining a harmonious household.

#### MW25 - More and Wollstonecraft

I have noticed that in both texts, which are extracts from novels, there is common theme of family but especially of motherhood.

Indeed, both mothers in the two texts are giving advices to their children emphasized by the use of imperative verbs : « Do not indulge romantic ideas, of super-human excellence." in *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* and " Gain experience" in *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*

However the theme of motherhood is viewed differently in each text. Even though both texts insist on how important a mother is " that we can never have but one mother" in *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*

and " It is (...) only such a mother, who will dare to break through all restraint to provide for your happiness" in *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, we can see that in *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* motherhood is being compared to fatherhood to lessen the power of fatherhood : " The tenderness of a father who knew the world, might be great; but could it equal that of a mother"

This aspect is reinforced by the fact that the narrator is herself a mother so her point of view is biased, she thinks no one could love her children as much as she does.

Whereas, in *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* the narrator is a young man, speaking about his parents. Therefore, he makes no difference between his parents, he loves them equally and he believes they love him both as much too. We can see that through the use of hyperbole to describe his father giving him as much importance as his mother: "in him the most affectionate father, the most enlightened companion, and the most Christian friend."

Thus, I think the tone in both texts is very similar as it implies a form of longing and of familial love that is undeniable and unbreakable.



## MW26 - More

In the excerpt from the novel, the young man is shaped by a rich education, cultivated by literature. We understand from the beginning that it was the father who transmitted this love for literature to him, which tends to show that literature is valued by being transmitted because this is how it achieves its ultimate goal: to enrich mankind. At the end of the extract, the mother, who is now a widow and an elderly woman, wants to pass on certain values to her by advising her to start a family before she dies. His vision of love, of marriage is very reductive. She sees the ideal woman according to the principles of Christianity; chaste pious, virtuous, good. She advises him to distance himself from all that is worldly, vain, superfluous and rather to come closer to God. The text shows us that in the face of the anguish of death, our inevitable human condition, man takes refuge in religion. We understand the pain of the young man who finds himself alone on his own after his father's death and his mother's illness. We can read this passage metaphorically because in life we are surrendered to ourselves at some point without being prepared for it.

## MW27 - More

I choose to only focus on the second text, an extract from *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* by Hannah More.

The story tells about a man, we'll know later that he's called Charles, that is looking for a woman, the one for all his life. After his father's death, he has to stay close to his mother, who has got only one wish : seeing his son married.

What I found really striking in the text is the vision that Charles's mother has from the perfect wife. The description is really precise, there is no place for fate and chance: she enumerates the characteristics of the ideal wife and how he can choose her.

The mother expresses her own vision of the person she wants her son to marry. Feelings comes very last and doesn't seem to be essential.

I personally do not agree at all with that point of view. For me the starting point of a relationship are feelings, common point with the other person, and not the social status, the level of education or even less beauty.

We could even find that the mother is talking about women like animals « the present race of female is not very favorable to domestic happiness », his son embodies the predator, and the woman he is asking for is the prey.

I found that very sad and like I said before, this is not my vision of love. I think that it is when we aren't looking for something special that we meet wonderful persons.

## MW28 - More and Wollstonecraft

What is first completely striking to me in these two different excerpts, is the complex relation parents can have to their children. We see here, how and what an adult, a father or a mother, can transmit, give, or teach to his progeny. I think these two texts themes are the idea of transmission and heritage. The first document, the text by Mary Wollstonecraft is a letter directly addressed to her daughter. To me, this literary genre is typically used to show a transmission, something that is passed to people. In this letter the passing is duplicated,

because the mother talks to her daughter about her own heritage, and her own childhood. In the second text, by Hannah More, the Father is giving, even if he is sick, a lot of values to his son: "affection", "wisdom", "piety" etc. The son also says that his father was for him "the most affectionate father", "the most enlightened companion", and to finish, "the most Christian friend". Here we see the deep relation that can exist through a parent and his child. Moreover, the son then gives us a complete speech her mother did to him about love and finding a girlfriend: "Remember that the fairest creature is a fallen creature". She seems to use her own experience and knowledge to give him valuable tips and advices.

It is true that these two excerpts, to me, enlighten the deep relationship between parents and children. This one is often full of tenderness (ex: "my child", "my dearest daughter", "my girl" etc).

But these relations can also be very complex, not always positive and full of happiness.

MW29 - Wollstonecraft

Romantics gave more importance to intense emotion in their works. On the other hand, the enlightenment thinkers did not give that much importance to intense emotion in their works. Instead, they valued tradition the more.

In the chapter 7 of *Maria, or the wrongs of women*, written by Mary Wollstonecraft, we can see many aspect of the romanticism. First of all, the narrator is a woman who write her memoirs; so it includes expressing feelings, and telling story about her life. ("Born in", "my father", "I soon discovered"..) All of this is addressed to her daughter to whom she gives advices. The role of the mother is important in this text; this is the one of a guide in life. The devotion of the mother is put forward in this text.

Then, there is reference to the nature who contributes to the happiness ("the varying charms of the nature", "the fresh green of spring", "search for the flower"). The nature is very important for the romantics because it generally represent a state of peace or a way to escape from the world.

The major aspect of the text, the one who strike me the most at least, is the place of men and women in society. Indirectly, by telling her childhood's story, she shows the patriarchal society with the figure of the bossy and respected father. The mother wasn't allowed to "question his absolute authority". There is a sentence which show well the place of the men at this time: "The representative of my father, a being privileged by nature". With this sentence this is the author that challenges the place of the men.

Moreover, there is a call for happiness which goes along with a call for freedom. The narrator wants her child to experience ("gain experience!"). The narrator express the fact that she suffered from the authority of her father and brother and that she uses nature as an escape. She doesn't want her daughter to take this path ("I will not entice you to stray with me into the verdant meadow") but she wants her to assert herself ("always appear what you are").

## Appendix Chap. 9.5. Student Responses to the Passages from *Sense and Sensibility*

### A1 - chapter 16

I chose to speak about the second text, the chapter 16.

In this text there are three characters: Marianne, Edward and Elinor. They walk in a country. Marianne describes the landscape like she remembers, with a lot of dead leaves. She remembers the landscape which looks like a Romantic landscape. With this element, we can understand that Marianne is a romantic character, who expresses her feelings. This sentence shows that: *What feeling have they, the season the air altogether inspired* line 6.

Her sister is not agree with her. The reader can understand she is more serious. She is not like her sister, so we see there is a different character.

Edward is someone very realistic, because he thinks about the future. It is someone who is thinking about the problem of the life of every day and anticipate it.

This extract shows the different nature of every one. It is what who can strike the most in this text, the opposition between Marianne, who is very romantic, and Elinor and Edward, who are more realistic. The text shows too Elinor and Edward are very similar, so we can suppose they be close in the novel.

### A2 - chapter 16

This extract is a chatty conversation about what the nature looks like in fall. In it the landscape is described in a very poetic way. They don't just list the elements but see something beautiful in it. Like on the third stanza. When leaves are usually seen as trash and something annoying they explain how they enjoy watching them during a walk. They also talk about their favorite landscapes and places, in a very dreamy way. What I noticed is how light the conversation is. It sounds like a little conversation with no importance around a cup of tea. They are just talking about the beauty of nature and what it inspires in them. And still, it seems to have real importance to them, like if defining which hills or cottage is the prettiest one has a real and deep matter, like in stanza 5 where the debate seems really intense.

### A3 - chapter 7

This excerpt of *Sense and Sensibility* is a good perception and description of the society in the 19th century, but in fact I find this text quite shocking because of the image of the wife it gives. Indeed, in the Middletons' house, which reflects the perfect family, Sir John is put forward to the detriment of his wife but overall women in general. In lines 7 to 8 "Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother." or "she humoured her children" l. 9, we send the woman back to her ability to give birth, her place is in the house. Moreover, if we keep this idea we can show up the place of Sir John and his behaviour with the Miss Dashwoods which makes me feel a bit uncomfortable. Women are related to objects, they have to be as pretty and smart as men want: "It was enough to secure his good opinion; for to be unaffected was all that a pretty girl could want to make her mind as captivating as her person.", "a family of

females only in his cottage". Sir John is really happy to have them in his house, like if it was trophies, it makes his virility stunning: "he had all the satisfaction of a sportsman."

#### A4 – chapters 7 and 16

Romanticism is a reaction of feeling against reason, it seeks escape and delight in the dream, the morbid and sublime, also the exotic and the past. These two excerpts from *Sense and Sensibility* illustrate this romantic ideal. The first (chapter 7) is a text and the narrator talk about what he knows. The second excerpts (chapter 16) is a dialogue.

First of all, we have the notion of nature with Barton Park, which is mentioned in Chapter 7 and described in Chapter 16. This nature seems wonderful and peaceful almost imaginary and then morbid at the end of excerpt of chapter 16 with the remark : "among the rest of the objects before me, I see a very dirty lane.". Nature is very important romanticism. It occupies a major place in painting (ex: Caspar David Friederich) and literature (ex: Victor Hugo ou Charles Baudelaire)

I also find a morbid dimension with the fact that the mother and her two daughters live with a couple who are strangers to them.

#### A5 - chapter 16

The excerpt of the 16th chapter of Jane Austen's novel, *Sense and sensibility* is a dialogue between Marianne, Elinor and Edward. I personally didn't read *Sense and sensibility* but if I can remember the little I knew about it Marianne and Elinor are sisters (both Dashwoods) and they lived in Norland in a little cottage with their family. So if I understand the sisters came back to Norland in Barton Valley and are melancholously, and in a poetic ton, speaking about the nature around their family cottage. Both are speaking of this environment in a magic way using beautiful words to explain how they feel about it. Edward (who didn't live there as he was little) doesn't really see the magic of the place and only confirm what Marianne said and also add that the road had to be really dirty during the winter. The contrast of the two views shows how memories and a past in some place, can change your view about this same place.

#### A6 - chapter 7

I concentrated on the text of the chapter 7. In this text, I noticed the importance of the society in the Middletons' life. In the first paragraph, I understand the Middletons like the presence of the society around them because we can read in the line 4 "They were scarcely ever without some friends staying with them in the house". For me, the Middletons like putting forward and welcoming of the world at their home. Maybe, the author Jane Austen wants to represent by the Middletons the importance of the society and the importance of the sentence of others. In the second part, I noticed the author give a big place to the life of the house and the importance of the mother in the house. Lady Middleton is represented as a simple mother to the home which likes pleasures of houses. I have the impression that the author sees in the woman only a simple mother and a housewife who can make nothing of other one. In the second paragraph, I understand this argument because we can read in the

lines 13-14 "Lady Middleton piqued herself upon the elegance of her table, and of all her domestic arrangements; and from this kind of vanity was her greatest enjoyment in any of their parties. ". And after this sentence, the author uses the word "but" like she wanted to create a break between the women in the home with the family and the man always out. Maybe, Jane Austen wants to give the impression that the Middletons are a classic vision of the society and the Miss Dashwoods are new vision of society, modern vision. Maybe, the author explains this vision after the last paragraph because the two heroines of the novel appear only at the end of the text. I think this excerpt of the chapter 7 in as desire to put forward the society and its importance in the 19 century.

#### A7 - chapter 7

At first, what strike me the most is the way that the landscape and the different characters. In fact, there is a digression in the way the things are described. At first, the Middletons are presented as welcoming and sophisticated, in a huge and beautiful house. But my understanding is that it hides something. It is for me introduced by the sentence "for however dissimilar a temper and outward behaviour, they strongly resembled each other in that total want of talent and taste which confined their employments, unconnected with such as society produced, within a very narrow compass." From this part, the vision of the couple changes for me as a reader. The following description highlights a standard family for the time, but with a lot of disparities. The man is working and having fun while the women is dedicating her time in order to raise their children with a good education. From my point of view, and in the light of these only extracts, I can't understand what is the author's goal and what is her position about women's conditions.

#### A8 - chapter 7

- Barton Park is a park in Oxford (UK)
- In this text, the lexical field of luxury and money is very present:
  - "large and handsome" (l. 3)
  - The couple is called "Sir" and "Lady" (l. 9/10), it conveys the impression that they're both rich and important persons
  - They also have "domestic" (l. 16)
  - They organize "private balls" (l. 22)
- Sir John seems to like party and having people at home:
 

Did he have an affair with some girl?

  - "scarcely ever without some friends" (l. 5)
  - He organizes "private balls" (l. 22)
  - Welcoming new families is "a matter of joy to him" (l. 24)
- Lady Middleton must also like parties but she seems to attach importance to immaterial:
  - "elegance of her table" (l. 16)

0 "this kind of vanity was her greatest enjoyment" (l. 17)

➤ The couple may welcome people who are in a difficult period, who are poor, like the Dashwoods after the father's death.

➤ Line 10, the narrator compares Sir Middleton's job (sportsman) with Lady Middleton's job (mother): can we really compare the two? Isn't it an allusion from the narrator to the women's situation of the time (XIX. century)?

A9 - chapter 16

Jane Austen is a British writer, who published anonymously the novel *Sense and sensibility* in 1811, signed by "a lady" and not by the author's name. It deals with the story of the Dashwood sisters: Elinor and Marianne. Forced to move to Barton cottage with their family, they are going to discover love, but also heartbreak.

This excerpt from the chapter 16 seems to take place in front of Barton Valley's view. Elinor, Marianne and Edward Ferrars, who is the older brother of Fanny Ferrars, are conversing about Norland, sensibility and beauty of nature.

This text especially touched me in the way Marianne is feeling and enjoying nature, in contrast to Elinor and Edward. For example, when she's speaking about the pleasure of seeing falling dead leaves, Elinor replies that "it is not everyone, who has your passion for dead leaves". In the same way, she can't understand how Edward can "think of dirt" while admiring "that farthest hill, which rises with such grandeur"... Her mates are not as sensitive as she is!

A10 - chapter 16

We can here feel the influence of romantic movement, thanks to some typical topics--> nature and its beauty: "how have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven n showers about me by the wind!"

But also the ode of a specific place, often quite personified " look at those hills! Did you ever see their equal?" /" and how does dear, dear Norland look?". This feeling of striking beauty is linked to memories and a sort of melancholy. Indeed the speaker is talking about where her family used to live. Once again we can notice the link with romanticism as melancholy was a currently evoked feeling, and we could say even partly at the origin of the romantic way of considering life. In France it was said to be "the illness of the century".

the loneliness of the romantic one: the speaker seems hypersensitive, touched by the falling dead leaves. "who has your passion for dead leaves?" asked another character. Other people have difficulties to understand the romantic spirit, in connivance with nature. Once again a well know trait of the romantic ones.

despite everything this Marianne remains an original character to me! She isn't totally isolated from her peers and sais "No, my feelings aren't often shared, not often understood, but SOMETIMES they are!"

Moreover she appears as a strong character, a bit impetuous maybe! We can see it by the way she's talking to Edward "Now Edward [...] here is Barton valley [...]look at those hills !". As far

as Im' concerned she embodies a modern character, a woman assuming her deep sensitivity without being weak or caricatural. in this excerpt Marianne is the incarnation of a new type of women, freed from their reductive education and "woman condition".

A11 - chapters 7 and 16

Both excerpts are taken from *Sense and Sensibility*, a novel written by Jane Austen and published anonymously in 1811. There are two ways to receive Jane Austen's writing. Without any interpretations or attempts, since it is written just after the Enlightenment, the writing can appear as a sentimental novel, full of moral advices and modest lessons. But, while considering the releasing period and the tendency to revolutionary thoughts, Jane Austen's novel may be seen as a hidden pamphlet against tight rules and women's purposeless positions in society. First, « picked herself upon the elegance of her table, and of all her domestic arrangements », in which Lady Middleton seems to find enjoyment in the appearances, as the only line dedicated to her enhances her trivial affection for balls and parties. Second, « and how does dear, dear Norland look ? cried Marianne », where Marianne cries and moans because of the way the propriety looks like in autumn, when all the leaves are down. This quote roasts Marianne's emotionalism. Her sister's answer is unequivocal, « it is not everyone who has your passion for dead leaves ». Girls have nothing to do with their lives. They have to manage to find entertainment while being locked down until marriage and beyond. But women may not be the only ones to be discussed. Third, « but Sir John's satisfaction in society was much more real », which is referring to a comparison between Lady Middleton and Sir John's attitudes, to highlight Sir John's genuineness in regard to Lady Middleton's superficiality. But it can also be a criticism of both personas, as they indulge in superficiality and eagerness for social recognition. Fourth, « the arrival of a new family in the country was always a matter of joy to him », in which it is possible to understand how Sir John always uses any occasions to express his supremacy. At first sight, Sir John seems to find delight in acts of generosity, but his attitude towards others may be motivated by pride and acknowledgement. Jane Austen may be criticizing women and men's pointless areas of interest.

A12 - chapters 7 and 16

To be honest, I don't really know what to say about these two excerpts. They didn't really speak to me and I had a hard time detecting some classical romantic elements. Sure, it is possible to see that nature still plays an important role (chapter 7 : the scene takes place in the british countryside, multiple references to the "*cottage*" l.1, "*valley*" l.2, "*hill*" l.3 + the conversation in chap. 16 is centered around "*dead leaves*" l.3 = nature changing with the seasons and nature used as a refelection of one's emotions and feelings).

But what struck me the most was the importance of the household and the provincial dimensions.

Also striking was the importance given to each character : indeed, Jane Austen seems to make a point of honor to write psychological descriptions about her characters.

So now I wonder : if Jane Austen is considered a romantic writer, is it possible that romantic novels offer an other definition of Romanticism ? And could romantic, in this case, refer to

something else ? Could romantic here be a synonym of sentimental and therefore of personal growth through the exploration of personal romantic feelings ?

A13 - chapters 7 and 16

While reading those two excerpts, it become obvious that this book belong to the Romanticism Movement. Indeed, the intensification of the feelings and the sensitivity are typical from the 19<sup>th</sup> century's authors.

First of all in chapter 7, is drawing up Barton Park which is a very open and elegant home and describes the Dashwood's visit. Moreover he is specifying the particular character of the Middletons. They are always hosting many guests as it is said "they kept more company of every kind than any other family in the neighborhood" (15). Indeed John's sole occupation is hosting lots of events that are important for aristocratic society. He is genuinely fond of the Dashwood girls, since they are pretty and "unaffected," as he calls them; he is kind to them out of the goodness of his heart, and enjoys their company. He also has a limited idea of the possibilities of a woman's character. Austen describe Sir John as a "sportsman," and Lady Middleton as a devoted mother who loved to spoil her children.

To my mind, Sir John Middleton seems to symbolize the best of upper class society, while his wife represents the usual rich person. While the man seems to be genuinely kind and enjoys socializing contrary to his wife who is more preoccupied with elegance, planning huge gatherings, and being generally polite company. As far as I am concerned Lady Middleton looks dull and plain, and is the archetype of the upper class. Her husband, manages to combine the riches and pursuits of the upper class with real friendliness and personality and might represent what this class of people could be, if not preoccupied with vanity and appearances to an overwhelming extent.

In the second excerpt, one of the principal weakness in Marianne's character is revealed. She makes herself too susceptible and so lets her life and feelings be overwhelmed by it. She is also too trusting of people. She also shows childishness and has a definite tendency toward overindulgence of spirit. Moreover she weights romantic virtues too highly as well. Her sister Elinor is more mindful of polite manners than she is.

Finally, through these texts I recognize a very romantic pattern that shows very expressive characters whose manners are exaggerated. Indeed their portrayal are representatives of the author's feelings about society and what she wanted to show to the readers.

A14 - chapters 7 and 16

The two passages are from the famous book *Sense and Sensibility* written by Jane Austen, a notorious english novelist from the 18st century. The first excerpt is from chapter 7, I can see a description of the character of Sir John and Lady Middleton who invite the Dashwood's family into their house. I can clearly see Jane Austen, the narrator criticizes the society of the 18st century. John Middleton's house is like a court in the Renaissance. Sir John and Lady Middleton take satisfaction from their own business before considering others. I can see examples in the text : "he had the real satisfaction of a good heart" line 30. I can see also, the narrator make a caricature of the middle-class society in the 18st century : she compared John Middleton as "a sportsman" line 10 and Lady Middleton as a "mother" line 10, "he



hunted and he shot, and she humored her children, and these were their only resources". This simile from Jane Austen are not insignificant. She wants to show us how ridiculous was the society at this time. The second text is an excerpt from the chapter 16, I see the typical description of romanticism movement : nature and sentiments are mixed. Marianne said an example of this kind of description line 3 to 6 and also line 9 to 14. Coming from a book of the same era, it is not surprising. Marianne represents the typical naivety that one could feel towards others and especially about a boy, and seeks shelter in the Nature surrounding her; this is the classical depiction of Romanticism, with Human at the center of the Nature, who can do nothing against it but admiring its beauty as time flies.

#### A15 - chapter 7

Two characters are described: Lady Middleton and Sir John. They are idealized. Maybe the authors wants to give her point of view about the perfect family. Maybe she wants her readers to learn something about this description. This family is full of values, principals. We can see it thanks to the words 'hospitality', 'elegance'. Lady Middleton is described as the perfect mother who is devoted for her children and 'who loved to spoil on her children'.

Sir John is describe as a good friend for the children and for the Young adults. Sir John welcomes the Dashwoods and notes that Lady Middleton's mother and his friend Colonel Brandon (a gentleman-like) are also there for the dinner. The dinner is described as being fairly dull and Mariane plays the piano.

It is a vision of the perfect family. Maybe it's an utopia and the author shows that it can be possible just in a book.

#### A16 - chapters 7 and 16

In the chapter 7, Sir john through the writing, exposes his vision of what an unpretentious girl is "to be unaffected was all that a pretty girl could want to make her mind as captivating as her person."

There is a contrast between Lady Middleton and The miss Dashwoods.

Indeed, these young ladies seem to be more simple, without manners and spontaneous than Lady Middleton. Moreover, they come at

This juvenile characters bring joy, lightness, as we can noticed with the numerous exclamation, punctuation "Look at those hills! Did you ever see their equals?" " 'oh,' cried Marianne," corresponding to what Sir john likes: "the noisier they were the better was her pleased"

All the more so, with the dialog, they add poetry, and lyricism through the text, especially Marianne who takes care of every nature elements whose the leaves: "The woods and walks thickly covered with dead leaves."

Marianne plays an important role in the second text, she tries to compare the image that people have when they see nature, only something casual, normal. And the other image with magic, feelings and reverie that can create nature.

#### A17m - chapter 7

I chose to analyse the text of the chapter 7. The author, Jane Austen is a famous writer of the end of the XVIIIth century. In her novels, she describes the life of the English gentry, and especially the life of women. As Mary Wollstonecraft, she is considered as a feminist.

In this text, she describes a very welcoming family. More than the family, the text is interesting for the father's description. In the family, he has got a position a power, but counter to Wollstonecraft's text, he doesn't use authority : he manages all receptions, and wants also a reputation of good family father.

I find that this figure looks like the father in *The Tree of Life* of Terrence Malik : the father is the leader at home. This father's power becomes stronger with his relationship with women. Certainly he makes many things but I have the impression that he does this to have women's favors (« and in settling a family of females only in his cottage " 1-31)

#### A18m - chapter 16

This text is about a couple (maybe) or two young people that are talking about nature. They are talking about the magnificence of Fall, and how the spectacle of the fallen leaves is beautiful. This text is quite romantic by the way the characters are amazed by the nature and the fallen leaves of autumn. The man feels like he is not understood by the others, which is pretty romantic too. They are feeling like they are disconnected from reality and that the other people are not amazed by nature, that they just see fallen leaves like a source of disappointment, like something to clear, to remove. This discrepancy between those guys and the other people is very romantic too.

The girl looks more positive than the guy. She is trying to catch the beauty of the hills where is their cottage. She talks about the magnificence of the hills, of the wood and everything. But the man only sees the dirt of the street, and thinks about how dirty it will be in winter. He can't focus only on positive things like the girl, he also sees the bad aspects of life. She's also in a reverie, which means that she can go to her inner-world more easily. She can escape the reality by the way of nature. This need of escaping and dodging reality is very romantic too. Romanticism is about the expression of feelings, feelings that you found inside you, in your inner-world.

This text reminds me of the first scene in the movie *Shining* from Stanley Kubrick. When the family comes to the hotel with their car and there is a lot of landscapes, with colorful woods of autumn, hills and lakes. When I read the text, the description of the landscape reminds me of this scene. Maybe Stanley Kubrick, by the way he shows nature, is a little bit Romantic too ?

#### A19m - chapter 16

We will only focus on the chapter 16 of *Sense and Sensibility*, First Novel written by Jane Austen in 1811.

First this passage strikes us in the topic it approaches. Marianne is passionately interested in dead leaves, an utterly uncommon interest. Indeed she seemed emotionally struck by their movements.

"transporting sensation" l.3. We may then consider her as a madwoman, disconnected of the reality. Nevertheless she doesn't personificate leaves, as we could expect from any text fostering an unusual or abstract objet. Thus we could relate this passage to Francis Ponge "Le parti pris des choses" which attempt to describe and extend our vision of common things as rain or bread. Indeed the personification is kind an antropocentrist way to describe objects, but they can be by themselves. Furthermore she care's about their evolution, as autumn pass, leaves fall and we consider them as "nuisance" l.6. Therefore we might ask ourselves if owing to the habitude our sensibility isn't degraded. This passage in my opinion shall aware us that we're not marveling enough about the surrounding world. Lastly it fit perfectly with the title of the novel, and the romanticism movement, due to the expression of inner feelings about the nature.

A20 - chapters 7 and 16

First excerpt

→ « hospitality and elegance » : Hospitality and Elegance are the key words of this domain and the only aim and concerns of the Middletown's husbands. John seems more connected with reality (« much more real ») of world (what can justify the title « Sense ») : he is sportsman, he hunts and assures his survival thanks to the product of his hunting (« and these were their only resources ») : he is pragmatic and his senses come first : he likes noise (« the noisier they were the better was he pleased »).

-> Lady Middleton, by her side, is moved by « sensibility ». Only elegance is important, she is vain (« piqued herself upon the elegance of her table »)

→ Only the association of the senses and the sensibility seems to be able to procure a full existence: « Continual engagements at home and abroad, however, supplied all the deficiencies of nature and education ». But this existence isn't happy : "**in that total want of talent and taste which confined their employments, unconnected with such as society produced, within a very narrow compass**" as we can underline with their name : Middletown (onomastics): they embody a "middle". This state is sufficient to exist but not to live in a suitable way.

→ Their existence seems cyclic: we can notice the metaphor of the compass, « all the year round »

Second excerpt

→ Elinor [means Marianne] seems to symbolize the combination of the senses and the sensibility (« reverie ») : She goes into raptures in front of dead leaves, finds them of a disconcerting poetry, knows how to see the sensitive beauty. (« with what transporting sensation »). The combination of both qualities is rare but not impossible: « No; my feelings are not often shared, not often understood. But SOMETIMES they are. »

A21m - chapter 16

I'm going to focus this analysis on the second extract, which is an extract of the chapter 16 of the book « Sense and Sensibility », written by Jane Austen in 1811, it's her first novel. This book is about the three Dashwood sisters as they move with their widowed mother from the

estate on which they grew up, Norland Park, to their new home, Barton Cottage. The four women must move to a meagre cottage on the property of a distant relative, where they experience love, romance, and heartbreak.

This extract is a dialogue between Marianne and her sister Elinor. A very close friend of Elinor, Edward is also present in the conversation. They are talking about Norland Park, their former residence. You can see that it's a romantic novel by the way they talk. They use so many unnecessary adjectives and pompous turns of phrases, nobody actually speaks like that.

A22 - chapters 7 and 16

This passage is the chapter seven of the novel *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) by Jane Austen. The author depicts a middle class family. What strikes me is the fact that this family is a cliché from the nineteenth century. 17" Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother". The man goes hunting and the woman raises children. This excerpt focuses on the British distraction and the sense of hospitality 17"private balls" and 19" The arrival of a new family in the country was always a matter of joy to him". This family seems to be perfect for all things. On the second passage ( the chapter 16), the two girls are speaking about a man. At this time, women were obsessed to marry with a wealthy man to have a comfortable position. Women were determined to find the perfect man. The two themes of these passages are often present in writing of Jane Austen. It reminds me *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Jane Austen describes the middle class society and the wish of the mother to marry her girls.

A23m - chapters 7 and 16

Both of the excerpts come from novels written by Jane Austen. The main purpose of the texts are romanticism and love story.

I think they are a great representation of Jane Austen's style which are based on live story in England with rich people. We can also say that the romanticism is well represented in the texts because it is a matter of feelings or marriage.

I'm not a big fan of those stories because there are no big issues all along the novel and you can not relate to the characters because they don't have the problems that you have.

But what I think is important with Jane Austen is the influence that she had on the British literature. So for me you have to read what she has done to understand the British literature of this era.

A24 - chapters 7 and 16

The two excerpts from Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* demonstrate her ability to both provide insight on and contrast the characters that are portrayed. This can be achieved through description or dialogue. The couple that is described through the first text belongs to the upper class ("The house was large and handsome", "Sir John"), but their characters differ greatly ("dissimilar in temper"). Indeed, Lady Middleton can be thought of as a pure product of her class, whose concern with elegance and refinement, though outwardly impressive, betrays a lack of warmth ("from this kind of vanity was her greatest enjoyment in any of their parties"). On the other hand, Sir John is more of an anomaly, as he demonstrates genuine

kindness and enjoyment of others' company, particularly children ( "Sir John's satisfaction in society was much more real; he delighted in collecting about him more young people than his house would hold"). The interest of his character lies in the fact that he manages to retain warmth and altruism in spite of his belonging to an often superficial upper class.

In the second excerpt, Marianne talks of a somewhat prosaic topic in a hyperbolic fashion: dead leaves ("with what transporting sensation have I formerly seen them fall! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind!"). It is made clear that she is very passionate, as well as charmed by a youthful Romantic sensibility (concerned with nature and an overflow of feelings), both of which may imply naivety. This contrasts with her sister Elinor's drier responses ("It is not every one," said Elinor, "who has your passion for dead leaves."). In few words, Austen clearly depicts the differences in character between the two sisters: Marianne strongly believes in the distinctiveness of her own emotions ("my feelings are not often shared, not often understood"), as she is not wise enough to have learnt to control or conceal them, and simply assumes that others' lack of communication signifies that they have no feelings at all, and that only she has the capacity to feel so deeply. Though more reserved, Elinor displays shrewdness that is more befitting of the society that they belong in, in which exercising restraint is valued.

A25 - chapter 7

Indeed, this text shows how important social status was back then as Sir John and Lady Middleton are always planning parties and inviting people over: "They were scarcely ever without some friends staying with them in the house"

To me this need to always have people over indicates that people in the 19th century, especially fairly rich people, did not usually get married because they truly loved each other but more likely for money and reputation. Marriage was a sort of business between families. Thus, perhaps the couple keeps inviting people over because they don't want to spend that much time together alone: "It was necessary to the happiness of both"

However, Sir John has raised my curiosity immediately as he seems to truly enjoy meeting people and not just for a social purpose of being high in the social ladder. Actually, it seems like Sir John is really taking a lot of pleasure into discussing with others as it is mentioned in this extract:

"But Sir John's satisfaction in society was much more real"

The choice of the adjective real is, I believe, really important as it shows that in a society where a lot is fake because people are trying to keep their masks on for others, Sir John has genuine motives.

This reminds me of "The picture of Dorian Grey" by Oscar Wilde where it is shown that all people cared about was appearance as the main character who magically never ages is praised by everyone. Therefore, in this superficial society, Sir John's joyful attitude really is contrasting but also refreshing in a way.

#### A26 - chapter 16

In the excerpt the character shows a very particular sensitivity when seeing the fallen leaves of the trees, with this metaphor of autumn the narrator wants to convey to us that this season that we tend to see, often wrongly, as a season that precedes the season of "death": winter, can also be a season of inspiration, of creation, meditation. When they arrive near the chalet, which is sumptuous, beautiful, one of the characters says "the Lane of the chalet is dirty". The reader can understand by this replica that some places are endowed with more beauty, authenticity like forests in autumn than large cottages with scenery.

#### A27 - chapter 7

I chose to focus only on the first excerpt from the chapter 16 of Jane Austen's book *Sense and Sensibility*. In my opinion, these excerpts evokes a common middle class couple. Sir John and his wife Lady Middleton have life pretty much figured out. They look perfectly happy with each other in their life and evidently don't want to change it. Miss Middleton has enough time to concentrate herself on parties and meeting people, « her greatest enjoyment in any of their parties ». Her man spends time going hunting and doing business with other men like him. Their life looks very enviable. They even have enough time to focus on a new family arrival in the country, means that they have a lot of time for things that doesn't really matter. I personally do not really trust these kind of stories that look perfect (at first view) with couples that love each other, with no problems.

#### A28 - chapter 16

This time, I think I will only concentrate myself on the second excerpt, because I have to admit that I didn't understand the first one. Maybe because the language is not familiar at all, and, in the contrary, it is a high English. I have real big issues to understand the vocabulary and even the general meaning of sentences. Anyway, the second text is more accessible. On one hand, we feel transported by the description of fall, and of the dead leaves. And on the other hand, I felt a bit surprised, and doubtfully, because it is still a very strange passion, as Eleanor perfectly says it. Marianne seems to be enchanted by something which is just natural and normal. And that can be difficult for us to follow her in her "dreams". She uses personification, and talks from the leaves just as people: for example she uses some pronouns to talk about it: "they", "them" etc. The thing is, that she has a specific link to nature, and she knows it. This special interest for nature makes me think, of course, of Romanticism. In this movement, just as in this novel, nature and personal feelings are commingled.

#### A29 - chapter 16

In this part of the chapter 16, we are reading a conversation between Elinor, Marianne and Edward. I think it represents well the romanticism of the novel.

First of all, what strikes me the most is when Marianne speaks. Words after words it sounds like poetry, the way she speaks. ("with what transporting sensation have I formerly seen them

fall") She is even using personification when she speaks about nature: "what feelings have they, the season". When she speaks its sounds just like a lyric poem. Indeed, she is expressing her feelings: she does not hide her sadness and she is crying ("she cried").

And over more, she is looking at the nature and talking about what she sees. And we understand the nature as souvenirs for Marianne. She adores nature, especially the season of autumn. We can see that when Elinor told her "'It is not everyone," said Elinor, "who has your passion for dead leaves."

So, in this text, the relation between the nature and Marianne, the way she expresses her feelings shows us a typical romanticism novel character. But It is contrasted with the behavior of the two other people that are with her. Elinor, indeed seems to be less sensitive than Marianne and does not really understand the passion of Marianne for the nature. Edward, even immediately think of the negative aspect of the nature: "It is a beautiful country," he replied; "but these bottoms must be dirty in winter." Marianne seems to be the dreamer whose not understand by everyone.

# Résumé en français

## Introduction

The great author of the drama of life has not finished his piece; but the author must finish his; and vice must be punished and virtue rewarded in the compass of a few volumes; and it is a fault in *his* composition if every circumstance does not answer the reasonable expectations of the reader. (Barbauld 55-56, souligné par l'autrice)

Dans son essai 'On the origin and progress of novel-writing' (1810), Anna Laetitia Barbauld souligne l'importance, sinon la nécessité, pour les romans d'avoir un cadre moral clair. En plus d'insister sur la dimension centrale de l'orientation morale des œuvres de fiction, Barbauld met en évidence la dynamique complexe de pouvoir entre auteur et lecteur, préoccupation de plus en plus prégnante à une époque où le marché du livre et la professionnalisation des auteurs et autrices avaient remplacé le modèle antérieur de parrainage aristocratique (Gomille 144). Barbauld compare explicitement l'écrivain à Dieu au début de la citation, qui reconnaît la différence entre la conception de la vie sur Terre et dans le récit, mais implique également une omnipotence créatrice commune. Toutefois, cette prétention au pouvoir suprême est immédiatement atténuée par l'affirmation selon laquelle l'auteur est en fait redevable aux attentes du lecteur, ce qui le prive de sa suprématie. Des lecteurs anonymes se voient ici accorder la capacité de déclarer un écrit défectueux s'il ne répond pas à leurs « attentes raisonnables », ce qui induit la nécessité pour l'auteur d'y répondre, y compris en termes moraux. Dans ce commentaire, Barbauld souligne l'importance de la moralité et de la réception dans le discours autour de la fiction narrative à l'époque ; deux concepts qui informent largement le travail présenté dans cette thèse.

## I. Définition du didactisme moral

Le didactisme moral désigne le fait d'avoir pour but premier ou sous-jacent l'instruction de valeurs morales<sup>2</sup>. Cette définition d'apparence simple doit cependant être affinée. Les termes « moral » et « didactique » méritent chacun d'être explicités, avant de

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2 « didacticism, n. » *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2021, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/52345](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/52345). Accessed 17 January 2022.



pouvoir les combiner et les placer dans le contexte de la fiction britannique de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

### 1. Définitions

L'*OED* définit la moralité comme suit :

moral virtue; behavior conforming to moral law or accepted moral standards, esp. in relation to sexual matters; personal qualities judged to be good », « moral discourse or instruction; a moral lesson or exhortation. Also: the action or an act of moralizing, [...] the branch of knowledge concerned with right and wrong conduct, duty, responsibility, etc.; moral philosophy, ethics<sup>3</sup> ».

Ces définitions soulignent la double nature du concept de « morale », qui concerne à la fois les actions conformes à un ensemble prescriptif de normes ou de valeurs et la réflexion sur ce que devrait être ce même ensemble. Le substantif *moral* indique « a moral maxim or practical lesson to be drawn from a story, event, etc. » ou « an exposition of the moral teaching or practical lesson contained in a literary work; that part of a work which expounds or contains the moral meaning<sup>4</sup> ». Enfin, les définitions de l'adjectif *moral* comprennent « of or relating to human character or behaviour considered as good or bad; of or relating to the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions, desires, or character of responsible human beings; ethical » et « of a literary work, an artistic or dramatic representation, etc.: dealing with the rightness and wrongness of conduct; intended to teach morality or convey a moral; (hence also) having a beneficial moral effect, edifying<sup>5</sup> ». Toutes ces définitions comprennent des exemples tirés de textes publiés au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ce qui établit leur pertinence dans le contexte de mon travail. En effet, dans son *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Samuel Johnson lie la moralité à la vertu ainsi qu'à l'éthique. La définition de « moral, adj. » indique « 1. Relating to the practice of men towards each other, as it may be virtuous or criminal; good or bad, » et celle de « morality, n. f. » « 1. The doctrine of the duties of life; ethicks<sup>6</sup> ». Le lien est également fait entre la fiction et la

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3 « morality, n. » *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122093](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122093). Accessed 12 March 2020.

4 « moral, n. » *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122085](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122085). Accessed 12 March 2020.

5 « moral, adj. » *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, [www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122086](http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/122086). Accessed 12 March 2020.

6 « moral, adj. » *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson*. Edited by Brandi Besalke. Last modified: June 14, 2017. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/moral>. Accessed 12 March 2020.

morale, cette dernière pouvant indiquer « 2. The doctrine inculcated by a fiction », illustrant l'importance de ce concept dans la pensée du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>7</sup>.

Les termes *moralité*, *vertu* et *éthique* restent aujourd'hui étroitement liés, et la mesure dans laquelle ils se recoupent fait l'objet d'un débat critique. Dans *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Simon Blackburn définit la vertu ainsi : « a trait of character that is to be admired: one rendering its possessor better, either morally, or intellectually, or in the conduct of specific affairs » (383). Cela suggère que ce qui est vertueux n'est pas nécessairement moral. Le même ouvrage souligne que, bien que la moralité et l'éthique soient des concepts équivalents, le premier est traditionnellement associé à des systèmes tels que celui de Kant, ancré dans les notions de devoir, obligation, et principes de conduite, tandis que le second tend à se référer à la raison pratique héritière d'Aristote, basé sur la notion de vertu (241). L'éthique indique à son tour « the study of the concepts involved in practical reasoning; good, right, duty, obligation, virtue, freedom, rationality choice » (121). La distinction entre les deux concepts n'est effectivement pas évidente, et reste controversée (241). Néanmoins, la notion de « système » liée à la morale en tant que concept philosophique souligne sa composante prescriptive, dont l'éthique semble plus éloignée.

Le concept de morale est intrinsèquement lié à celui de didactisme, comme en témoigne l'une des définitions de *moral* : « a moral maxim or practical lesson to be drawn from a story » (c'est moi qui souligne)<sup>8</sup>. En outre, tout comme la morale, les notions d'enseignement et d'apprentissage méritent d'être interrogées. Comme le souligne Gert Biesta, le « paradoxe de l'apprentissage » (*learning paradox*) remonte à Platon et Socrate, avec l'idée que l'apprentissage s'apparente à un souvenir et que le rôle de l'enseignant est de

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« morality, n. f. » *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson*. Edited by Brandi Besalke. Last modified: June 14, 2017. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/morality>. Accessed 12 March 2020.

7 « moral, n. f. » *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson*. Edited by Brandi Besalke. Last modified: June 14, 2017. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/moral>. Accessed 12 March 2020. Le *Rambler 4* de Johnson, dans lequel il évoque l'importance pour les œuvres de fiction de souligner et d'encourager la vertu, est abordé dans la section suivante. Selon Trevor Ross, l'habileté à manier la langue, l'originalité et la dimension morale étaient les principaux critères d'excellence littéraire pour Johnson. En effet, Ross affirme que « literature had a moral value for Johnson, and ideally a moral intentionality as well » (280), visible aussi dans les revues et les romans de mon étude. En outre, dans *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, Jane Spencer remarque que « the moral utility of literature was an all-pervasive concern of eighteenth-century critics », autant pour les romanciers que les romancières (77).

8 "moral, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2021, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/122085](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122085). Accessed 18 January 2022.

faire ressortir ce qui est déjà là, par opposition à de nouvelles informations transmises par une source extérieure (452). La question de savoir ce que signifie enseigner et comment le faire est au cœur de la recherche en éducation, et fait l'objet de nombreux débats. Biesta soutient que l'expérience de l'enseignement devrait être transformatrice pour les apprenants, plutôt qu'un simple exercice d'ajout de nouvelles informations. L'apprenant doit être amené à réaliser quelque chose qui était auparavant complètement extérieur à son être (457).

Dans l'*OED*, ce qui est qualifié de « didactique » ne semble pas impliquer une telle expérience de transformation, mais cette possibilité n'est pas pour autant niée. Lorsqu'il qualifie une méthode d'enseignement, l'adjectif « didactique » est défini comme suit : « convey[ing] knowledge or information by formal means such as lectures and textbooks, rote learning, etc. » Si les méthodes d'enseignement spécifiques telles que les cours magistraux et l'apprentissage par cœur ne sont pas intrinsèquement considérées comme bonnes ou mauvaises dans cette définition, celles associées aux techniques centrées sur l'enseignant (*teacher-centered*) sont aujourd'hui généralement vues comme une entrave à un apprentissage plus ludique centré sur l'apprenant, comme le souligne Sue Cross : « [such techniques] have come to mean all that is *didactic*, boring, self-serving and neglectful of the interests of learners » (Cross 9, c'est moi qui souligne). Le terme « didactique » est ici clairement péjoratif, et reflète une des définitions de l'*OED* : « frequently contrasted (often unfavourably) with teaching methods encouraging greater involvement or creativity on the part of those being taught. » Pour autant, la définition B. 1. b., où cette note suit le sens donné, est la seule qui ne soit pas neutre.

On note ainsi une tension similaire dans ce qui est considéré comme moral ou didactique : les deux adjectifs peuvent se référer de manière tout à fait impartiale aux notions philosophiques de bien et de mal d'une part et à l'enseignement d'autre part, ou bien désigner de manière dépréciative certaines des applications austères de chacun d'eux. Étant donné la proximité des termes, « fiction didactique » et simplement « didactique » sont utilisés de manière interchangeable dans cette thèse pour des raisons de lisibilité. Il convient maintenant de contextualiser cette notion dans le paysage littéraire du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

## 2. *Le didactisme moral et la fiction britannique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*

Le souci de définir et prescrire la conduite à tenir à l'époque géorgienne se reflète dans la façon dont les écrits publiés étaient jugés par la critique, cette dernière commentant d'ordinaire la qualité morale des premiers. C'est particulièrement vrai en ce qui concerne les romans, associés à l'immoralité à une époque où ils n'étaient pas encore établis en tant que formes littéraires et artistiques<sup>9</sup>. Par exemple, dans *Sermons for Young Women* (1766), James Fordyce écrit à destination des femmes : « the general run of Novels as utterly unfit for you. Instruction they convey none. They paint scenes of pleasure and passion altogether improper for you to behold, even with the mind's eye » (Volume 1 : 114). La référence à l'inconvenance suggère que le type d'instruction qui fait défaut dans la majorité des romans est d'ordre moral et concerne le bien et le mal. En revanche, si un roman était lu à des fins « morales et pédagogiques » à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, on considérerait qu'il avait de la valeur pour le lecteur et surtout pour la lectrice, reliant ainsi fortement les concepts de moralité et d'instruction (Warner 8).

L'instruction morale comme élément primordial pour juger de la qualité d'un roman est également au cœur du quatrième essai de Samuel Johnson tiré de *The Rambler* (1750). Pour Johnson, « [novels] are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions to life » (17). Ainsi ces œuvres doivent-elles être soumises aux critères moraux les plus élevés, étant donné l'influence qu'elles sont susceptibles d'avoir sur des esprits qui se laissent facilement impressionner, en plus d'être jugées sur le plan esthétique en fonction de leur vraisemblance (16). Johnson cite Horace dans son essai, et son principe rappelle bien-sûr le principe classique *dulce et utile*. Soixante ans après la publication de l'essai de Johnson, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, qui affirma notamment qu'il est impardonnable pour un roman d'être ennuyeux<sup>10</sup>, continue de considérer que le divertissement ou l'esthétisme ne suffisent pas à évaluer la qualité d'une œuvre, comme le souligne la citation introductive de cette thèse ; une évaluation morale reste nécessaire (48).

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9 Pour William Warner, le processus de légitimation de la forme romanesque s'achève au milieu du dix-neuvième siècle (36).

10 Citation d'origine : « the unpardonable sin of a novel is dullness ».

Comme l'affirme Simon Blackburn, les vertus sont spécifiques à chaque culture. Ainsi, « the humility, charity, patience, and chastity of Christianity would have been unintelligible as ethical virtues to classical Greeks » (383). Dans le contexte de la Grande-Bretagne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'éthique chrétienne protestante est centrale, et les vertus mentionnées par Blackburn imprègnent les œuvres que j'étudie à des degrés divers. Pour Fordyce, « l'exercice de la piété » permet un exercice « aisé et délicieux » de la vertu chez les femmes (Volume 2 : 28, ma traduction). En outre, Samuel Richardson, qui est régulièrement cité comme le précurseur des romans didactiques anglais, écrit de Clarissa qu'il voulait en faire « une héroïne réellement chrétienne », tout comme Sir Charles Grandison devait être « un homme de religion et de vertu » (iv, vi, souligné par l'auteur, ma traduction)<sup>11</sup>. En 1938, Katherine Hornbeak écrivait que les romans de Richardson s'inscrivaient dans la lignée de la littérature explicitement didactique tels que les livres de conduite (8). Elle insiste sur le lien entre la littérature prescriptive et la Bible : « one of the Puritan taboos which is stated over and over in the domestic handbook and which Richardson upholds consistently is that against the reading of romances [as opposed to novels] » (24)<sup>12</sup>.

Dans *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing, 1790-1820* (2017), Hilary Havens souligne également l'étroite parenté entre les manuels de bonne conduite et le roman didactique, particulièrement évidente dans les romans du milieu du siècle de Richardson (7).<sup>13</sup> Pour Havens, les romans didactiques pouvaient comporter des éléments d'imagination, mais l'instruction, qu'elle définit comme étant de nature morale, devait en demeurer l'objectif principal (5, 8). Un demi-siècle après la publication des romans de Richardson, la centralité de l'ethos chrétien est particulièrement visible dans les romans évangéliques des années 1800 et 1810, son représentant le plus célèbre étant *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1806) de Hannah More. Selon Anthony Mandal, l'évangélisme du dernier tiers du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle était

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11 Ces commentaires apparaissent tous deux dans la préface de *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). Citations d'origine : « the practice of piety, » « easy and delightful », « a truly *Christian Heroine* », « A Man of Religion and Virtue ».

12 Le terme même de « roman » faisait l'objet de débats à l'époque, et la distinction qu'opère Hornbeak entre la fiction didactique de Richardson et les *romances* constitue un premier argument en faveur de l'appellation de « roman » (*novel*) pour décrire les œuvres étudiées dans cette thèse. Ce débat sur la terminologie est détaillé davantage dans la section relative aux corpus de cette introduction (partie II) ; en attendant, j'utilise indifféremment les termes « roman » et « œuvres de fiction ».

13 Havens suggère par ailleurs que Richardson s'appuya sur la tradition initiée par des romanciers et romancières antérieurs qui intégraient des éléments didactiques dans leurs œuvres, comme Pénélope Aubin (5-6).

fondé sur l'inquiétude de nombreux anglicans vis-à-vis d'un christianisme qui aurait été vidé de son sens profond, réduit à des pratiques exécutées par habitude et convention sans que la foi ne se vive réellement au quotidien (2014 : xix). Dans les premières années du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le didactisme évangélique imprègne des romans tels que *Cælebs* dans un but de prosélytisme ; là encore, l'instruction morale – et chrétienne – est dispensée par la fiction, supplantant l'importance de l'intrigue (xxi).

Le souci d'instruction visible dans la prolifération d'ouvrages pédagogiques au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle peut être lié à l'importance du sujet dans les œuvres des philosophes des Lumières, qui selon Mathilde Lerenard et Pauline Pujo « ont fait des idéaux et des pratiques éducatifs un enjeu historique » (7). L'ouvrage de John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), fut particulièrement influent, et des théoriciennes et romancières de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, telles que Maria Edgeworth et Mary Wollstonecraft, y firent directement allusion dans leurs propres écrits sur l'éducation<sup>14</sup>. La description que fait Locke d'une méthode d'éducation « la plus propre à faire des hommes vertueux, utiles à leurs semblables » s'adresse spécifiquement aux gentilshommes (*gentlemen*), mais est devenue un point de référence essentiel pour les auteurs concernés par l'éducation des hommes et des femmes (xxxix)<sup>15</sup>. Edgeworth fait également référence aux opinions de Jean-Jacques Rousseau sur l'éducation, par exemple en ce qui concerne les filles jouant à la poupée, illustrant ainsi l'impact de son *Émile ou de l'éducation* de 1762 (3).

Compte tenu de l'élévation du roman au rang de forme artistique au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, suivie de l'avènement de la doctrine de l'art pour l'art, les critiques littéraires des cent dernières années bien souvent raillèrent de nombreux romans du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle qui paraissent didactiques, et en cela dénués de qualités artistiques pour le public moderne. Paul Hunter affirme en 1990 qu'au milieu du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le XVIII<sup>e</sup> constituait l'embaras des programmes universitaires en littérature anglais, « le mouton noir dont personne ne voulait parler » des programmes universitaires anglais de littérature (xiii, ma traduction). Hunter attribue explicitement cet état de fait à la nature moralement didactique de la littérature de

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14 Voir *Thoughts on the Education of Children* de Wollstonecraft (1787, 11) et *Practical Education* de Edgeworth (1798, 95). Des romans des deux autrices figurent dans les corpus étudiés dans cette thèse, présentés dans la partie II ci-dessous.

15 Traduction de Gabriel Compayré de 1882. Voir <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54006609/texteBrut>, accès du 20 juin 2022.

l'époque (xiii). Cependant, nous voyons un regain d'intérêt pour la fiction de l'époque depuis une cinquantaine d'années, avec l'avènement des études féministes, néo-historicistes et les *cultural studies* (xiv).

Le didactisme moral dans la fiction narrative des XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles est à présent un sujet d'étude ; différents chercheurs et chercheuses avancent que cet aspect ne devrait plus être écarté au motif qu'il déshonorerait la littérature anglaise. Dans son ouvrage sur le roman victorien, Jesse Rosenthal affirme : « the moral dimensions of Victorian thought still remain a bit of an embarrassment for critics: a sort of stuffy, stiff-necked rectitude that can obscure more meaningful scientific or aesthetic insights » (2). Il soutient également que le formalisme victorien était intimement lié à la morale, conférant ainsi au moralisme une dimension artistique et élevant ses préoccupations au niveau de philosophie au delà d'une simple prescription comportementale rigide (2). Une approche similaire est adoptée dans l'ouvrage collectif édité par Hilary Havens, dont le bornage chronologique recoupe le mien. Dans l'introduction, Havens déclare :

it is undeniable that the single-minded didacticism of these works can, at times, be grating on modern ears; while the primary purpose of this collection is not an aesthetic defence of these novels, the recuperative work done by many of the essays emphasizes the ideological *and* literary contributions women made during this period. (13, c'est l'autrice qui souligne)

Le titre de l'ouvrage suggère une approche féministe, ou du moins attentive au genre. En effet, plus de la moitié de la production de fiction à l'époque fut écrite par des femmes, ce que de précédents chercheurs utilisèrent pour rejeter ce vaste corpus d'œuvres (Mandal 2007 : 13, 27)<sup>16</sup>. Havens relie explicitement l'écriture de romans didactiques à l'écriture féminine, expliquant que « ces romancières tirent leur autorité de leur position d'épouses, de mères, mais surtout d'éducatrices » (13, ma traduction)<sup>17</sup>. La relation entre la réception du didactisme moral dans la fiction au fil du temps et l'évolution des conceptions de l'art et du bon goût sous-tend une grande partie de mon travail.

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16 Dans son ouvrage qui fit date *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt écrit notamment : « the majority of eighteenth-century novels were actually written by women, but this had long remained a purely quantitative assertion of dominance ; it was Jane Austen who completed the work that Fanny Burney had begun, and challenged the masculine prerogative in a much more important manner » (310).

17 Citation d'origine : « these novelists gain authority from their positions as wives, mothers, but above all, educators ».

Le titre du livre de Havens renvoie également à la question de l'appellation *roman didactique*. En effet, des chercheurs et chercheuses ayant travaillé sur certains de ces romans, comme Eleanor Ty, purent les qualifier de « didactiques » sans aller jusqu'à suggérer l'unicité générique que recouvre la formule *roman didactique* (1998 : 9). De même, Lisa Wood se concentre sur le type de « didactisme » que l'on trouve chez les romancières conservatrices ; la forme nominale est ici assez éloignée de la combinaison d'un adjectif et d'un nom qui constituent une catégorie générique, telle que *roman didactique*. À l'inverse, Hilary Havens affirme que « peu de romans didactiques sont aussi célébrés que leurs homologues sentimentaux, gothiques ou domestiques », ce qui confère une légitimité à la catégorie générique de *roman didactique* en lui faisant une place aux côtés de types de romans plus établis (13, ma traduction)<sup>18</sup>.

Il convient ici d'interroger la notion de genre. Selon Alastair Fowler, les genres littéraires se caractérisent par leur contenu ainsi que par leur structure externe (55). La structure externe dépend de ce que Fowler appelle le « genre historique » (*historical genre*, qu'il appelle aussi *kind*), comme le sonnet, qui implique une structure spécifique bien qu'elle puisse varier selon le contexte historique (57). La division en chapitres est un exemple de structure externe que l'on retrouve dans plusieurs genres, dont les romans (61). Fowler concède qu'il n'est pas simple de définir clairement les limites des différents genres, d'autant plus que les textes individuels peuvent combiner des caractéristiques de plusieurs catégories (57). Cependant, comme il l'écrit avec pragmatisme, « without distinguishing some such categories of genre, criticism must sink into incoherent confusion » (55). À partir des genres, Fowler développe le concept de *sous-genre* : « in subgenre we find the same external characteristics with the corresponding kind, together with additional specification of content » (56). Ainsi, le roman gothique, le roman sentimental ou encore le roman didactique peuvent constituer des sous-genres du genre romanesque, dans la mesure où ils sont définis comme des romans traitant de sujets plus spécifiques que le genre général, puisque le sous-genre est déterminé par le contenu ou le sujet (112).

À l'inverse, Fowler définit le *mode* comme suit : « [mode] is a selection or abstraction from kind. It has few if any external rules, but evokes a historical kind through samples of its

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18 Citation d'origine : « few didactic novels are as celebrated as their sentimental, Gothic, or domestic counterparts ».



internal repertoire. Compared with historical genre, then, the subgenre category adds features, whereas the mode subtracts them » (56). Les termes désignant le mode ont ainsi tendance à être de forme adjectivale plutôt que nominale, comme « comique » dérivant de « comédie ». Des éléments présentés comme « un motif spécifique », « une formule » ou « une qualité rhétorique » peuvent signaler la présence d'un mode particulier et se présenter soit localement, soit plus largement dans une œuvre (107, ma traduction)<sup>19</sup>. Dans son étude sur les romans didactiques, Lisa Wood souligne la récurrence de certains éléments de langage, tels la présence d'énoncés enchâssés ou de pauses digressives pour commenter des valeurs morales spécifiques afin d'indiquer au lecteur ou à la lectrice la réaction attendue (66). Ces caractéristiques constituent une qualité rhétorique, ce qui indique que, dans ce cas, le didactisme est conçu comme un mode. Cependant, Wood souligne également l'omniprésence de l'intrigue du mariage qui prouve la valeur morale de l'héroïne, ou encore l'utilisation de l'intrigue en miroir, qui oppose trajectoire tragique et destin honorable dans le but de promouvoir une leçon morale (68, 70). Ces éléments relèvent du sujet et, dans une moindre mesure, de la forme caractéristiques des sous-genres, ce qui complique la classification.

Du point de vue de la linguistique de corpus, Douglas Biber et Susan Conrad définissent de la même manière les genres en termes de caractéristiques reconnaissables, de format et d'organisation rhétorique qui constituent le texte (16). En outre, ils affirment que l'analyse des textes du point de vue du registre implique d'examiner les caractéristiques linguistiques omniprésentes qui ont des fonctions communicatives importantes, ce que nous pourrions facilement appliquer à l'expression de l'instruction morale dans le cas de la fiction didactique (16). Ils distinguent le genre et le registre du style, ce dernier recouvrant les choix linguistiques effectués pour leur valeur purement esthétique (16). Biber et Conrad diffèrent de Fowler en positionnant le sujet comme un élément du registre plutôt que du genre, mais autrement leurs concepts de genre et de registre reflètent largement ceux de genre et de mode de ce dernier (37). Le genre qui est au cœur de mon travail de recherche est le roman. Cependant, la difficulté est de déterminer si la composante didactique des romans est un registre ou un mode dont la présence peut varier dans le récit et qui est identifiable par des marqueurs linguistiques répétés, ou si, à travers certains éléments formels et thèmes qui

19 Citations d'origine : « a characteristic motif », « a formula », « a rhetorical proportion or quality ».

structurent les textes, le roman didactique peut être considéré comme un sous-genre au sens de Fowler (112).

Cette question est importante, car les catégories génériques ont un pouvoir descriptif plus stable que les modes ou les registres, qui peuvent apparaître à des intensités variables dans tout type de texte. Le mode d'un roman peut être didactique, tout comme celui d'un poème ou d'une pièce de théâtre ; le terme didactique ne décrit pas ici un ensemble cohérent d'œuvres, étant donné que la structure formelle peut être très différente. En revanche, si le terme didactique est utilisé pour désigner un sous-genre de fiction, comme le fait Havens, il définit un groupe spécifique de romans sur la base de leur contenu didactique reconnaissable. Ainsi, le fait de nommer un sous-genre peut conférer une légitimité à un type d'écriture auparavant non catégorisé ou non reconnu, ce qui peut à son tour contribuer à lui faire une place dans le canon littéraire, ou du moins dans la hiérarchie des genres en constante évolution (Fowler 221). Cela fait partie du projet de Havens ; en étudiant un panel d'œuvres regroupées sous la rubrique *romans didactiques*, les contributrices de l'ouvrage affirment la valeur de ces romans en tant que sous-genre, qui pour Havens illustre « un important moment historique pour le développement de la voix politique des femmes » (13, ma traduction)<sup>20</sup>.

La question de la définition du didactisme comme sous-genre de la fiction narrative ou comme mode est au cœur de mon travail, et les corpus de romans, décrits dans la section suivante, ont été conçus afin d'y répondre. La question reste sans réponse tout au long des premiers chapitres de cette thèse, et les termes *didactisme* et *didactisme moral* sont utilisés de manière interchangeable pour parler des romans avant que la question ne soit réglée au chapitre 7.

## II. Les corpus

Les études qui se concentrent sur la fiction didactique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle tendent à délimiter leur corpus de textes en fonction de leur propre perception du didactisme moral. Lisa Wood examine l'écriture des romancières conservatrices de la période post-révolutionnaire, et justifie son approche genrée par l'observation que « l'objectif

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<sup>20</sup> Citation d'origine : « important historical moment in the steady development of women's political voice ».

propagandiste » (*propagandistic purpose*) se trouvait principalement chez les écrivaines (11). Elle choisit ensuite de se concentrer sur les autrices conservatrices, en tant que sous-groupe de femmes écrivant des fictions didactiques. En effet, comme elle et Hilary Havens le notent, le didactisme se retrouve dans les fictions de femmes de diverses affiliations politiques, y compris des révolutionnaires comme Mary Wollstonecraft ou Mary Hays (Wood 62, Havens 11). Havens différencie les romans didactiques des non didactiques en fonction de l'intention de l'auteur, comme pour Richardson qui explicite son dessein dans les préfaces de *Pamela* et *Clarissa*, et de sa perception du degré de subversion contenue dans l'œuvre. Ainsi, *Evelina* de Burney est exclu de la sélection de romans traités en raison de sa « satire omniprésente » (*pervasive satire*) (6, 8).

Dans mon étude sur le didactisme moral dans les romans britanniques de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, ma décision fut de construire mon corpus à partir de la réception initiale, afin de déterminer ce qui put constituer un éventuel sous-genre du roman didactique au moment où les œuvres furent publiées et lues pour la première fois. En m'appuyant sur les affirmations d'Eleanor Ty et de Wood selon lesquelles le niveau élevé des attentes des critiques et du public en termes de moralité explique en partie la prévalence des romans didactiques à cette époque, j'ai utilisé les critiques disponibles publiées dans la *Monthly Review* et la *Critical Review* afin de déterminer le corpus d'œuvres à étudier (Ty 1998 : 7, Wood 12).

Le terme *roman (novel)* est utilisé pour décrire les livres inclus dans mon étude d'après leur réception. La terminologie était sujette à débat à l'époque, et j'utilise *roman* plutôt que *romance* en raison de la prévalence des œuvres de mes deux corpus qui incluent *novel* dans leur titre, et de son utilisation fréquente dans les critiques de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review*. Ce choix reflète également la distinction opérée par Clara Reeve, pionnière de la théorisation du roman anglais : « The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things.—The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written » (111). La définition du genre donnée par Reeve à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle convient particulièrement bien, étant donné que l'un des critères d'inclusion dans les corpus que j'étudie stipule que les intrigues doivent être contemporaines aux romans, comme nous le verrons plus loin.

## 1. *Le corpus didactique*

Constitué de 18 romans publiés entre 1778 et 1834, le corpus présenté dans le tableau 1 fut élaboré principalement à partir des commentaires de critiques des premières éditions, provenant soit de la *Monthly Review*, soit de la *Critical Review*. Ces magazines furent créés au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle pour identifier et évaluer le nombre croissant de publications, et les opinions que l'on y trouve constituent une première tentative de définir une norme pour la littérature en prose, et de séparer le bon grain de l'ivraie (Millet 342). Ces magazines sont le point de départ de la création du corpus en raison de leur statut de revues littéraires prééminentes de l'époque (Donoghue 1996, Waters 2004, Christie 2018). Leur importance culturelle dans la deuxième partie du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle les rend également accessibles ; les revues sont au moins partiellement reproduites dans le volume 1 de *The English Novel, 1770-1829 : A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles* (2000) de James Raven, qui se concentre sur la période 1770-1799. Pour la période 1800-1829, les critiques complètes de la *Monthly Review*, de la *Critical Review* et d'autres magazines sont entièrement accessibles sur le site de Peter Garside, *British Fiction, 1800-1829 : A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception* (désormais abrégé en *Database of British Fiction*, ou simplement *DBF*). Étant donné que Raven présente exclusivement des critiques de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review*, seules les critiques des mêmes magazines pour la période 1800-1814 sont prises en compte, par souci de cohérence. Outre *The English Novel* de Raven et *Database of British Fiction*, les notices de catalogues de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review* sur HathiTrust Digital Library furent utilisées pour compiler les critiques.

1778	<i>Evelina</i>	Frances Burney
1778	<i>Munster Village</i>	Lady Mary Hamilton
1782	<i>Cecilia</i>	Frances Burney
1788	<i>Mary, A Fiction</i>	Mary Wollstonecraft
1790	<i>Julia, A Novel</i>	Hannah Maria Williams
1796	<i>HermSprong, or Man as He Is Not</i>	Robert Bage
1796	<i>Memoirs of Emma Courtney</i>	Mary Hays
1798	<i>Edgar: or, The Phantom of the Castle</i>	Richard Sicklemore
1798	<i>Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman</i>	Mary Wollstonecraft
1801	<i>Belinda</i>	Maria Edgeworth
1801	<i>The Father and Daughter</i>	Amelia Opie
1805	<i>The Nobility of the Heart</i>	Elizabeth Spence
1808	<i>Cælebs in Search of a Wife</i>	Hannah More
1810	<i>Romance Readers and Romance Writers</i>	Sarah Green
1811	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	Jane Austen
1811	<i>Self-Control</i>	Mary Brunton
1813	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen
1814	<i>Patronage</i>	Maria Edgeworth

Tableau 1. Le corpus didactique

Bien que la qualité d'un grand nombre des romans de cette liste n'ait pas toujours été jugée de manière équivalente au fil du temps, tous ont fait l'objet d'au moins une critique positive lors de leur première publication. Deux éléments principaux devaient apparaître dans au moins une critique pour qu'un roman soit inclus : la présence perçue d'une instruction morale et la capacité à amuser ou divertir le lectorat, conformément à la tradition horacienne de *dulce et utile* qui sous-tend les considérations théoriques de Johnson et Barbauld sur la forme émergente du roman. De plus, seuls les romans dont l'action se déroule principalement en Grande-Bretagne à la même époque que celle de l'écriture ont été retenus, mettant de côté les romans historiques ainsi que les récits de voyage - conformément à la définition du genre romanesque donnée par Reeve. Les romans gothiques n'ont pas été exclus par principe, bien que seul *Edgar ; or The Phantom of the Castle* de Richard Sicklemore entre clairement dans cette catégorie<sup>21</sup>. Enfin, la sélection tient

<sup>21</sup> La période durant laquelle se déroule la narration dans *Edgar* n'est pas claire. Le roman a été inclus car le cadre non spécifié signifie qu'aucun terme lié à une période antérieure ne risque d'interférer avec l'analyse statistique de l'utilisation du vocabulaire, l'une des méthodes utilisées dans cette recherche. La quantité de romans gothiques est nécessairement faible en raison de la forte proportion de romans du genre à se

compte de la disponibilité des romans en format électronique, afin de procéder à une analyse assistée par ordinateur comme moyen d'étudier les caractéristiques de registre et de genre propres à ce corpus dit didactique (Jockers 28, Rastier 227). Les diverses approches méthodologiques de l'étude sont détaillées dans la partie III plus bas.

Le roman le plus ancien de mon corpus est *Evelina* de Frances Burney. Il a été choisi comme point de départ chronologique en raison de son statut canonique actuel et de son succès au moment de sa sortie, comme en témoigne la comparaison avec Samuel Richardson par la *Critical Review* : « This performance deserves no common praise, whether we consider it in a moral or literary light. It would have disgraced neither the head nor the heart of Richardson » (CR 1778, vol. 46 : 202). L'inclusion d'*Evelina* illustre mon parti pris de prendre la réception comme point de départ. Si des chercheurs et chercheuses récents ont eu tendance à minimiser la portée didactique de ce roman, en faveur notamment de la « satire omniprésente » qui s'y trouve, comme cité précédemment (Havens 8), les premiers critiques identifièrent clairement un effet didactique<sup>22</sup>. Mon corpus devait initialement se terminer par *Helen* (1834) de Maria Edgeworth, le dernier roman d'une autre grande figure littéraire du roman de l'époque. Cependant, comme la *Database of British Fiction*, qui fournit un inventaire assez exhaustif des critiques sur la fiction du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, se termine en 1829, le bornage chronologique fut raccourci afin de construire un corpus basé sur des critères uniformes.

Le critère de la disponibilité électronique réduit nécessairement le corpus de manière considérable, car de nombreux romans aujourd'hui tombés dans l'oubli n'existent qu'en version imprimée dans des bibliothèques spécialisées telles que la Chawton House Library. Davantage de romans écrits par des femmes que par des hommes répondent aux critères indépendamment de la disponibilité numérique : 45 romans furent décrits dans les critiques initiales comme moralement instructifs et divertissants, en plus de se dérouler principalement dans les îles britanniques à l'époque où ils furent écrits, dont quatre par des hommes<sup>23</sup>. Deux romans écrits par des hommes restent dans la sélection de 18 romans

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dérouler en dehors des îles britanniques et/ou dans des périodes antérieures. Voir par exemple *The Mysteries of Udolpho* de Ann Radcliffe (1794) ou encore *The Monk* de Matthew Gregory Lewis (1796).

22 Les critiques du *Monthly* et du *Critical* sont analysées en détail dans le chapitre 1.

23 Les titres des 27 romans qui ne purent être incorporés au corpus car uniquement disponibles en édition papier sont apparaissent en appendice 1.

numérisés, ce qui n'affecte pas le ratio original de façon conséquente. La grande disproportion dans mon corpus d'auteurs masculins et féminins signale l'importance de la question du genre dans la réception précoce du didactisme moral.

En outre, la disponibilité des romans en format électronique soulève la question du canon littéraire. Certains romans sont extraits de la collection Novels Online de Chawton House (par exemple, *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* de Sarah Green), qui se spécialise dans l'écriture féminine et vise à rendre « librement accessibles les transcriptions en texte intégral de certaines des œuvres les plus rares de la collection de la bibliothèque de Chawton House<sup>24</sup> ». D'autres, comme *Julia* de Helen Maria Williams, figurent dans *Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)*, décrite comme suit : « [ECCO] includes significant English-language and foreign-language titles printed in the United Kingdom during the eighteenth century, along with thousands of important works from the Americas » (c'est moi qui souligne)<sup>25</sup>. Enfin, un certain nombre proviennent du Projet Gutenberg (par exemple *Evelina* de Frances Burney ou *Pride and Prejudice* de Jane Austen), qui a tendance à ne pas avoir d'œuvres plus obscures. Le corpus comprend donc des romans dont le degré de canonicité est très variable, ce qui permet d'explorer en détail le concept de canon littéraire au chapitre 8.

Ce corpus comprend certains romans dont la popularité fut retentissante mais relativement fugace. C'est le cas de *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* de Hannah More, qui fut édité à six reprises l'année de sa publication, puis perdit en audience et considération dès le milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (DBF 1808A081). D'autres romans ne furent publiés qu'une seule fois, comme *The Nobility of the Heart* de Elizabeth Spence (DBF 1805A067). L'examen de romans qui firent l'objet de critiques similaires mais traités très différemment par le public à travers les ventes permet d'interroger la notion de bon goût ainsi que le fossé entre l'autorité littéraire que représentent les critiques et le public. Enfin, les auteurs et autrices dont les œuvres sont

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24 'Novels Online.' Chawton House. <https://chawtonhouse.org/the-library/womens-writing-in-english-2/novels-online/>. Accessed 19 January 2022. Ma traduction.

25 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) TCP' Text Creation Partnership. <https://textcreationpartnership.org/tcp-texts/ecco-tcp-eighteenth-century-collections-online/>. Accessed 19 January 2022.

incluses dans le corpus illustrent une variété de positions politiques, du conservatisme d'Hannah More à la radicalité de Mary Wollstonecraft, ce qui doit être pris en compte dans la mesure où leurs romans reçurent des critiques similaires lors de leur publication, du moins en ce qui concerne la présence perçue de didactisme moral. Il est également à noter que More et Wollstonecraft, ainsi que Maria Edgeworth, Sarah Green et Mary Hays, publièrent également des écrits pédagogiques non fictionnels. Cela illustre le lien entre les romans didactiques et la littérature de conduite évoqué plus haut, bien qu'uniquement pour cinq auteurs sur quinze.

Malgré ces différences, plusieurs éléments formels donnent une certaine unité au corpus : outre la prédominance d'auteurs féminins dans les romans, 77% sont des récits hétérodiégétiques et 83% mettent en scène un ou plusieurs protagonistes féminins (comme les sœurs Dashwood dans *Sense and Sensibility* d'Austen ou Mary et Marianne dans *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* de Green). Ici et ailleurs, les pourcentages sont donnés pour faciliter la comparaison, étant entendu qu'ils sont appliqués à de petits nombres.

Bien que plusieurs sous-catégories génériques puissent s'appliquer à certains de ces romans, telles que satirique, gothique, jacobin ou anti-jacobin, presque tous sont construits autour d'une intrigue sentimentale qui sert à illustrer les leçons à tirer du texte, selon la définition de Wood pour le roman domestique (69)<sup>26</sup>. Cette définition soulève la question de savoir si un sous-genre didactique, différent du roman domestique, peut être un descripteur pertinent pour ces romans. Afin de répondre à cette question, j'ai élaboré un corpus de référence de taille équivalente et présentant plusieurs caractéristiques similaires, définies et expliquées ci-dessous.

## 2. *Le corpus de référence*

Selon Michaela Mahlberg, « corpus work is essentially comparative: a text or text extract is compared to an appropriate reference corpus providing a relative norm » (2013 : 24). J'ai construit par conséquent un corpus de référence pour fournir un échantillon

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26 Le seul véritable contre-exemple est *Edgar* de Sicklemore, qui termine bien sur un mariage, mais dont l'intrigue sentimentale est très périphérique. Dans tous les autres romans, la relation amoureuse est centrale à l'intrigue, même si son issue n'est pas toujours heureuse.



représentatif de fiction auquel mon corpus didactique pourrait être comparé, en utilisant également les premières critiques de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review* (voir tableau 2). Deux romans inclus dans le corpus de référence ne reçurent pas de critique lors de leur première publication : *The Son of a Genius* (1812) de Barbara Hofland et *Mansfield Park* (1814) de Jane Austen. Ils furent conservés afin d'assurer l'équilibre entre les romans publiés au XVIII<sup>e</sup> et au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ainsi que pour éviter qu'un auteur ne domine le corpus (par exemple, d'autres romans de Thomas Holcroft et de William Godwin sont disponibles en format numérique). Ces deux romans sont nécessairement traités à part des autres lorsque je m'intéresse spécifiquement des critiques, mais comme le corpus de référence a été construit sur une absence de réception didactique précoce explicite, leur présence dans le corpus de référence n'a pas été jugée problématique.

Pour que les deux corpus soient comparables, les romans du corpus de référence suivent le même bornage chronologique que le corpus didactique, et comprennent le même nombre de romans avec des caractéristiques similaires, à savoir que l'intrigue se déroule avant tout en Grande Bretagne contemporaine des auteurs et autrices (Bandry-Scubbi 2015 : 4)<sup>27</sup>. Le corpus de référence comprend 18 romans publiés entre 1778 et 1814, dont 9 avant 1800 et 9 à partir de 1801, comme son homologue didactique. Les romans dont l'intrigue se déroule en Irlande et qui parurent après l'acte d'Union de 1801 sont inclus, malgré sa nature controversée (Kelly 2018 : 140). Les listes de romans établies dans *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* de Gary Kelly et *The English Novel, 1770-1829* de James Raven ont été utilisées pour compléter et adapter la sélection des romans du corpus de référence d'Anne Bandry-Scubbi provenant de son article 'Chawton Novels Online, Women's Writing 1751-1834 and Computer-Aided Textual Analysis'. Les textes en format numérique proviennent en majorité des bases de données Project Gutenberg, ECCO, et *Nineteenth Century Collection Online*.

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27 Plus de la moitié de *The Vagabond* de George Walker se déroule en Amérique, mais l'intrigue commence et s'achève sur le territoire britannique, raison pour laquelle ce roman figure malgré tout dans le corpus de référence.

1778	<i>Learning at a Loss</i>	Gregory Lewis Way
1788	<i>Emmeline; or, The Orphan of the Castle</i>	Charlotte Smith
1791	<i>A Simple Story</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
1792	<i>Anna St. Ives</i>	Thomas Holcroft
1794	<i>Caleb Williams</i>	William Godwin
1795	<i>Henry</i>	Richard Cumberland
1796	<i>Nature and Art</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
1798	<i>Rosamund Gray</i>	Charles Lamb
1799	<i>The Vagabond</i>	George Walker
1804	<i>Adeline Mowbray</i>	Amelia Opie
1805	<i>Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling</i>	Caleb Williams
1806	<i>Leonora</i>	Maria Edgeworth
1806	<i>The Wild Irish Girl</i>	Sydney Owenson
1812	<i>The Son of a Genius</i>	Barbara Hofland
1813	<i>The Heroine</i>	Eaton Stannard Barrett
1814	<i>Mansfield Park</i>	Jane Austen
1814	<i>Discipline</i>	Mary Brunton
1814	<i>The Wanderer</i>	Frances Burney

Tableau 2. Le corpus de référence

Aucun des romans du corpus de référence ne recoupe le corpus didactique, mais plusieurs autrices apparaissent dans les deux, à savoir Amelia Opie, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Mary Brunton et Frances Burney. Cela semble indiquer que la réception initiale du didactisme s'attachait à un roman donné et ne s'étendait pas nécessairement à l'ensemble de l'œuvre d'un auteur. Cette distinction entre réception de l'œuvre et de son auteur est vouée à évoluer, car la réputation des romanciers tend à se stabiliser ; ces derniers en viennent à être associés à des qualités particulières, comme le didactisme (voir chapitre 8). On peut également en déduire que si la plupart des romans reçus comme didactiques ont été écrits par des femmes, les romancières n'étaient pas nécessairement associées au didactisme moral.

Elizabeth Inchbald et Godwin William apparaissent deux fois dans le corpus de référence ; c'est également le cas d'Austen, Burney, Edgeworth et Wollstonecraft dans le corpus didactique. Je me suis efforcée de maintenir un nombre comparable d'auteurs dans les deux corpus, afin d'éviter que la trop grande présence d'un romancier ou d'une

romancière ne fausse l'étude. Tout comme le corpus didactique, le corpus de référence contient des textes d'écrivains d'affiliations politiques diverses, bien qu'il penche légèrement plus du côté de la radicalité. Sur la base des informations de l'*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, les romans écrits par William Godwin, Elizabeth Inchbald, Thomas Holcroft, Charles Lamb, Sydney Owenson, Amelia Opie et Charlotte Smith peuvent être classés comme politiquement radicaux, ce qui représente la moitié des œuvres dans le corpus de référence. En revanche, seuls six romans du corpus didactique ont été écrits par les révolutionnaires Robert Bage, Mary Hays, Amelia Opie, Helen Maria Williams et Mary Wollstonecraft. Enfin, le corpus de référence présente également une gamme variée de succès commerciaux et critiques, comme en témoigne l'historique de leur publication jusqu'en 1850 fourni par Raven et la *Database of British Fiction*.

D'autre part, le corpus de référence comprend dix romans écrits par des femmes, et huit écrits par des hommes. C'est la principale différence entre les deux corpus, si l'on exclut le fait que le corpus de référence a été choisi pour l'absence de didactisme perçu dans la première réception. Cette parité relative illustre la réalité du marché littéraire de l'époque. La production frôlait l'équilibre entre hommes et femmes, bien que durant les dernières années de la période d'étude les femmes aient été légèrement majoritaires (Mandal 2007 : 13, 27). En outre, la différence de proportion de romanciers et de romancières dans les deux corpus me permet d'étudier le rôle du genre dans la réception et les manifestations linguistiques du didactisme moral.

Comme on pouvait s'y attendre, il est plus difficile de trouver une sous-catégorie générique qui illustrerait l'unité narrative du corpus de référence, étant donné que ces romans ont été choisis pour ce qu'ils ne sont pas, plutôt que pour un trait commun perçu. Le corpus de référence a été conçu pour permettre la comparaison avec le corpus didactique afin de mettre en lumière les spécificités de ce dernier lorsqu'il est étudié par rapport à un échantillon représentatif de la fiction de l'époque : suffisamment similaire pour que la comparaison soit possible et différent dans les aspects clés qui intéressent mon étude.

### III. Questions de recherche et approche méthodologique

À première vue, les deux corpus se ressemblent à bien des égards. L'éventail des sensibilités politiques n'est nullement surprenant dans le corpus de référence, étant donné que le paysage littéraire de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle fut marqué par les débats autour des idéaux et des effets de la Révolution française, et que ce corpus vise à fournir un échantillon relativement représentatif de la fiction narrative se déroulant principalement dans la Grande-Bretagne contemporaine publiés à cette époque (Grenby 4). Cependant, la présence d'écrivains tels que Mary Wollstonecraft ou ses consœurs radicales Mary Hays et Hannah Maria Williams aux côtés d'autrices conservatrices et/ou évangéliques Hannah More et Mary Brunton dans le corpus didactique est quelque peu déroutante. Le didactisme moral apparaît par essence lié à la politique conservatrice, dans la mesure où la fiction didactique « perpétue des codes moraux stricts » (Havens 8, ma traduction)<sup>28</sup>. Pourtant, comme l'affirme Havens, certaines autrices radicales ont pu s'approprier le genre didactique à leur avantage (8). Il est également à noter que bien que Wollstonecraft et More aient été dépeintes comme de farouches adversaires de leur vivant, certainement de la manière la plus célèbre par Richard Polwhele dans *The Unsex'd Females* (1798)<sup>29</sup>, elles se retrouvaient en réalité sur un certain nombre de leurs opinions, notamment sur la question de l'éducation des femmes dans les années 1790 (Stott 218-219). Néanmoins, la présence de Wollstonecraft dans un corpus et de son époux Godwin dans l'autre donne à réfléchir et soulève des questions sur la façon dont les critiques du *Monthly* et du *Critical* semblent avoir défini la fiction morale.

En outre, il est particulièrement frappant que pas moins de cinq autrices apparaissent dans les deux corpus. Jane Austen, Frances Burney, Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth et Amelia Opie reflètent la variété des sensibilités politiques que l'on retrouve dans les corpus, du lien d'Opie avec les cercles radicaux à la foi vigoureuse issue de l'église presbytérienne écossaise de Brunton, assimilée à l'évangélisme (*ODNB*, Mandal 2014 : xx). Austen, Burney et Edgeworth, trois des plus importantes romancières de l'époque, peuvent

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28 Citation d'origine : « perpetuated strict moral codes ».

29 Richard Polwhele, ecclésiastique anglican et collaborateur de la très conservatrice *Anti-Jacobin Review*, oppose dans son poème les écrivains qu'il approuve à celles qu'il qualifie d'asexuées, pour séparer les cygnes des vilains petits canards (Stafford 2010 : 2). Hannah More et Frances Burney font partie du premier groupe, tandis que Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith et Anna Laetitia Barbauld, toutes liées aux cercles radicaux, font partie de celles dont il juge la conduite déplacée (*improper*) (2-3).

être définies comme des modérées, chacune pouvant se montrer subversive tout en soutenant par ailleurs l'ordre social établi<sup>30</sup>. Les romans de ces autrices qui figurent dans les corpus ne diffèrent pas fondamentalement les uns des autres en termes de genre littéraire : ceux d'Austen, Burney et Brunton sont tous centrés sur une jeune protagoniste (ou deux, dans le cas de *Sense and Sensibility*) et se terminent par son mariage imminent avec un gentilhomme de valeur. Les œuvres d'Edgeworth mettent en scène les aventures et tribulations de jeunes gens de bonne famille (mais pas nécessairement célibataires) avec ce qu'elles impliquent en terme de moralité, et celles d'Opie sont des contes dont la fin tragique sert d'avertissement contre la promiscuité sexuelle malavisée des jeunes demoiselles. En termes d'intrigue, tous ces romans semblent relever du domaine de la fiction domestique, au sein de laquelle la considération morale est cruciale, et l'on peut se demander pourquoi certains ont été jugés didactiques et pas d'autres (Mandal 2007 : 23, Wood 69).

Il peut sembler particulièrement surprenant de voir *Mansfield Park*, considéré comme le plus sérieux moralement des romans d'Austen, dans le corpus de référence (Mandal 2007 : 91). Comme indiqué plus haut, ce roman et *The Son of a Genius* (1812) de Barbara Hofland ont été négligés par les critiques lors de leur première publication ; on ne connaît pas leur réception initiale. Cela n'indique pas qu'ils n'étaient pas jugés suffisamment importants ou bons pour faire l'objet d'une critique, puisque la *Monthly Review* et la *Critical Review* avaient pour objectif d'étudier toute la production fictionnelle. Cependant, comme le note James Raven, l'augmentation de la production de romans à partir des années 1780 fit que, dans les années 1800, cet objectif était devenu inaccessible et que moins de la moitié de tous les romans publiés étaient mentionnée dans ces magazines (Volume 2, 16). Les deux romans connurent un certain succès commercial : *Mansfield Park* fit l'objet de six éditions entre 1814 et 1850, et *The Son of a Genius* n'en eut pas moins de dix-sept (DBF 1814A011)<sup>31</sup>. L'absence de critiques n'affecte pas la comparaison textuelle des corpus et fournit un contrepoint précieux pour comparer les conclusions tirées de l'analyse des critiques.

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30 Audrey Bilger souligne le pouvoir subversif de leur comédie malgré l'absence de « polémique féministe explicite » dans leurs œuvres (11, ma traduction).

31 Les éditions de *The Son of a Genius* furent comptées à l'aide du catalogue de la British Library. Anthony Mandal qualifie de « best-seller » *Cælebs* de Hannah More, qui fut l'objet de quatorze éditions sur la même période, ce qui illustre l'étendue du succès de Hofland (2014 : xxi).

## ***1. Questions de recherche***

Ce bref aperçu des corpus amène à se poser les questions suivantes : comment le didactisme moral dans la fiction peut-il être défini en fonction de sa réception initiale ? En outre, peut-on dire que le roman didactique existe en tant que sous-genre ? Si oui, quelles sont ses caractéristiques spécifiques ? Ces questions sont liées aux concepts de genre et de mode, ou de genre et de registre, décrits précédemment. L'incertitude réside dans les différentes façon d'entendre le qualificatif *didactique* dans les études littéraires. Le terme est parfois utilisé de manière péjorative, comme lorsque Mary Waldron suggère que la représentation des enfants et de la dynamique familiale chez Austen est plus vraisemblable et donc meilleure car moins expressément didactique que celle des manuels de bonne conduite (51, 52-3). Le terme est parfois appliqué de manière plus neutre, mais une ambivalence subsiste quant à la manière dont il est mis en œuvre dans la langue, qu'il s'agisse de caractéristiques formelles externes ou de marqueurs linguistiques omniprésents, comme nous l'avons vu dans la première section.

Commencer par la réception initiale attire donc l'attention sur l'évolution de l'utilisation du terme dans la critique littéraire. Cette thèse examine également dans quelle mesure la réception précoce diffère des évaluations critiques ultérieures, et ce que cela implique pour l'inclusion ou l'exclusion des romans de l'un ou l'autre corpus dans le canon littéraire. Cela suppose une étude en histoire de la critique, qui met en évidence le processus dynamique de détermination des catégories de textes.

## ***2. Méthodologie et plan de la thèse***

Le principal cadre théorique qui sous-tend mon étude est la réception, définie par Wolfgang Iser comme l'étude des « lecteurs existants, dont les réactions témoignent de certaines expériences de la littérature conditionnées par l'histoire » (x, ma traduction)<sup>32</sup>. Comme l'écrivent James Machor et Philip Goldstein, « because it recognizes that the traditional canon embodies the 'changing interests and beliefs' of authoritative readers or critics, reception study examines the socio-historical contexts of interpretive practice » (xii). Cette approche suppose une sorte de « mort de l'auteur » en référence à l'essai de Barthes de

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<sup>32</sup> Citation d'origine : « existing readers, whose reactions testify to certain historically conditioned experiences of literature. »

1967, ou du moins un évitement de l'auteur en tant que point central de l'enquête. Néanmoins, nous pouvons considérer avec Marilyn Butler que la soi-disant mort de l'auteur est une notion tout aussi historiquement construite que celle de l'intention, et que cette dernière ne peut être ignorée dans une étude sur l'écriture du XVIIIe siècle, qui était par essence partisane (1987 : xvi). Les différents chapitres de la première partie de cette thèse reflètent la relation complexe entre l'auteur ou l'autrice, le texte et le lecteur ou la lectrice, en particulier dans le contexte d'une étude sur le didactisme moral. En effet, si l'on revient à la philosophie de l'éducation, Gert Biesta affirme que l'enseignant n'a pas réellement de prise sur l'apprentissage effectif de ce qu'il ou elle tente de transmettre (457). Si nous considérons que la réception du didactisme moral dans la fiction nous invite à considérer un livre, et peut-être par extension son auteur ou autrice, comme un professeur, et les lecteurs et lectrices comme des élèves, les deux perspectives doivent être prises en considération.

En partant des réactions des premiers critiques, il est possible de tirer des conclusions sur la manière dont une partie de l'élite culturelle définit et perçoit le didactisme moral dans la fiction. La *Monthly Review* et la *Critical Review* furent créées au milieu du XVIIIe siècle pour rendre compte du nombre croissant de livres publiés, mais leur but n'était pas tant de faire gonfler les ventes que de d'établir un public réceptif à « l'intelligence littéraire » (*literary intelligence*, Butler 1993 : 123). Une analyse approfondie de ces critiques permet donc de saisir le discours culturel autour du didactisme moral, étant donné l'importance que les critiques acquièrent sur le marché du livre (Forster 171-172).

Afin d'approfondir nos connaissances sur la présence et l'utilisation du didactisme moral dans ces romans et d'identifier l'importance d'un éventuel sous-genre de roman didactique au sein de l'histoire littéraire, la réception précoce est étudiée à la lumière des éléments linguistiques des textes et comparée à la réception ultérieure. Le plan de cette thèse correspond à ces étapes.

La première partie étudie le discours sur la moralité et l'instruction que l'on trouve dans les premières critiques, d'abord la réception initiale (chapitre 1) puis la construction par les critiques de la figure du lecteur et de la lectrice (chapitre 2). La deuxième partie se penche sur l'analyse textuelle des romans par le biais d'une comparaison des corpus, en commençant par l'étude des paratextes tels que les préfaces et dédicaces, afin d'examiner

l'intention des auteurs et autrices par rapport à leur lectorat (chapitre 3). Les récits sont ensuite explorés à l'aide d'outils de stylistique de corpus, dans le but d'étudier les composantes du langage qui peuvent être associées aux romans didactiques tels qu'ils ont été reçus par leurs premiers critiques. Selon Douglas Biber, la stylistique de corpus dérive de la linguistique de corpus :

Most corpus-stylistic studies focus on the distribution of words to identify textual features that are especially characteristic of an author, particular text, or even a single character within a play or novel. Three major methodological approaches have been used to study the stylistic relevance of such word distributions: 'keyword' analysis, identifying typical extended lexical phrases, and collocational analysis.(16)

Mon étude fait usage de deux approches présentées par Biber, l'analyse de mots-clés (*keyword analysis*) et celle des collocations (*collocational analysis*). Dans mon travail, le corpus de référence fournit la « norme relative » nécessaire par rapport à laquelle le corpus didactique est analysé (Mahlberg 24, ma traduction), afin d'examiner leur utilisation respective du vocabulaire lié à la moralité et à l'instruction (chapitre 4), et pour une comparaison plus générale des caractéristiques textuelles (chapitre 5).

Dans son étude de stylistique de corpus sur la fiction de Dickens, Michaela Mahlberg plaide explicitement en faveur de l'investigation d'un corpus de textes de façon à la fois quantitative et qualitative, afin d'identifier et d'analyser les « motifs langagiers structurants » tout autant que les « fonctions textuelles locales » (175, ma traduction). Cela implique des allers-retours entre la description linguistique systématique et l'analyse fine des éléments mis en évidence par l'étude quantitative. La troisième partie s'appuie sur les conclusions tirées de l'étude quantitative des corpus pour en analyser des aspects spécifiques et parvenir à une définition fonctionnelle du roman didactique (chapitres 6 et 7). Cette approche permet de mettre en lumière certains présupposés implicites dans les premières critiques, ancrant ainsi l'ensemble de l'étude dans la théorie de la réception.

Pour compléter ce travail, la quatrième partie se penche sur l'évolution de la réception des romans jusqu'au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, en comparant à nouveau les deux corpus (chapitre 8). Elle comprend également une étude de cas sur les réponses de lecteurs et lectrices réels à des extraits de trois romans du corpus didactique (chapitre 9). Les deux chapitres s'informent mutuellement pour commenter l'évolution de la relation conflictuelle



entre le didactisme moral dans la fiction et le canon littéraire, et contextualisent davantage les conclusions tirées de la réception initiale du roman didactique.

L'ensemble de la thèse combine donc diverses méthodes de recherche afin d'étudier la manifestation et la réception du didactisme moral dans les romans sous différents angles. Les approches quantitatives et qualitatives sont utilisées conjointement selon les étapes de l'étude, suivant l'hypothèse que le fait de combiner les méthodes « fournit une compréhension plus complète d'un problème de recherche que l'une ou l'autre approche seule » (Creswell et Creswell 42, ma traduction)<sup>33</sup>.

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33 Citation d'origine : « provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. »

## Première partie. La réception initiale du didactisme moral

Les deux premiers chapitres de cette thèse analysent en détail les critiques de la *Monthly Review* de la *Critical Review* pour les romans des deux corpus. Il est d'abord question de la différence entre *qualité morale* (« moral tendency ») et *instruction morale* pour les contributeurs, puis de la manière dont ils conçoivent la relation entre les critiques et le lectorat.

### Chapitre 1. Instruction ou simple qualité morale selon la *Monthly Review* et la *Critical Review*

Le premier chapitre de cette thèse s'interroge sur la perception du didactisme moral par les critiques de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review*. Il montre tout d'abord que la réception initiale relève d'une tentative de définir et de maintenir le bon goût. Une échelle émerge le long duquel il est possible de classer la réception précoce du didactisme, du succès à l'échec (voir figure 1), et de dresser un tableau des différents éléments qui composent les meilleurs romans selon les critiques. Le discours que l'on trouve dans les premières critiques concernant la tendance morale en général et le didactisme en particulier indique une hiérarchie tenant à la présence d'une morale satisfaisante et d'une composition littéraire efficace. Sans cette dernière, un roman ne se voit attribuer aucune qualité artistique, mais peut tout de même faire l'objet d'un éloge moral, tandis que l'immoralité conduit à une condamnation directe en dépit d'éventuelles qualités esthétiques. En réalité, la plupart des romans reçus comme didactiques firent l'objet de critiques ambivalentes, illustrant la difficulté de trouver le juste équilibre entre l'instruction morale et une construction narrative sans faille. Il peut être ardu de concilier les attentes d'une narration agréable qui maintient l'attention du lectorat avec celles de garder l'instruction comme objectif principal, comme le suggère le petit nombre de romans qui répondent exactement à ces critères.

Réussi			Satisfaisant			Mauvais
<i>Father &amp; Daughter</i>	<i>Evelina</i>	<i>Julia</i>	<i>Munster</i>			<i>Self-Control</i>
<i>Sense &amp; Sensibility</i>	<i>Cecilia</i>	<i>Memoirs</i>	<i>Edgar</i>			<i>Mary</i>
<i>Pride &amp; Prejudice</i>	<i>Hermesprong</i>	<i>Nobility</i>	<i>Belinda</i>			
	<i>Romance</i>		<i>Cœlebs</i>			
			<i>Patronage</i>			
			<i>Wrongs</i>			

Figure 1. Représentation du degré de succès des romans du corpus didactique selon les critiques<sup>34</sup>

Cet intérêt pour les questions de composition souligne l'intention des critiques d'agir sur l'évaluation des romans en tant que forme littéraire émergente. Bien que leur ton souvent méprisant illustre la position précaire du roman dans le paysage culturel, on peut également considérer que le degré élevé d'exigence des critiques participa à la légitimation du roman. Le fait de trouver deux des romans d'Austen et un de Burney dans la catégorie des romans didactiques les plus réussis anticipe la réception ultérieure de ces œuvres et de leurs autrices – en particulier Austen – qui inclut ces romans dans le canon littéraire anglais, analysé en détail au chapitre 8.

Ce chapitre enrichit également les évaluations précédentes de l'importance du genre sexuel dans la réception initiale. Les meilleurs romans de l'un ou l'autre corpus pour les critiques furent écrits par des femmes, ce qui illustre un niveau élevé de considération pour la fiction féminine à une époque où le roman était perçu comme bien moins scandaleux que précédemment et n'était pas encore dominé par les écrivains masculins – à condition que la tendance morale des œuvres corresponde à la conception que les critiques se faisaient de la femme et de l'homme convenables (Warner 4, Mandal 2007 : 27). En tant que telles, les critiques suggèrent que le didactisme moral régit le comportement des jeunes femmes et des jeunes hommes de la classe culturellement dominante, bien que les histoires tendent à se concentrer plus manifestement sur les femmes à travers la prédominance de protagonistes féminins. Ces éléments sont explorés plus en détail par l'analyse textuelle dans les parties 2 et 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Wrongs of Woman* est en position décalée du fait de sa réception particulière, comprenant une critique éminemment positive et l'autre négative.

Les critiques eux-mêmes peuvent être considérés comme des arbitres de la moralité et du bon goût, visant à prescrire aux auteurs et autrices la meilleure façon de combiner instruction morale et qualité esthétique pour le bénéfice de leurs lecteurs et lectrices. Le chapitre 2 explore la conception de la figure du lecteur par les critiques, la compréhension de la façon dont ce dernier était conçu étant primordiale pour l'étude de la réception initiale du didactisme moral.

## Chapitre 2. À qui s'adresse le didactisme moral ?

Le chapitre 1 a montré que les critiques créent une hiérarchie des efforts littéraires didactiques en fonction de leur tendance morale et de leur construction narrative et esthétique. L'importance des idéaux genrés des rôles sociaux des femmes et des hommes en ressort comme un élément central pour délimiter les frontières du bon goût. La présence du didactisme moral implique un destinataire réel ou imaginé de l'instruction fournie, sous la forme de lecteurs et lectrices. Par conséquent, le chapitre 2 analyse la conception qu'ont les premiers critiques du public des romans didactiques, en utilisant les lignes de concordance générées par le logiciel de textométrie TXM pour examiner l'utilisation des occurrences des substantifs *reader* et *public*<sup>35</sup>.

Cette comparaison dans les critiques des deux corpus illustre la construction difficile par les contributeurs de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review* de leur relation avec une grande variété de types de lecteurs et lectrices possibles. En effet, le lectorat était de plus en plus important et multiple, avec, par conséquent, un pouvoir commercial et culturel accru sur le marché du livre lui aussi en plein essor. Comme le note Antonia Foster,

in commercial literary enterprises the interests of readers naturally take precedence. It is readers who are paying to be told, despite the best deflecting efforts of authors' prefaces and booksellers' advertisements, whether a book or pamphlet is worth reading; they may also be paying to be entertained by the rudeness with which some authors or their works are disposed of or to be flattered by assumptions of common ground between readers and reviewers, with the generally used grand editorial 'we' of the review journal contributing to a sense of institutional authority in which the reading public is assumed to be on the same side. (182)

L'intention éventuelle de « flatter » les lecteurs à des fins mercantiles est en contradiction avec l'objectif supposé des critiques d'agir en tant que juges du mérite littéraire. Les deux postures impliquent des positions très différentes : la première suppose la création d'une proximité voire d'une égalité relative avec son lectorat, tandis que la seconde suggère une relation hiérarchique. Les critiques des romans du corpus didactique invoquent davantage la figure du lecteur et de la lectrice que celles des romans du corpus de référence. Nous pourrions émettre l'hypothèse que les critiques des romans perçus comme didactiques sont

35 Le logiciel TXM, développé à Lyon, génère des lignes de concordance où le mot-clé recherché apparaît à côté de son contexte gauche et droit, permettant une étude comparative directe des différentes occurrences (Heiden 2).

particulièrement susceptibles d'assumer une position d'autorité littéraire et morale, imitant la relation traditionnelle entre enseignant et apprenant avec le lectorat envisagé. Cependant, ce chapitre met en évidence que la réception initiale du didactisme moral ne se traduit pas particulièrement par une posture affirmée qui rappellerait celle de l'enseignant, soulignant plutôt la difficulté des difficultés à gérer la relation « triangulaire » qui existe entre eux-mêmes, les auteurs et autrices, et le lectorat (Donoghue 29).

Les mentions de *reader* sont fréquentes dans les critiques des romans des deux corpus, et la comparaison des occurrences des substantifs *reader*, *readers* et *public* ainsi que les façons dont ces mots sont utilisés en contexte, nous permettent d'analyser comment les critiques envisagent leur lectorat et à quel effet<sup>36</sup>. Les lignes de concordance de la requête « reader|readers|publicNN » dans les critiques des romans des deux corpus illustrent la manière dont les critiques tentèrent de négocier leur place vis-à-vis de leur lectorat en essayant de définir les types de lecteurs et lectrices auxquels, selon eux, les romans et eux-mêmes s'adressent. Bien que les critiques du corpus didactique expriment sans surprise une préoccupation plus manifeste pour la réaction du lectorat que celles du corpus de référence, en particulier pour les jeunes filles de bonne famille et les jeunes gens des deux sexes, dans les deux cas, la difficulté à établir une position d'autorité sur le public est évidente, soulignant une dynamique de pouvoir délicate entre les critiques en tant qu'arbitres du bon goût et les lecteurs et lectrices en tant que consommateurs.

En outre, les adresses directes aux lecteurs (DAR pour *direct addresses to readers*) sont un élément incontournable des préfaces et des romans du XVIIIe siècle, explorés respectivement dans les chapitres 3 et 4. Cette pratique a été décrite comme une caractéristique générique de l'émergence du roman (Biber et Conrad 224-225, Stewart 7), que nous pourrions relier au processus de théorisation et de légitimation de la fiction narrative, observable dans les romans du début et du milieu du siècle, comme le détaille Baudouin Millet dans son ouvrage « *Ceci n'est pas un roman* » : *l'évolution du statut de la fiction en Angleterre de 1652 à 1754*. Le même processus est à l'œuvre dans la construction de la figure du lecteur et de la lectrice par les critiques.

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36 Afin d'isoler les occurrences de la forme nominale du mot « *public* », « NN » suit le terme dans la requête TXM.

Les contributeurs de la *Critical Review* s'engagent plus souvent dans de telles tentatives explicites de construction de leur lectorat que les critiques qui écrivent pour la *Monthly Review*, ce qui suggère une plus grande préoccupation pour la figure du lecteur dans la première publication. En effet, 65% des références aux lecteurs et lectrices dans les critiques des romans du corpus de référence apparaissent dans la *Critical Review*. L'écart est d'autant plus frappant dans les critiques des romans du corpus didactique, où 80% de ces mentions se trouvent dans cette revue. Cela peut indiquer une tendance chez les contributeurs pour la *Critical Review* à être plus discriminants que leurs homologues de la *Monthly Review*, conformément à la tâche auto-proclamée de la première revue à « corriger ou civiliser les goûts du lectorat », ce qui peut facilement être lié à la perception du didactisme moral (Mayo 207, Donoghue 25, ma traduction). Ce chapitre analyse les différents types de lecteurs et lectrices évoqués par les critiques, en commençant par les catégories spécifiques de lecteurs, telles que *fair readers*, *fastidious readers*, ou encore *readers of circulating libraries* (partie I). Une comparaison des lecteurs et lectrices conçus comme appartenant au camp des critiques (« nos lecteurs », *our readers*) ou celui des auteurs et autrices (« ses lecteurs », *her readers*) est ensuite proposée (partie II), avant une discussion finale sur le lecteur ou la lectrice mentionnés de façon impersonnelle (*the reader*) (partie III).

Les critiques des romans perçus comme didactiques montrent, sans surprise, un engagement plus explicite avec la notion de lecteur que les critiques des romans de référence. Cependant, l'examen de la manière dont les références aux lecteurs et lectrices sont formulées dans les critiques des deux corpus signale également que les contributeurs tentent de définir leur relation avec le lectorat, entre estime et autorité. En effet, la diversité des catégories de lecteurs peut être considérée comme une tentative de la part des critiques de reconnaître et de faire appel à la nature protéiforme du lectorat croissant de romans, ce que l'utilisation fréquente du pluriel « *readers* » confirme. En outre, les types de lecteurs et lectrices mentionnés dans les critiques du corpus didactique montrent que les contributeurs considéraient l'édification morale comme importante pour plusieurs catégories de personnes, dont par exemple les jeunes hommes et les pères de famille. Néanmoins, on constate une plus grande préoccupation et un plus grand respect pour les réactions prêtées à des lecteurs et lectrices de la bonne société. On remarque également un intérêt plus marqué

pour l'éducation des jeunes lectrices, ce qui renforce l'argument de Nancy Armstrong selon lequel le pouvoir culturel croissant du roman à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle servit à créer et à consolider les idéaux féminins de la classe moyenne qui prévalurent par la suite (9).

Mais ce qui est le plus frappant est la difficulté des critiques à se positionner dans la relation triangulaire critique/auteur(ice)/lecteur(ice) ainsi que la réticence à affirmer explicitement leur autorité culturelle sur le lectorat, ce qui est particulièrement contre-intuitif lorsqu'il s'agit des critiques des romans du corpus didactique. Cette ambivalence illustre néanmoins une volonté de définir et d'influencer le public en pleine expansion tout en évitant de l'aliéner, puisque la *Monthly Review* et la *Critical Review*, en tant que publications, dépendaient aussi du « principe commercial » évoqué dans une des critiques de *Patronage* de Maria Edgeworth (DBF 1814A020). Sur la base de ces résultats, le chapitre 3 propose d'analyser le discours des auteurs et autrices dans les préfaces et dédicaces des romans, en examinant la manière dont l'intention, et, le cas échéant, l'intention didactique, est formulée et ce qu'elle illustre de leur conception de la relation avec les critiques et la figure du lecteur ou de la lectrice.



## Deuxième partie. Analyse textuelles des romans

Les chapitres 3, 4 et 5 explorent les romans des deux corpus afin d'expliquer la différence de réception initiale par les critiques de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review*. Le chapitre 3 analyse les préfaces et dédicaces, et les chapitres 4 et 5 se concentrent sur le vocabulaire comme manière de comparer le registre (*register*, Biber and Conrad) et les thèmes qui distinguent les deux corpus.

### Chapitre 3. L'intention didactique dans les préfaces

Après l'analyse de la réception initiale dans les chapitres 1 et 2, le chapitre 3 aborde les marques d'intention didactique dans le paratexte qui précède parfois le texte : les préfaces et les dédicaces. Il s'agit de déterminer si les œuvres du corpus didactique présentent systématiquement une intention didactique morale manifeste, comme les affirmations précédentes faites sur ce type de textes tendent à le suggérer (Havens 5, 8, Wood 12, 16). La première partie indique que les romans perçus comme didactiques ont davantage tendance à inclure une préface ou une dédicace, confortant l'hypothèse selon laquelle leurs auteurs et autrices exprimeraient explicitement leur intention d'instruire. Néanmoins, l'analyse textuelle souligne le corpus didactique ne se démarque pas spécialement de celui de référence dans la manière dont les auteurs et autrices situent leurs romans du point de vue de l'instruction morale et de l'intention didactique. Les deux parties suivantes étudient la construction de la dynamique critique-auteur(ice)-lecteur(ice) à l'aide de la même méthodologie que celle appliquée aux critiques initiales dans le chapitre 2 ; elles montrent la difficulté, notamment pour les autrices, largement majoritaires dans le corpus didactique, d'établir une voix auctoriale affirmée. À plusieurs égards, ces conclusions font écho à celles des deux premiers chapitres, et façonnent la direction que prend cette thèse dans les suivants, afin de pouvoir définir ce qui caractérise le roman didactique selon la réception initiale, aboutissement de la troisième partie.

Identifier l'intention d'un auteur ou d'une autrice est une entreprise délicate, et ce chapitre commence par aborder ce débat. Comme l'expriment Dorothee Birke et Tilmann Köppe, « confondre auteur et narrateur, c'est faire l'amalgame entre des catégories

distinctes » (6, ma traduction)<sup>37</sup>. En outre, la question de savoir si les attitudes exprimées rhétoriquement dans le corpus didactique représentent ou non les convictions réelles des auteurs et autrices n'est pas au centre de mon enquête. Ce qui importe, c'est de savoir si et comment les auteurs et autrices investissent une certaine forme d'autorité rhétorique, implicite ou explicite, dans leur manière d'établir un lien avec leur lectorat, et si elle est utilisée différemment dans les deux corpus. J'emprunte à Susan Lanser le concept d'auctorialité manifeste (*overt authoriality*). Ce dernier définit une posture narrative dans les récits hétérodiégétiques qui inclut notamment des adresses directes aux lecteurs et lectrices ainsi que des commentaires sur le processus narratif, conférant autorité à l'instance narrative et permettant à l'auteur ou autrice de peser sur des débats littéraires, sociaux et intellectuels depuis la fiction même (16). Lanser note que cette posture est traditionnellement bien plus difficile à investir pour les femmes que pour les hommes, donnée importante au vu de la répartition genrée des romans des corpus.

Lanser n'aborde pas la question des préfaces dans sa discussion sur l'auctorialité manifeste. Néanmoins, les préfaces et les dédicaces relèvent tout autant d'un processus de construction que les textes qu'elles introduisent et ont tendance à commenter ces derniers, comme l'analyse Baudouin Millet dans le cadre de la fiction britannique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ainsi, ce chapitre commence par examiner ce type de paratexte présent dans les romans des deux corpus, en tant que lieu potentiel d'expression d'une auctorialité manifeste, afin de déterminer si les auteurs et autrices expriment une intention particulière, et dans quelles mesures celles-ci relèvent du didactisme moral (première et deuxième parties). La troisième partie se concentre sur la construction de la figure du lecteur ou de la lectrice, établissant un parallèle avec les conclusions du chapitre 2 pour évaluer la façon qu'ont les auteurs et autrices affichant un dessein didactique d'établir leur position d'instructeur moral.

L'analyse souligne l'importance du genre dans la construction de la dynamique auteur-lecteur. En effet, l'étude des préfaces des deux corpus illustre la plus grande précarité des voix des autrices, dans la manière dont elles construisent leur relation avec les lecteurs ou lectrices et les critiques, bien que cette incertitude ne soit pas circonscrite aux écrivaines. L'ambivalence dans la construction de la relation au lectorat met en lumière le paradoxe inhérent à l'ambition de donner des leçons de morale à des consommateurs et

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37 Citation d'origine : « conflating author and narrator is to make a category mistake. »

consommatrices qui, en définitive, sont les nouveaux mécènes littéraires, dont l'identité, l'âge, l'éducation et la classe sociale sont beaucoup moins facilement identifiables que dans le cas de bienfaiteurs individuels. Dans ce contexte, il convient de s'adresser à ses lecteurs et lectrices en fonction de la position relative de chacun. Le parallèle entre auteur(ice)/lecteur(ice) et enseignant(e)/apprenant(e) dans le contexte du didactisme moral est ainsi perturbé, avec la construction d'une relation relativement égalitaire entre autrice et lectorat.

En combinant les résultats des trois premiers chapitres, il devient clair qu'il n'y a pas de lien de causalité évident entre la présence d'un didactisme intentionnel manifeste et sa réception en tant que telle. Cela conforte l'affirmation des critiques qui revendiquent leur rôle d'évaluateur de l'effet d'une œuvre, indépendamment des objectifs déclarés de son auteur ou autrice. Par ailleurs, aucun des meilleurs romans selon les critiques n'inclut de profession d'intention didactique, atténuant l'association faite par plusieurs chercheurs du didactisme avec la moralisation explicite, en raison de la proximité de ce type de roman avec les manuels de bonne conduite et de l'importance des craintes conservatrices concernant la Révolution française (Spencer 98, 142, Wood 12). La posture d'autrice analysée dans la dernière section de ce chapitre, caractérisée par la création d'une relation assez égalitaire avec les lecteurs et lectrices, renforce également la déconnexion entre l'auctorialité manifeste et la réception précoce du didactisme moral. Néanmoins, les romans perçus comme didactiques sont plus susceptibles que ceux du corpus de référence d'inclure une préface, ce qui fait de cette dernière un marqueur potentiel d'un sous-genre de roman didactique, bien qu'elle ne soit pas suffisante en soi pour justifier l'existence d'une telle catégorie.

Par conséquent, nous devons chercher ailleurs des preuves d'objectif éducatif et d'autorité manifeste en tant que marqueurs potentiels du roman didactique, ainsi que d'autres éléments qui pourraient expliquer la différence de réception entre les deux corpus. Les deux chapitres qui suivent se penchent sur la manière dont les romans des deux corpus abordent la notion d'instruction morale de manière plus large et plus systématique au sein de la diégèse, afin de déterminer dans quelle mesure elle constitue réellement un marqueur pertinent de différence entre le corpus didactique et le corpus de référence.

## Chapitre 4. Expressions textuelles du didactisme moral

Le concept d'auctorialité manifeste de Susan Lanser a été introduit dans le chapitre 3 pour évaluer la posture des auteurs et autrices exprimée dans les préfaces et dédicaces des romans deux corpus. Cette notion est tout aussi pertinente comme cadre d'analyse des éléments de la diégèse, étant donné qu'elle fut conçue pour cela. L'étude du discours des critiques et des préfaces et dédicaces des œuvres a déjà suggéré que les deux corpus sont d'une ressemblance certaine en ce qui concerne la réception et l'expression d'un contenu moralement chargé. Ce chapitre se penche sur les récits proprement dits à l'aide d'outils statistiques afin de déterminer si les romans du corpus didactique comportent davantage d'instruction morale explicite et d'autorité manifeste que ceux du corpus de référence.

Dans son étude sur les romans féminins conservateurs de l'époque, Lisa Wood affirme que, quelle que soit la position de l'autrice sur l'échiquier politique, « le texte didactique demeure coercitif, en ce sens qu'il tente de provoquer des changements de comportement chez ses lecteurs et lectrices » (64, ma traduction)<sup>38</sup>. Ceci rappelle le concept de texte fermé (*closed text*) de Umberto Eco, construit pour orienter le lecteur ou la lectrice vers la réaction qui s'impose (7). Wood cite l'importance des déclarations intégrées à la narration qui « soutiennent implicitement la teneur morale du texte », et des « jugements de valeur qui indiquent la réponse appropriée du lecteur ou de la lectrice » dans la création d'un texte coercitif, en plus de la présence de pauses digressives pour commenter directement des valeurs morales spécifiques (66, ma traduction)<sup>39</sup>. Pour que ces stratégies soient efficaces, la voix narrative doit être conçue pour faire autorité ou, pour utiliser la terminologie de Lanser, elle doit faire preuve d'auctorialité manifeste. Ce chapitre se concentre sur la manière dont le texte est construit pour encourager certaines réponses, en s'appuyant sur des micro-lectures et des outils de stylistique de corpus pour tester l'hypothèse selon laquelle les romans reçus comme moralement didactiques par leurs premiers critiques peuvent être considérés comme plus « fermés » dans leur façon d'aborder le sujet de l'instruction morale ou d'utiliser une auctorialité plus manifeste que leurs homologues du corpus de référence.

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38 Citation d'origine : « the didactic text remains coercive, in that it attempts to effect behavioral changes within its readers, but the punitive subtext is generally absent. »

39 Citations d'origine : « implicitly support the text's moral basis », « value judgments that indicate the appropriate readerly response. »

Ce chapitre met en évidence une déconnexion entre les réceptions initiale et ultérieure du registre de ces romans : si l'on peut trouver certaines caractéristiques linguistiques associées au didactisme moral dans le corpus didactique, les deux corpus apparaissent plus similaires que différents lorsqu'ils sont étudiés à la lumière de la réception ultérieure. La théorie de Biber et Conrad sur les genres et les registres sous-tend ce chapitre. La première partie analyse le discours entourant la moralité dans les paragraphes qui concluent des romans des deux corpus, comme un élément qui pourrait définir le roman didactique au niveau générique. Les deux parties suivantes explorent les caractéristiques linguistiques dominantes du corpus didactique dans son ensemble en le comparant au corpus de référence en termes d'éléments lexicaux et grammaticaux associés au registre du didactisme moral.

Bien que certaines différences apparaissent dans l'étude textuelle des récits composant les deux corpus, la majorité des critères utilisés dans ce chapitre invalident l'hypothèse selon laquelle les romans reçus comme didactiques sont plus susceptibles d'être des textes « fermés » abordant explicitement le thème de l'instruction morale en utilisant un ton davantage empreint d'autorité que leurs homologues du corpus de référence. La première partie démontre que l'inclusion de commentaires moraux explicites dans les paragraphes de conclusion des intrigues est omniprésente dans les deux corpus, et ne peut être considérée comme une caractéristique rhétorique déterminante d'un éventuel sous-genre didactique du roman. Le commentaire moral conclusif apparaît en réalité comme une caractéristique du genre romanesque de façon plus large à cette époque, si l'on se réfère à la définition du concept donnée par Biber et Conrad (6, 223). Ceci rappelle l'affirmation de Marilyn Butler : « if [Edgeworth's] controlled actions and contrived endings seem didactic to us now, it is because the novels of her day, of all shades of opinion, *are* didactic » (1987 : 53, souligné par l'autrice).

En outre, la première partie montre que l'auctorialité manifeste n'est pas plus répandue dans les paragraphes finaux des romans didactiques que dans ceux du corpus de référence, ce qui suggère que le registre didactique ne s'articule pas autour de telles caractéristiques linguistiques. Étant donné les conclusions tirées de l'étude des préfaces sur les plus grandes difficultés que rencontrent les autrices par rapport aux auteurs à affirmer

une voix assurée, ces résultats ne sont pas surprenants. Il convient toutefois de noter que le clivage entre les sexes n'est pas aussi visible dans les récits, certains romans écrits par des femmes affichant des niveaux élevés d'auctorialité manifeste, tandis que certains ouvrages écrits par des hommes sont bien moins affirmés dans le ton de l'instance narrative. Cela peut illustrer une plus grande facilité pour les autrices de se soustraire aux attentes liées au genre dans les limites de la diégèse, par contraste avec les textes préliminaires où la figure de l'auteur ou autrice, bien que construite, s'apparente bien plus à l'écrivain(e) en chair et en os.

Les deuxième et troisième parties indiquent également une nette similitude entre les corpus selon les caractéristiques lexico-grammaticales étudiées. Cela suggère que les questions de philosophie morale et les adresses directes aux lecteurs comme forme de médiation entre auteur(ice) et lecteur(ice) sont aussi davantage des caractéristiques omniprésentes du registre des romans de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle plutôt que des caractéristiques spécifiques des romans didactiques<sup>40</sup>. Il est frappant de constater que certains romans du corpus de référence se révèlent plus manifestement autoritaires et même moralement didactiques que les romans du corpus didactique, notamment *Henry* de Richard Cumberland. De plus, les termes et expressions étudiés sont inégalement répartis entre les romans composant les corpus de ces deux derniers, ce qui suggère que la réception précoce du mode didactique ne repose pas sur un ensemble homogène de caractéristiques lexicales liées à la morale ou à l'instruction. En effet, *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* de Hannah More, souvent cité comme emblématique du genre didactique de l'époque, s'avère différer de manière importante des romans des deux corpus, loin d'illustrer la norme en termes de registre didactique.

Néanmoins, une différence apparaît entre les corpus, notamment dans la propension des romans didactiques à inclure le sujet de la moralité en tant que norme de conduite en plus des questions de philosophie morale. Les types de lecteurs plus restreints auxquels s'adresse ce corpus sont également mis en exergue, rappelant l'analyse des adresses aux lecteurs et lectrices dans les chapitres 2 et 3. L'ensemble de ces résultats suggère que le registre didactique des romans s'articule autour d'une représentation plus limitée des normes de bonne conduite que dans le corpus de référence, s'adressant à un public plus

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<sup>40</sup> Il conviendrait de mener une étude similaire avec un spectre plus large de type de fiction de la période, comme les romans gothiques ou historiques, pour confirmer cette conclusion.

spécifique composé en grande partie de jeunes femmes de la classe dominante. Le chapitre 5 explore ces pistes en adoptant la méthodologie inverse à la stratégie dite *corpus-based*, qui permet de valider ou invalider une hypothèse préalable (Comby *et al* 7). Il vise à trouver les éléments qui indiquent les différences les plus saillantes entre les deux corpus, afin de progresser vers une caractérisation plus précise du registre présent dans les romans perçus comme didactiques, et de définir ce qui pourrait constituer le sous-genre du roman didactique au tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

## Chapitre 5. Le registre du didactisme moral par l'approche *corpus-driven*

Bien que les résultats du chapitre 4 mettent en évidence certaines caractéristiques du didactisme moral en tant que registre en termes de fréquence de vocabulaire, notamment son ancrage dans les questions de genre et de classe sociale plutôt que dans l'enseignement moral, une grande partie de l'analyse assistée par ordinateur menée jusqu'à présent met en évidence des similitudes plutôt que des différences entre les corpus. Par conséquent, pour explorer les façons dont les deux ensembles de romans pourraient différer, j'ai mené une étude à l'aide de l'approche inverse, dite *corpus-driven*, qui permet aux conclusions d'émerger plutôt que de tester des hypothèses (Comby *et al* 7).

AntConc a été utilisé pour ce faire. AntConc est un outil de concordance qui génère des listes de mots-clés montrant « quels mots sont inhabituellement fréquents (ou peu fréquents) dans le corpus par rapport aux mots d'un corpus de référence. Cela permet d'identifier des mots caractéristiques dans le corpus, par exemple dans le cadre d'une étude sur les genres textuels » (Anthony 2019 : 7, ma traduction)<sup>41</sup>. La liste de mots-clés classe les mots en fonction de leur spécificité (*keyness*), qui est mesuré à l'aide de la mesure statistique *log-likelihood* (LL). Plus le score de spécificité est élevé, plus le mot dans le corpus est caractéristique par rapport au corpus de référence. *Log ratio* (LR) est également inclus comme mesure statistique complémentaire ; des scores LL et LR élevés indiquent une différence particulièrement frappante dans l'utilisation du vocabulaire. AntConc tient compte de la différence de taille des corpus qu'il compare, en normalisant le nombre de vocables afin de pouvoir comparer des corpus de tailles variées. Les textes ont été lemmatisés à l'aide de TreeTagger, en regroupant les occurrences des différentes inflexions d'un même lemme.

Grâce à l'analyse des mots-clés, ce chapitre corrobore les résultats du chapitre 4 et souligne dans la première partie l'importance évidente du genre (*gender*) et de la classe sociale comme ligne de démarcation entre les deux corpus. La deuxième partie confirme l'éventail plus restreint de sujets abordés dans les romans perçus comme didactiques, par

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41 Citation d'origine : « which words are unusually frequent (or infrequent) in the corpus in comparison with the words in a reference corpus. This allows you to identify characteristic words in the corpus, for example, as part of a genre [...] study. »



l'étude des textes écrits par des autrices qui figurent dans les deux corpus. Enfin, la troisième partie opère des permutations pour organiser les romans en de nouveaux corpus à partir de l'intention perçue par les critiques de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review*, et démontre la distinction entre la réception de l'intention et celle de l'effet des romans, que l'analyse du discours des critiques au chapitre 1 a déjà suggéré.

Les résultats de ce chapitre confirment ceux du chapitre 4 en soulignant que les principales différences lexicales entre les corpus didactiques et de référence ne découlent pas de la discussion explicite des valeurs morales. Au contraire, le vocabulaire lié au genre (*gender*) et à la classe sociale, en particulier aux femmes des échelons supérieurs de la société, est surreprésenté dans les romans didactiques. Ces romans semblent également inclure une gamme plus restreinte de sujets que leurs homologues de référence, liés à la sociabilité dans l'espace domestique, racontés principalement par une narration hétérodiégétique. En outre, l'analyse comparative des mots-clés abordée sous différents angles renforce la conclusion selon laquelle la réception initiale du didactisme dans les romans n'était pas liée à un style moralisateur, ni même à un style particulièrement autoritaire.

L'accent mis sur le didactisme moral en tant que moralisation intrusive semble s'être développé dans les travaux critiques de la seconde moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec une attention particulière pour Mary Brunton, Maria Edgeworth et Hannah More, dont on a montré qu'elles présentaient des caractéristiques linguistiques associées plus tard à une moralisation explicite. Ces caractéristiques étaient en fait déjà décrites par les premiers critiques, mettant en cause les pauses digressives malhabilement intégrées à l'intrigue. L'évolution de la réception du registre didactique au cours des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, présentée au chapitre 8, permettra d'approfondir cette question.

Les résultats indiquent également que le cadrage narratif du genre et de la classe doit être analysé plus en détail afin de déterminer ce qui constitue le cœur d'un roman reçu comme didactique par les premiers critiques, surtout lorsque la réception fut chaleureuse. Par conséquent, les chapitres 6 et 7 étudient de plus près les éléments particuliers de l'intrigue qui différencient les romans du corpus didactique des romans du corpus de référence, en se concentrant sur les représentations du genre et de la classe sociale.

## Troisième partie. Le roman didactique et l'idéal national

Après l'analyse textuelle assistée par ordinateur menée dans la partie précédente, les chapitres 6 et 7 reviennent à la micro-lecture afin de d'affiner les conclusions tirées des données quantitatives. Le chapitre 6 se concentre sur les représentations de genre (*gender*) et de classe sociale dans les deux corpus, tandis que le chapitre 7 explore leurs utilisations respectives du lieu et de l'espace. La troisième partie se conclut par une définition du roman didactique en tant que sous-genre de la fiction en prose à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

### Chapitre 6. Didactisme moral et *gentility*

Jusqu'à présent, l'étude a montré que les romans des corpus didactique et de référence évoquent les notions de moralité et d'instruction à des fréquences comparables, alors que la réception initiale les divise entre expressément didactiques et simplement moraux (ou, beaucoup plus rarement, immoraux). L'analyse textuelle assistée par ordinateur menée dans les chapitres 4 et 5 a suggéré que les manières de présenter les questions de moralité au sein de la narration diffèrent d'un corpus à l'autre et peuvent être la raison pour laquelle certains romans ont été perçus comme instructifs et pas d'autres, y compris des romans écrits par la même personne. Si l'on considère différents aspects de la narration tels que la caractérisation et les éléments de l'intrigue, les romans du corpus didactique semblent mettre en scène, dans leur grande majorité, des personnages qui incarnent les valeurs de la femme convenable (*Proper Lady*) et de l'homme respectable (*True Gentleman*), décrits dans le premier chapitre, tandis que les romans du corpus de référence tendent à mettre en scène des protagonistes qui s'aventurent au-delà des limites strictes de cet idéal sexué, moral et social<sup>42</sup>.

Ce chapitre indique la façon dont la différence entre les deux corpus s'articule autour de leur représentation d'idéaux genrés incarnés par les personnages principaux des romans, liant la réception initiale du didactisme moral à l'illustration de la bonne conduite dans le cercle social dominant, notamment des propriétaires terriens (*gentry*). Compte tenu de la

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42 Cette méthode reflète celle de Patrick Parrinder, qui propose d'examiner davantage la signification et le « codage culturel » (*cultural coding*) des éléments de l'intrigue que les aspects rhétoriques et formalistes afin d'étudier le lien entre les romans et la nation anglaise, sujet au centre des chapitres 6 et 7 (4).

taille des corpus, cette étude se concentre principalement sur les représentations des protagonistes des romans, avec quelques discussions sur les personnages secondaires pour compléter l'argumentaire. Les représentations récurrentes de femmes et d'hommes de bonne famille se comportant de manière moralement correcte unissent les romans du corpus didactique, malgré les différences en termes de cadre narratif ou d'affiliation politique des auteurs et autrices. La première partie se concentre sur les représentations de la *Proper Lady* et du *True Gentleman* en tant qu'idéaux moraux fortement ancrés dans la classe sociale dominante comme une caractéristique déterminante du corpus didactique. La deuxième partie se penche sur la manière dont les défauts moraux des protagonistes sont dépeints dans les romans des deux corpus, illustrant davantage le contraste entre les deux.

La réception initiale du didactisme, étudiée à travers le prisme de la *Proper Lady* et du *True Gentleman*, révèle que les valeurs et le rang social associés à ces idéaux de féminité et de masculinité doivent coïncider pour que les romans soient considérés comme moralement instructifs. La différence entre les deux corpus selon la trajectoire narrative des protagonistes soutient d'ailleurs l'affirmation de Lisa Wood selon laquelle les romans didactiques s'appuyaient sur l'intrigue pour inculquer des principes moraux spécifiques (68). Les romans des deux corpus épousent en grande majorité des valeurs similaires. En revanche, celles-ci sont largement mises en scène sous la forme de modèles de bienséance dans le corpus didactique, tandis que les protagonistes des romans du corpus de référence s'écartent de manière beaucoup plus explicite et significative des idéaux de la *Proper Lady* et du *True Gentleman*, plus souvent par le biais d'une narration homodiégétique ou de la forme épistolaire. Ce chapitre met en évidence l'idéal de la nation incarné par la bienséance de la classe dominante dans le corpus didactique, les personnages restant dans les limites de leur condition. Ceci peut indiquer dans la réception initiale une crainte contre-révolutionnaire d'un bouleversement de l'ordre établi, même si dans les faits les frontières entre les classes sociales étaient floues, comme le montrent les romans du corpus de référence de façon beaucoup plus réaliste que ceux du corpus didactique. Le lien entre la réception initiale du didactisme moral et l'idéal national est approfondi davantage dans le chapitre 7.

## Chapitre 7. La géographie du didactisme moral

La réception initiale du didactisme moral, avec l'accent qu'elle met sur la moralité et le comportement de la classe de la *gentry*, semble étroitement liée à une certaine conception de la nation, soutenant la hiérarchie sociale traditionnelle tout en défendant les valeurs morales que l'on associa par la suite à la période victorienne. Cela correspond aux sentiments anti-révolutionnaires qui prévalaient en Grande-Bretagne après la Révolution française, ce qui peut sembler paradoxal étant donné qu'un certain nombre de romans du corpus didactique furent écrits par des radicales telles que Mary Hays, Hannah Maria Williams ou Mary Wollstonecraft. Néanmoins, la représentation de la *gentry* anglaise constitue le principal dénominateur commun de ces romans par ailleurs assez variés, et illustre ce que William Warner identifia comme un processus de nationalisation de la fiction narrative en Grande-Bretagne au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, par opposition à la nature davantage paneuropéenne de la circulation des romans au siècle précédent (20). Les corpus étudiés dans cette thèse couvrent le tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et illustrent les fondements du développement du genre romanesque en tant qu'« expression particulière de la nation » et « de la culture de la classe moyenne (démocratique et protestante) » dans la Grande-Bretagne du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (20-1, ma traduction)<sup>43</sup>.

En plus de dépeindre un idéal moral féminin et masculin de la *gentry* compatible avec celui de la classe moyenne grandissante, les romans du corpus didactique sont aussi remarquablement anglocentrés dans leurs intrigues. Le modèle à suivre est ainsi circonscrit au sein des frontières géographiques propres. Un cadre narratif situé principalement dans les îles britanniques était l'un des critères d'inclusion dans les deux corpus, ce qui rend la différence entre les deux ensembles de romans dans le traitement des lieux géographiques d'autant plus frappante.

L'adhésion des romans à l'ordre patriarcal incarné par la philosophie politique d'Edmund Burke met en évidence la centralité non seulement de la *gentility* convenable, mais aussi de l'anglicité respectable dans la réception initiale du didactisme moral dans la fiction britannique, qui s'étend également pour la plupart aux trajectoires des protagonistes masculins. Bien que, comme le notent Elizabeth Sauer et Julia Wright, le concept de nation à

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43 Citations d'origine : « a distinct expression of the nation », « middle-class (democratic, Protestant) culture. »

l'époque était moins clairement lié qu'aujourd'hui au territoire, le lieu et l'espace sont essentiels à la délimitation d'un idéal moral de l'Angleterre dans le corpus didactique (3). Ce chapitre montre que les protagonistes féminins et masculins des romans du corpus de référence s'aventurent régulièrement au-delà des frontières de l'Angleterre et, dans leur mobilité au sein du pays, s'égarant dans des lieux qui évoquent le désordre, tels la prison ou la forêt dense. Ainsi, ces romans contreviennent à l'ordre burkéen, même s'ils réaffirment dans leur quasi-totalité ce dernier à l'issue de l'intrigue, comme étudié dans le chapitre 4.

D'autre part, la notion de domesticité, un concept souvent associé aux femmes dans les manuels de conduite au tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et dans les travaux universitaires sur la littérature de l'époque, est inextricablement liée au foyer, et donc à un sentiment de circonscription géographique<sup>44</sup>. Cette idéologie de la domesticité féminine, visible dans l'accent mis sur les idéaux genrés de la *gentility* dans le corpus didactique, est également soulignée par la mobilité spatiale des personnages dans ces romans, pareillement informée par les normes genrées et sociales, mais aussi par les hiérarchies nationales. Les protagonistes féminins du corpus didactique voyagent moins que leurs homologues des romans de référence ; lorsqu'elles voyagent, elles ont tendance à le faire d'une manière qui renforce en fin de compte l'idéal burkéen du foyer stable et patriarcal, mais spécifiquement anglais, liant la réception du didactisme moral à un certain idéal de la nation anglaise.

En effet, une distinction nette s'opère entre les deux corpus en ce qui concerne la façon dont les romans qui les composent abordent le voyage géographique et la mobilité spatiale. Alors que les romans du corpus didactique tendent à renforcer le sentiment d'anglicité ancré géographiquement dans la stabilité du domaine rural anglais (*country seat*), ceux du corpus de référence mettent de côté cet idéal en faveur d'une représentation plus ambiguë ou franchement subversive de la relation entre géographie et pouvoir dans le contexte anglais. La maison de campagne et son domaine domestique apparaît donc comme un symbole de la stabilité de la nation dans les romans du corpus didactique, ce qui suggère que le maintien de cette notion d'anglicité fait partie intégrante de la réception initiale du

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44 Il doit être mentionné que l'association persistante des femmes à la sphère dite « privée » fut établie comme relevant avant tout de l'idéologique. Comme l'affirme Mary Waldron en référence aux écrits du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle qui soutenaient que les hommes et les femmes étaient fondamentalement différents et avaient donc naturellement des rôles différents à jouer dans la société, « la polémique est prescriptive et non descriptive » (24, ma traduction).

didactisme moral. Ceci correspond à l'argument de William Warner selon lequel l'essor du roman anglais coïncide avec la nationalisation de la culture, allant de pair avec sa pleine légitimation en tant que forme artistique (19-20). Cette dernière question sera approfondie dans le prochain chapitre, par la comparaison des trajectoires des romans des deux corpus au sein du canon littéraire depuis leur première publication jusqu'au début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Ainsi, les résultats des chapitres 7 et 8 suggèrent que les romans du corpus didactique forment bien un ensemble cohérent, permettant de délimiter les traits caractéristiques du sous-genre didactique dans la perspective d'une réception précoce.

Comme nous l'avons vu au chapitre 4 à propos des caractéristiques linguistiques attendues du didactisme moral, les discussions savantes sur le didactisme dans la fiction ont tendance à se concentrer sur le registre plutôt que sur le genre. Néanmoins, Hilary Havens utilise le terme « genre didactique » (*didactic genre*) dans son introduction à *Didactic Novels and British Women's Writing* (8), et l'appellation *roman didactique* suggère par sa construction ce que Fowler appellerait un sous-genre, défini par des motifs et sujets spécifiques en plus des éléments du genre duquel il découle (112). Chris Baldick définit les motifs comme suit : « a situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type » (Baldick 1990 : 162). Dans le corpus didactique, la prévalence de certains motifs accrédite la pertinence du roman didactique en tant que sous-genre, que les quelques variations ou déviations constatées dans certains romans n'entachent pas (Fowler 40). Il s'agit notamment du personnage-type de l'héroïne féminine issue de la *gentry* et du mariage qui la mène dans une demeure de la campagne anglaise lorsque les fins sont heureuses, et de la perte de cette perspective dans les récits qui mettent en garde contre les écarts de conduite. Un autre motif récurrent est celui du voyage géographique comme marqueur de précarité sociale et/ou morale des personnages féminins dans les romans du corpus didactique. Ces motifs structurent les récits et prennent une importance accrue lorsqu'on les oppose aux éléments qui semblent nuire à la cohésion du corpus, comme l'enchevêtrement de plusieurs sous-genres, visible dans les deux corpus. En outre, il est frappant de constater que la réception précoce de l'idéal moral de l'anglicité incarné par la *gentry* inclut des auteurs et autrices de tout le spectre politique, dont certains apparaissent dans les deux corpus, ce qui souligne

davantage l'importance de ces motifs narratifs spécifiques dans la réception initiale du roman didactique.

Par conséquent, le sous-genre du roman didactique outrepassa sa nature morale liée à la domesticité féminine et devient résolument, mais pas nécessairement ouvertement, politique. Souvent considéré comme dérivé du genre non fictionnel du manuel de bonne conduite, le roman didactique traite de questions qui étaient centrales à l'époque, comme l'importance de la raison et de la prudence (Spencer 142)<sup>45</sup>. Ces éléments sont centraux à ce qu'Anne Mellor appelle le romantisme féminin, et ils sont en effet également visibles dans un certain nombre de romans du corpus de référence (1993 : 39). Le lien entre les romans didactiques tels qu'ils étaient perçus à l'époque et la notion d'anglicité respectable différencie cependant ces romans des autres ; ils constituent ainsi une étape importante dans le développement de la tradition romanesque anglaise, lié à la « nationalisation de la culture » (Warner 19).

William Warner soutient que dans le roman du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les aspirations réalistes, les effets sur la morale et les liens avec la nation restent enchevêtrés et « deviennent les critères qui permettent de l'identifier et le distinguer de la 'simple' fiction » (40, ma traduction). À la lumière de l'importance que les romans didactiques tels qu'ils ont été reçus à l'origine jouent dans l'histoire du roman anglais, il semble pertinent d'étudier leur sort au sein de l'histoire littéraire, à travers leur réception du XIX<sup>e</sup> au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. C'est ce qu'abordent les deux derniers chapitres de cette thèse.

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45 Ces concepts font l'objet de débat dans la philosophie ainsi que la littérature de bonne conduite de l'époque, que ce soit par des écrivains conservateurs ou radicaux. Voir par exemple les *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* de Mary Wollstonecraft (1787) et les *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* de Hannah More (1799). Une étude comparative entre les manuels de conduite et les romans didactiques de l'époque serait utile pour étudier les liens entre les deux genres. C'est un projet que j'aimerais entreprendre, ce qui nécessiterait la numérisation d'un certain nombre d'ouvrages. Le manque de disponibilité de manuels de bonne conduite en format numérique est la raison pour laquelle une telle étude n'a pas été entreprise dans le cadre de cette thèse.

## Quatrième partie. Le devenir du roman didactique

Le chapitre qui suit se propose d'explorer l'évolution de la réception du roman didactique, afin d'historiciser les différentes connotations du terme *didactique*. Le chapitre 8 analyse l'histoire du traitement critique réservé aux deux corpus en lien avec le canon littéraire. Le chapitre 9 examine les réactions d'étudiantes et étudiants de première année de licence à des extraits de romans du corpus didactique, afin de comparer les attitudes de lecteurs et lectrices contemporaines dits « ordinaires » à celles des spécialistes de littérature britannique. Pour ce faire, aux perspectives de registre et de genre (*genre*) s'ajoute celle de style, toujours selon la taxonomie de Biber et Conrad.

### Chapitre 8. Le roman didactique et le canon littéraire anglais

Le canon littéraire a fait l'objet de nombreuses recherches dans la communauté universitaire au cours des dernières décennies. Les chercheurs s'accordent généralement sur l'existence d'un canon littéraire, mais ses limites et les raisons de son évolution restent fortement débattues (Eagleton 1-9, Beardsley 23, Hirsch 48). De manière pragmatique, le canon littéraire peut se définir comme suit : « [the canon is] generally understood as the list of authors and works included in basic literature courses because they are deemed to comprise our cultural heritage » (Kaplan et Cronan Rose xvii). En effet, notre conception du canon occidental est étroitement liée à l'institution universitaire depuis l'existence de l'anglais comme discipline académique, que Carey Kaplan et Ellen Cronan Rose situent au tout début du vingtième siècle en Grande-Bretagne (9) et que Terry Eagleton associe à l'essor de la Nouvelle Critique (*New Criticism*) aux Etats-Unis (43).

Les recherches sur la formation et l'évolution du canon soulignent l'importance conjointe, et parfois contradictoire, des préoccupations esthétiques et commerciales. Selon Michael Gamer, cela apparaît clairement dès les premières tentatives de délimitation du canon littéraire, comme *The British Novelists* (1810) d'Anna Laetitia Barbauld. Gamer soutient que pour Barbauld,

literary production is necessarily collaborative, that legal and economic considerations matter as much as aesthetic ones, and that a utopian world free of legal and commercial constraints would bring with it critical autonomy and a larger and more diverse canon of writing. (462)



Cette affirmation se voit confirmée par les résultats d'une enquête quantitative menée par le Stanford Literary Lab, qui conclut que si l'existence d'un canon dans la littérature anglaise est indéniable, celui-ci est en perpétuelle évolution en raison de changements constants en termes de popularité et de prestige, marqueurs centraux de la canonicité (Porter 17, 20). Pour J.D. Porter, il y a deux manières d'intégrer le canon : être lu par le plus grand nombre et être prisé par une élite, notamment celle de la communauté universitaire (2).

Ce chapitre met en évidence cette interaction entre popularité et prestige à travers l'étude de l'histoire de la publication des romans des deux corpus et de leur traitement par les historiens et les critiques littéraires au cours des deux derniers siècles. Cette étude de la formation du canon illustre l'instabilité du canon littéraire, allant de pair avec l'évolution des définitions et des attitudes critiques à l'égard du didactisme moral. Le chapitre commence par une enquête sur l'histoire de la publication des romans des deux corpus. Il se concentre ensuite sur l'évolution du prestige des romans à l'aide d'anthologies et de livres d'histoire littéraire publiés au cours des deux cents dernières années.

Le schéma d'inclusion et d'exclusion des romans du corpus didactique et de référence au sein l'histoire littéraire anglaise est loin d'être clair, ce qui soutient l'idée d'un canon littéraire en perpétuelle évolution, toujours dans un processus de négociation et de renégociation. Cette étude de cas suggère que la popularité et le prestige sont effectivement imbriqués dans l'élaboration du canon anglais, et qu'ils se rejoignent pleinement dans le cas des textes et des auteurs « hypercanoniques » (*hypercanonical*), mais qu'ils restent par ailleurs des indicateurs très distincts de la canonicité (Porter 6). L'étude montre également que le canon n'acquière une relative stabilité que tout en haut ou tout en bas de l'échelle, tandis que la plupart des romans franchissent les frontières de la canonicité à plusieurs reprises, démontrant ainsi la précarité du statut « canonique ». Si les programmes d'études universitaires et les anthologies utilisées dans les enseignements semblent avoir un impact sur les orientations ultérieures de la recherche universitaire, et si la popularité initiale d'un auteur ou d'une autrice est désormais considérée comme un motif légitime de recherche universitaire, il ne s'ensuit pas que les œuvres « redécouvertes » gagneront nécessairement en popularité et en succès commercial. De plus, la majorité des auteurs et autrices des deux corpus continuèrent à faire partie du récit de l'histoire du roman anglais jusqu'à ce que le

canon littéraire se voit considérablement réduit dans les années 1940, 1950 et 1960, en partie à cause de la montée en puissance des approches formalistes, au moment de l'institutionnalisation de la littérature comme discipline universitaire. Le « Grand oubli » (*Great Forgetting*) des femmes et plus largement des romans de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle est incontestable, mais celui-ci constitue finalement une période relativement brève de la réception de ces romans (Siskin 195).

Les sensibilités culturelles à l'égard des textes ayant un objectif moral explicite ont également évolué de manière spectaculaire depuis la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Là où pour les premiers théoriciens du roman la teneur morale se devait d'aller de pair avec la qualité de la plume, l'accent fut mis sur l'innovation stylistique et sa complexité au delà de toute autre considération au tournant du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Price 2000 : 6). Cette rupture théorique affecte les romans des deux corpus, illustrant l'évolution graduelle, mais non linéaire, de la réception du didactisme moral au fil du temps, défini davantage selon les thématiques abordées à l'époque romantique, alors que la perspective stylistique de ce qui fait un discours « moralisateur » a tendance à prévaloir depuis le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Cela explique pourquoi il a été difficile de cerner ce qui faisait la cohésion du corpus didactique à l'origine (voir chapitres 1-3), surtout si l'on considère le fait que ce qui constitue le cœur du didactisme moral dans la réception initiale de ces romans revient à une certaine expression de l'anglicité, qui a certes évolué avec le temps, mais qui fait toujours partie du récit anglais de la nation à travers la fiction. Les premiers romans d'Austen allient représentation de l'Angleterre rurale raffinée et esthétique de l'ironie et de la nuance. Ces deux dernières ont pris le pas sur le reste à mesure que les goûts culturels dominants se sont éloignés du principe de *dulce et utile* pour s'orienter vers un éthos de l'esthétisme. Les valeurs véhiculées par le didactisme moral telles qu'il fut perçu à l'origine n'ont pas été réellement supprimées ; en revanche, le mépris critique pour les textes où le dessein moral se détache de façon disgracieuse du projet artistique, déjà présent dans la *Monthly Review* et la *Critical Review*, a constamment gagné du terrain.

Ces dernières années, l'utilisation du terme *didactique* dans les ouvrages critiques sur la fiction narrative est beaucoup moins empreinte de jugement négatif ; néanmoins, sa définition se trouve marquée par une certaine incertitude quant à la perspective adoptée, de

style, de registre, ou de genre. Mon travail sur l'évolution de la réception du didactisme moral dans les romans montre que cette dernière dépend grandement de l'époque. La réception initiale se concentra davantage sur l'efficacité du registre didactique, et la sélection de textes à partir des premiers critiques montre une cohérence générique. Les considérations stylistiques, présentes dès la réception initiale, ont connu une importance croissante avec le temps, bien que nous voyions ces dernières années un retour de la fonction communicative dans la recherche autour du didactisme dans la fiction, et donc de la perspective de registre, et parfois de genre (*genre*). Le didactisme a pu être reçu à la fois comme un élément formel et comme un reflet du genre (*gender*) et/ou des opinions politiques d'une personne, et il semble impliquer, au fond, une idéologie morale comme cadre de la fiction narrative, exprimée de façon plus ou moins voilée ou imbriquée dans la narration, le didactisme explicite étant le mode d'expression qui historiquement a suscité le plus de mépris en termes de valeur esthétique, et tout particulièrement au cours du siècle dernier. Le chapitre qui conclut cette thèse explore les réactions d'étudiantes et étudiants de premier cycle universitaire à des passages de romans jugés didactiques suite de leur publication initiale, afin d'explorer plus avant la réception du didactisme moral aujourd'hui.

## Chapitre 9. Lire le didactisme moral aujourd'hui : Une étude de cas

Dans *The Myth of Popular Culture*, Peter Meisel attire l'attention sur l'importance du lecteur ou de la lectrice dans la formation et la réalisation des canons artistiques : « the reader completes, realizes, or indeed, performs the text, which is otherwise without being, and certainly without effective cause » (57). D'autre part, de nombreux chercheurs et chercheuses soulignent l'importance de l'enseignement supérieur dans le (ré)établissement du canon littéraire, dans le cadre de la double mission de l'institution universitaire de produire de la recherche et d'enseigner, comme nous détaillé dans le chapitre 8 (Graff 162, Kowaleski-Wallace viii, Lecker 10, Lovell 134, Ross 10).

Par conséquent, ce dernier chapitre présente une étude de réception (*reader response*) à partir de réactions écrites d'étudiantes de première année de licence à quatre extraits tirés de trois romans du corpus didactique : *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) de Mary Wollstonecraft, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) de Hannah More et *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) de Jane Austen<sup>46</sup>. Les étudiantes étaient inscrites à un cours de première année de littérature britannique à l'automne 2018, que j'enseignais. Dans la continuité du regard porté par le chapitre précédent sur l'évolution de la réception du didactisme moral dans le discours critique, cette étude vise à réfléchir à la perception du didactisme moral aujourd'hui, et savoir si celle-ci, encore souvent victime de la critique qui tend à refuser toute valeur esthétique à ce registre, est susceptible d'être réévaluée.

Les données suggèrent que les étudiantes tendent à s'aligner sur la tradition, remontant aux premières critiques, de percevoir un didactisme tacite chez Austen, par opposition à son expression plus explicite chez More et Wollstonecraft. En outre, de nombreuses réactions évoquent celles de la *Monthly Review* et de la *Critical Review* dans leur absence d'opposition entre perception du didactisme et considération esthétique, ce qui contraste avec la position critique qui prévaut depuis le milieu du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme nous l'avons vu au chapitre 8. Les étudiantes ont des réactions très diverses face au didactisme moral qu'elles perçoivent, de l'enthousiasme à la consternation, ce qui démontre que pour cette cohorte dans son ensemble, la présence du didactisme moral dans un texte littéraire, qu'il soit manifeste ou voilé, n'est ni positive ni négative par principe. Par ailleurs, la

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46 Les femmes étant très largement majoritaires dans cette étude (25 femmes pour 4 hommes), la forme féminine « étudiante » est préférée ici pour représenter l'intégralité du groupe.

perception d'un didactisme moral n'exclut pas une réponse esthétique et l'appréciation d'une œuvre dans son caractère littéraire.

Ces étudiantes peuvent être considérées comme des lectrices relativement « naïves » au moment de la collecte des données, car seulement au début de leur parcours universitaire (De Beaugrande 1992: 200). Néanmoins, c'est justement cette condition, moins empreinte de l'héritage critique que celle des chercheurs et chercheuses, qui est intéressante ; leurs réactions restent largement exemptes de la posture hostile au didactisme moral que l'on retrouve dans une grande partie de la critique littéraire depuis le milieu du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui conduit de nombreux universitaires à continuer d'affirmer que l'intérêt porté à ce type de fiction exclut toute appréciation artistique, comme cela a été montré dans le chapitre précédent. Mon argument n'est pas de dire, au contraire, que la perception du didactisme rend nécessairement une œuvre réussie sur le plan esthétique, mais simplement que nous pourrions considérer la teneur morale de manière neutre comme une composante possible d'un texte, ni intrinsèquement positive ou négative.

Comme le note Geoff Hall, les études de cas telles que celle présentée dans ce chapitre ne sont ni généralisables ni facilement reproduisibles, étant donné l'importance du contexte situationnel (202). En effet, 29 participantes dans une classe de premier cycle universitaire en France constituent un échantillon trop petit et trop spécifique pour tirer des conclusions définitives sur la réception actuelle du didactisme moral dans la fiction. De même, les passages des romans présentés sont trop courts pour susciter une affirmation sur la pertinence d'inclure des œuvres moins connues de More ou de Wollstonecraft dans les programmes d'enseignement dans une perspective d'élargissement du canon littéraire. Néanmoins, selon Hall, ce type d'étude apporte des informations précieuses sur une situation spécifique qui peut constituer une source utile d'hypothèses pour des recherches futures, et les résultats de ce chapitre plaident en faveur de l'élargissement du canon dans l'enseignement ainsi que dans la recherche, comme c'est la tendance actuelle à l'université (201). Étant donné qu'au sein des promotions de première année, certaines personnes deviendront des spécialistes de littérature, cette étude offre également l'espoir d'une réévaluation possible du didactisme moral au niveau de la critique dans un avenir relativement proche (Hunter xiii).

## Conclusion

L'étude du didactisme moral dans la fiction centrée sur la réception initiale, l'analyse textuelle et la réception au fil du temps met en lumière à quel point les perspectives de lectures peuvent varier, et souligne l'importance de l'évolution du contexte historique et culturel de la tradition critique dont nous héritons. Le terme même de « didactique » fait lui aussi l'objet d'usages différents, selon la perspective d'interprétation adoptée, que ce soit du point de vue du registre, du genre littéraire ou du style. D'autre part, cette étude met en évidence l'intérêt d'allier différentes méthodes.

L'analyse des critiques et des préfaces et dédicaces a montré la centralité de la relation au lectorat dans le contexte du marché croissant du livre. De plus, l'utilisation de la stylistique de corpus a permis d'explorer le vocabulaire des romans de façon systématique, pour donner davantage de poids aux hypothèses dérivées d'études quantitatives précédentes, ou au contraire les réfuter. Par exemple, l'examen du vocabulaire lié à la morale et à l'instruction nuance l'hypothèse selon laquelle le registre didactique s'articulerait principalement autour de ces thèmes. Si la question de la bonne conduite est effectivement plus présente dans les romans reçus comme didactiques par leurs premiers critiques, la moralité en tant que concept philosophique revient de manière récurrente dans les deux corpus et ne caractérise pas le roman didactique en tant que tel. De même, il a été démontré que les adresses directes aux lecteurs sont omniprésentes dans de nombreux romans de la période, au-delà de ceux qui ont été vus comme édifiants.

Alterner entre les approches *corpus based* et *corpus driven* dans l'analyse textuelle assistée par ordinateur renforce ces conclusions. Alors que la partie *corpus based* a permis de tester, et en grande partie réfuter, les hypothèses conçues à partir de précédentes interprétations du didactisme, la partie *corpus driven* a élargi la perspective et montré que les thèmes (*topic*) de la moralité et de l'instruction sont en réalité relativement périphériques lorsqu'il s'agit de définir les caractéristiques du registre didactique, contrairement aux questions de genre (*gender*) et de classe sociale. Ces dernières se sont révélées centrales dans la distinction entre les deux corpus, conduisant à une évaluation des types de personnages et des trajectoires narratives qui unissent de manière convaincante les romans perçus comme édifiants en un sous-genre didactique de la fiction de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Comme le note Alastair Fowler, les catégories qui régissent la théorie littéraire sont susceptibles d'évoluer au fil du temps (9). Le fait de partir de la réception initiale permet d'historiciser la notion de didactisme, souvent maniée à des fins partisans, et d'explorer la réception au fil du temps, jusqu'aux réactions d'étudiantes d'aujourd'hui. Cela contribue à accroître notre compréhension d'une composante non négligeable du paysage fictionnel de l'époque, tout autant que cela fournit un contexte précis pour les utilisations et les perspectives ultérieures autour de la notion de didactisme dans la littérature.

Pour finir, cette étude souligne l'intérêt d'élargir la portée du canon littéraire, que les tendances actuelles de la recherche reflètent déjà, y compris dans l'évolution des pratiques d'enseignement à l'université. En effet, il est utile de contextualiser et de remettre en question les connotations négatives que des termes auparavant descriptifs tels que *didactique* ont pu acquérir dans la tradition critique dont nous héritons. Ceci permet d'apporter de la nuance et de permettre aux perspectives de registre, de genre et de style de coexister sans que cela ne nie les potentialités esthétiques d'une œuvre à sa lecture.